

"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Roscoe NY

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Part XI Rules 3 and 4

(T-30.I.6:1) (3) Remember once again [in other words, let us go back to the beginning] **the day you want, and recognize that something has occurred that is not part of it.**

By "the day you want," Jesus means the day that you *truly* want, which is a day of peace and happiness. Something now has happened that is not a part of that: you are not happy. You are disappointed, angry, or feeling triumphant because you have gotten what you wanted. Again, I think I said before that triumph is not peace. Ecstasy is not peace. Exhilaration is not peace. Great drama is not peace. Peace is the peace of God, which means it is constant and steady—it does not go up and down.

So what you are asked to do is monitor yourself during the day and realize as quickly as you can that something has gotten off kilter. You have gotten off track because you are not at peace.

(T-30.I.6:2) Then realize that you have asked a question by yourself, and must have set an answer in your terms.

Here again he is saying that the question we are asking of the Holy Spirit is not really a question. It is a statement: "I want this. And I want you to tell me that it is OK that I want it." "I want" means we are into the ego thought system, which then means the answer that we receive will be an idol made by the ego. Then we call that idol the Holy Spirit or Jesus or God. But the whole thing has been set up. We have established what the question is, and therefore the answer must come in those terms. This is an extremely important point.

The *Song of Prayer* supplement, which Helen had taken down from Jesus a year after the Course was published, was originally written for Helen—and then for everybody—to correct the misconception that asking the Holy Spirit meant asking for parking spaces, where to go shopping, where to live, what to do with your life—whether it is something that we might label trivial or something we think is important. What Jesus explained to her (first in a special message which was then re-written for the general audience, which is now in the supplement) was that while there is nothing wrong with this kind of asking, it is only the beginning step and it is not really what you want. Whenever you ask the Holy Spirit for a specific question, you are in effect telling Him what the answer should be. You are not leaving Him any room for anything He might want to say, because you are telling Him what He should say. When you ask: "Should I take job A or job B?" the only answer you will let yourself hear is A or B, because that is how you framed the question. What you are not aware of is that this is a very subtle attack and an attempt to control God all over again, just as we tried to do right at the beginning.

So asking a specific question is really an attempt to control the answer. It will not *seem* that you are really trying to control God. What Jesus says in *The Song of Prayer* is that when you ask for something specific, it is exactly the same as looking on sin, making it real, and then forgiving it. Later on in the supplement he coins a new term, *forgiveness-to-destroy*, which is not used in the Course even though the process is described. I make sin real when I say that you have done something wrong to me, but in the goodness of my heart I will overlook it—after having made it real. That is what he calls *forgiveness-to-destroy*. He is saying that asking the Holy Spirit for specifics is exactly the same thing, so even though it is not a term he uses there, we could say that is an example of *asking-to-destroy*. And yet it seems to be the right thing to do. The Course says that you should ask for help, you should pray, etc. But you don't understand that your specialness is really getting the upper hand.

In *The Song of Prayer*, he says that the specifics of the song of prayer are not what you want; you want the song itself. In other words, it is not the specific answers to specific questions that you want. You want the love that inspires that. You want the song itself, not the contours of the song, not the melody, not the harmonics, not the intervals. It is not the *form* of the song that you want, it is the love which has inspired it. In "The Forgotten Song," a beautiful section at the beginning of Chapter 21 in the text, Jesus talks about the forgotten song as that presence of the Holy Spirit's Love in our minds, which *reminds* us of the song of Heaven. He says that "the *notes* are nothing" (*italics added*). The parts of the song, the form that the song takes, are nothing. It is the *song* that you want.

So what he is talking about is that what you want is an experience of Jesus' love. When you insist that what you want are specific answers to specific questions, you are dragging his love from your mind, and putting it into the world, because that is where you believe you are. Then you go further and say: "Fix this for me!" You deny the fact that you made up the problem so you could fix *him*, so you could take care of his love, so that you don't have to experience it. Imagine the arrogance of that: Here we are—we make up a world, make up a problem to *exclude* Jesus' love; and then we get into so much trouble that we bring him into it and plead: "Please fix it!" And he says: "No." Not because he is angry or vindictive. But because he says there is nothing there to fix. "Don't ask me to fix up your specific problems; ask me rather to *join* with you, which will undo the cause of all of your specific problems." The cause of all of our specific problems is the belief that we are separate from the Love of God. We call this separation sin. Then we feel guilty because of what we have done and believe we deserve to be punished for our sinfulness. That is the source of all of our distress—in *any* form. Therefore, by asking to join with Jesus and asking his help (which really is a way of asking ourselves to join with *him*), we are undoing the separation from God's Love that is the cause of all the problems. And that is why this course is so simple.

To complicate everything, *Course in Miracles* students drag Jesus or the Holy Spirit from the mind where They are, into a world where They are not, into a world where *we* are not, and demand that They fix things for us here. And then we get good and angry when They don't do it. *The Song of Prayer* picks up on all of these ideas in the Course, because people were not paying attention. *The Song of Prayer* was dictated so that all of the mistakes that were already beginning to occur within one year of the Course's life would be corrected. The problem, of course, is that people never bothered with the pamphlet (now called a supplement), because they never bothered with what the Course really says. So now the same mistakes have been repeated over and over again, having become almost universal with people.

People don't pay attention to what the Course says, because they think they *understand* what it says simply because they can read English. They don't realize that the meaning of the Course does not lie in

the words (or, as I said before, in the intellectual understanding). The meaning lies in becoming part of the same process and joining with the love that inspired the Course. This means, again, that you really have to cultivate an attitude of humility when you work with this, because it is so easy to think you are hearing the Holy Spirit, when all you are doing is hearing the resonance of your own voice. That is what this is about.

(T-30.I.6:2-5) Then realize that you have asked a question by yourself, and must have set an answer in your terms. [Which means you will hear exactly what you wanted to hear and that is how you set it up]. **Then say** [now this is the third rule]: **I have no question. I forgot what to decide.**

That is the beginning of real humility. It is not only that I don't have a question: I don't even know what to *ask*. At least now you are wiping your slate clean. At least now you are withdrawing the arrogance that says: I know what my problem is. I know what the solution is. And I have an "in" with the Holy Spirit—He'll solve this for me. And if you are very good at this, you'll say to your friends: "I'll get Him to solve your problems for you, too—because He talks through me. And if you come to me, He will talk to you through *me*." Well, guess what that means? That makes me very special, because I have an "in" with this wonderful Voice. And it makes you special, because you are privileged to sit in my company. The whole thing is so fraught with specialness, it is astounding that people do this in the name of *A Course in Miracles* and don't realize what they are doing. When you understand what specialness is, you can see clearly what is happening. People who do this are not evil, bad people. They are just *fearful* people who are afraid of what the message of the Course really is and then substitute their own message, unaware of what they are doing.

(T-30.I.6:6) This cancels out the terms that you have set, and lets the answer show you what the question must have really been.

If your mind is a blank slate, then the answer will be some experience of Jesus' love, and you will understand what the question really should have been. Namely, the question has to do with the ego no longer being your teacher and your wanting Jesus as your teacher instead. So the question is never "Do I do A or B?" The question is: "Which teacher will I choose? Which adviser will I choose? Which guide will I choose to help me learn which is the 'right' thing to do?" What you want to do, which again is the message of *The Song of Prayer*, is join with Jesus' love. And in that love you will find all the answers to the specific questions you think you have.

In *The Song of Prayer*, he quotes the famous line from the Sermon on the Mount: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all else will be given you." And he says in that *one* answer—joining with *my* love, with *my* song—all the little answers will be found; you don't have to worry about them. That doesn't mean that you don't have to make a choice between job A and job B, to stay in job A or to leave job A, to stay in a relationship or to leave a relationship. Of course you have to make a decision. And you do the best you can at any given moment when the decision has to be made. But above all, try to be involved with the underlying process of getting beyond your ego's investment in the answer—"Damn it! What do I *do*?!"—to the real question, which is to ask, "Why do I persist in choosing my ego when the Love of God is there for the asking?"

So the third rule now is to *undo* our having forgotten about the first two rules. So we say, "I have no question. I forgot what to decide."

(T-30.I.7:3) And your fear of being answered in a different way from what your version of the question asks will gain momentum, until you believe the day you want is one in which you get *your* answer to *your* question.

The word "until" here is used slightly differently from the way that it is usually used in popular English. What this means is that your version of the question will gain momentum up until and *including* the point when you believe that your happy day will come when *your* question is answered with your answer—in other words, when you get what you want. So that basically is the culmination of the process. And you stick to this more and more because you don't want to hear the other answer—because you know somewhere inside you that the other answer means that you are wrong, which in turn means that you don't exist. That is the terror of being wrong. Being wrong becomes a *symbol* of a much larger thought that says if I am wrong, then the Holy Spirit must be right—because it is always one or the other. One of the hallmarks of the ego's system is "*one or the other*." You never have more than two choices, and it is always one or the other. It is a seesaw: if one is up, the other must be down. If one is right, the other must be wrong. If one is innocent, the other must be guilty. And there is no choice in that. Once you identify with the ego system, that is what you are buying into: the idea that it is one or the other. The ego doesn't know about the word "same". The word "same" doesn't exist in the ego's vocabulary, because its whole existence is predicated on the idea that God and the Son are *different*, by which the ego also means *separate*.

God and the Son are the same—that is the Atonement principle. God and Christ are totally one. They are the same spirit. God is the Creator, Christ is the created. God is the First Cause; Christ is the Effect. But as I mentioned before, in truth there is no God and Christ in Heaven, no Cause and Effect in Heaven. These are categories that we introduce in a dualistic world to help us understand the world that is beyond duality. The whole ego thought system begins with and rests on the premise that God and His Son are separate and different. Consequently, if that is what the ego's thought system is, everything that comes from it must share in that idea. However, if we are all the same, we are not fragmented; and if we, as spirit, are the same as God, then we are not separate from Him. That is the end of the ego. That is what the Atonement principle is.

So the ego only knows about difference—that I am different from God and therefore different from everybody else. That is one of the ways of understanding what *specialness* is. The very word "special" implies a comparison. Someone is more special than someone else; someone is *different* from someone else. Therefore again, if I am right, you can't be right, because we can't be the same. We must be different. Let's use something trivial as an example—a simple fact in the world: You say that the capital of New York State is New York City. Somebody else says that it is not New York City, it is Albany. You are proven wrong, and you get upset. Why are you getting upset? Because that is a symbol—not that you are wrong about a state capital, but that you are wrong, *period*. That is why so often you meet people who can't be wrong—they always have to be right and they get very upset if they are not right. They get so upset because the underlying thought is that I am wrong, *period*. And if I am wrong, it is only because the Holy Spirit is right. And if the Holy Spirit is right, then this whole thought system is wrong—this whole world is wrong, which means I cease to exist as a creature of the ego. That is the terror. That is why we strive so hard to always be right, which means to always be special; and to always prove that God is wrong.

This is the problem in all of this. Our fear is that we will be proven wrong, which means that we don't know what is in our own best interests.

So again:

(T-30.I.7:3-4) And your fear of being answered in a different way from what your version of the question asks will gain momentum, until you believe the day you want is one in which you get *your* answer to *your* question. And you will not get it, for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want.

The distinction here is between what you want and what you *really* want. What you *really* want is the peace of God. What you *want* is the ego's version of that—some indulgence and satisfaction of your specialness. So what Jesus is saying is that you will never get what you want because what you want is in conflict with what you *really* want. In other words, even if you get what you think you want, it will never be enough. Everybody in this society is aware of that: it is never enough. You always want more, and more. Whether it is more food, more money, more sex, more fame, or more material things—you always want more, you always want better—because it is never enough. You get what you think you want, but it doesn't really satisfy you, because somewhere deep within you is this gnawing sense that there is something missing.

What *is* missing is the Love of God that you threw away. But the ego will never let you know that. Instead, the ego says that this sense of lack in you is coming from the fact that you are imperfect. That is what the Course refers to as the "scarcity principle." What results from this is that you always have to take from the outside to fill up the gaping hole within. And that is why what you take in is never enough. The gaping hole is never filled, and can never be filled until you change your mind about the original decision. That is why this course always keeps coming back to that, and that is what you always have to look at. That is why Jesus says that you will not get what you want, "for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want." So what Jesus is doing is appealing to us now, telling us: "You have a split mind. Yes, you have an ego mind that only wants and wants and wants, and will kill to get it; but you have another part of your mind, too—the right mind." Once you understand that your mind is split, then the concept of a decision maker becomes incredibly meaningful, because now your choice is meaningful. You are choosing between the ego thought system, which is an illusion and a lie, and the Holy Spirit's thought system, which is the truth. And even if you don't exercise that choice right away, you will at least understand now that you have a choice—between what you want as an ego, and what you *really* want, which is to return home.

Q: Suppose you have reached the point where the things of the world such as sexual relationships and food don't work for you anymore. You think you don't want them. You realize that you no longer have an investment in them—similar to the realization that you keep slamming the door on your fingers, so the thing to do is stop slamming the door on your fingers. How can you tell though, if you are in denial about all this?

A: This is an extremely important question, because the solution you are proposing will not work. Yes, if you keep slamming the door on your fingers, for goodness' sake stop slamming the door on your fingers!—if that is the cause of your pain. If you believe the cause of your pain is all these lousy relationships you keep getting involved with, which never work anyway, then you are absolutely justified in saying: "No more relationships, I'll become a nun."

Q: That doesn't work either.

A: Right! Because that is not the problem. The problem is not the relationship—the problem is the guilt in your mind and the choice that you made regarding who will help you with the guilt: the ego versus the Holy Spirit. If you are in this world in this body, then you are here so you can learn lessons. Relationships are the classrooms *par excellence*. That is why the Course is filled with material on that topic—that is what this is a course in—because our guilt is most clearly and powerfully expressed in our special relationships. We take the guilt in ourselves and we dump it onto someone else.

Ontologically the way all that begins is our literally splitting off a part of ourselves that we don't want and making a new person with it. Basically, your special relationship, your special partner, is a split-off part of the same whole of which you are a split-off part. That is why it is so important that you not see each other as separate. Trying to resolve this on the level of the body will never work: you just kind of slam your fingers in the door over and over again. And then you will seem justified in concluding that you just will not get involved in relationships anymore because they don't work. But these relationships are the perfect classroom. What the Course would say is: "Don't give up relationships. Rather, invite me in [Jesus or the Holy Spirit] so I can now teach you through this classroom. If you close the door on the relationship, how can I teach you? You have come into this world in a body, with all these special partners all around—past, present and future—just so you will reach the realization that I could be your teacher. And just when you reach that point you close the door and declare: 'No more classroom.' Then I [Jesus] have to go on unemployment!"

What you want to realize is that the problem is not what goes wrong between you and the other person. The problem is what goes wrong in your mind—when you choose against Jesus and for the ego. That is the problem. The ego will try to convince you that the problem is the situations or relationships in your life. And once you have identified that as the problem, the solution is easy: give them up! That is how monasteries began. Literally! They began in the 5th century when men fled the evils of the city (which really meant the evils of women) and became monks—mistakenly thinking that they wanted to be with God alone. Being with God alone meant to them that they could have nothing to do with anyone else. Certainly nothing to do with sex! Because the ego would say that the problem is between bodies; so therefore the solution is to just ignore or deny the body. The Course says, through the miracle, that the problem is not the body—the problem is with whom you are looking at the body, namely with your ego.

The problem always comes back to this choice point in your mind. Therefore what you want to see is that relationships are the perfect classrooms, and that of course you are going to mess them up. They are going to begin with specialness, thrive on specialness, and end with specialness. This is the perfect way for you to learn that specialness is not the answer. But you must choose a different teacher. So when you go into a relationship, you can tell yourself that of course I am going to screw this up, I know I am going to do it. But now I can have Jesus alongside me while I do it, and I can watch myself making all the choices for specialness with him by my side. The difference will be that now I don't have to be guilty about them. I don't have to be afraid of them. I don't have to be ashamed of them.

That will be the beginning of the process of learning to let them go entirely—not the relationship, but the specialness of the relationship. So you don't want to give up the relationship necessarily. What you want to give up is the teacher you have chosen to teach you in the classroom.

So returning now to the last sentence I read:

(T-30.I.7:4-5) And you will not get it [namely, you will not get your answer to your question—you will not get what you want], **for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want. This can be very hard to realize, when once you have decided by yourself the rules that promise you a happy day.**

Here is another one of those places where, if you read it carefully, you will hear Jesus saying to you: "This is not easy!" No one, once again, wants to be told that they are wrong, because, as I explained before, if you are wrong, it means your very existence is a lie, which means you are not even *here*. That is very frightening, if you are convinced you *are* here. That is what he is talking about.

So once you have done this by yourself, it is very hard to shift gears. You know this is true—just look at what has happened in the world. We made the choice to be on our own—we didn't need God as our Source because we became our own source—we didn't need the Holy Spirit as our Teacher because now we have a better teacher, namely the ego—and from that point on we were just off and running, glorifying and luxuriating in our specialness, in our self-centeredness, and in our self-importance. And we will never, ever give it up—certainly not without a big fight! And from that original identification came this whole world and all the things that go on in this world. It just goes on and on and on.

In the beginning of the teachers' manual, Jesus talks about how this world winds on wearily (M-1.4:4-5)—because nothing ever works. People are beginning to see that nothing ever works. You get a glimmer of hope, and you know exactly what will happen—because it always happens. You get a glimmer of hope here with the economy, for example, and you know what will happen. This is because the thought system that underlies all of this is the thought system of me, me, me—it is a thought system of specialness. It is not a thought system that says that we are all part of the *one* Sonship. It is a thought system that says that we are part of a special sonship, and my special part is better than your special part. That is why nothing ever works—and people realize that. That is why this course is so terribly important, and also why nobody pays any attention to it—*because* it is so important. To really pay attention to it means that you must look at your own specialness, which means undermining your very existence as you have established it.

So now, once again he is saying: "I have given you a *third* rule, but you are not going to listen to this one either." So now he has to give us a *fourth* rule.

Excerpts from Rule 4:

(T-30.I.8:1-2) (4) If you are so unwilling to receive you cannot even let your question go, you can begin to change your mind with this: *At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now.*

If I am not willing to let go of my specialness or of my investment in being right, at least I can say that I don't like the way I am feeling. I may still be tempted to blame *you* for it, but at least I can allow myself to be aware that I don't like the way I feel. The reason this is important is that—as a number of people already have commented—very often it is easy to fool yourself into thinking that you are really feeling happy and peaceful and have no grievances against anyone. When the fact of the matter is that you are furious—you are very depressed and anxious, but you are covering it over. So what Jesus is saying here

is: "At least try to be honest with yourself *this* much: Admit that you don't like the way you are feeling—that you are feeling angry, disquieted, in pain; you're guilty, lonely, fearful. You're this, you're that. At least be honest with that: *don't* cover it over."

We have a term for people who cover over their pain: "bliss ninnies." You won't find that term in the Course, but bliss ninnies are people who put on a happy face and say everything is wonderful. They not only try to convince other people, but they try to convince themselves. This is not a course in being happy. This is a course in recognizing how *unhappy* you are. Forgive yourself for the cause of the unhappiness and *then* you will be happy. Jesus is not against happiness, obviously. But what he is saying is if you truly want to be happy, you *must* let go of all the decisions you have made to be *unhappy*, and then blame other people for your unhappiness.

Again, the happiness that the Course promises us is the result of the process of first realizing how *unhappy*, depressed, anxious, fearful, and angry we are. These are not sins: we *have* to be all those things. How could anyone be homeless and orphaned and not be depressed and angry? Everybody in this world is homeless and orphaned, within their belief system, because they believe they ran away from home. And they believe either that God is killed by them, or God is so angry that He disowned them. No one in this world can be happy because no one in this world believes that he or she is home. And you can only be truly happy when you are home. Therefore, to try to pretend that you are happy here, that you could make this world a better place for yourself and a home in which you could be happy is to feed the very thought system that got you into trouble in the first place. This is a course in helping you realize how *unhappy* you are, because you are not at home. And then it helps you realize that the reason you are not at home is a choice *you* made. This has nothing to do with what someone else did, or what God did. And if you don't realize it is a choice *you* made, how can you ever change it? That is why, to make the point once again: you can't change your mind unless you first know: (1) that you have a mind, and (2) that your mind has chosen the wrong thought system.

As long as you think that you are happy and filled with thoughts of love and peace, you will never study this *Course in Miracles*. You may *think* you are studying it, but what you are doing is re-writing it so it says what you want it to say. This course is for people who don't know how unhappy, miserable, lonely, alienated, and depressed they are, so that they can then learn that this is what they feel, and understand where the feeling came from—not from anything in the world, but from their own choice. Once they understand it is their own choice, they can then make a better choice. That is how the Course fulfills its purpose. But if you think you are already happy, or have become happy, forgiven, and forgiving because you have "done" the workbook lessons for a year and have read through the text a couple of times, then you are not really paying attention to what this is saying. The reason is that it is just not that easy to let go of an identification that you very strongly hold on to. Real happiness in this course comes from looking at your guilt, at your self-hatred and your sinfulness, and forgiving yourself for it. That is where the real happiness comes from. It is not something you can impose upon yourself, thereby pushing down all these hateful thoughts. It can only come when you *look* at those hateful thoughts with Jesus' love beside you and then realize that there is nothing there. Then the happiness will come, a happiness born of the recognition: "Thank God, I was wrong.» Not that I was right.

If we believe we are happy and peaceful, there will be no motivation to change. And so the source of all of our problems, both individually and collectively, will remain buried in our unconscious. All that guilt will stay there and continually throw off a shadow, but we won't know where the shadow is coming

from, and we'll always mistake the shadow for the reality. Those of you who remember your Plato will remember that that was his principal point in the Allegory of the Cave: that people think the shadows are the reality. And so we will see all the pain and suffering around us, but we won't realize that they are the shadows of the guilt that is in our own individual mind, and in the mind of the Sonship. It is our allowing ourselves to experience our unhappiness and our not being happy with how we are feeling that will motivate us to begin to explore where the unhappiness is coming from.

Before moving on, I just wanted to make a few more comments about the concern people have when they begin to take this seriously—that is, the feeling that their "safety nets" are being taken away and the feelings of confusion when they accept that they no longer feel comfortable asking Jesus "What should I do?" and other questions along those lines.

It is true as I have been saying that your ego will get in your way if you ask Jesus to help you that way. But it is different when you ask Jesus to help you look at the problem, because then you realize that the problem is not whether you do A or B. The problem is that you want to do it on your own. You would experience indecision or confusion only because you have already chosen your ego. If you had chosen Jesus, there would be no indecision, hesitancy, or confusion—you would just do it. As Gloria says: then you become "thunk." Then the answer, the Love of God, just comes through you and you automatically do what is most loving. The issue is getting your ego out of the way. Asking Jesus for help means asking him to help you look at the problem, the problem being: I don't *know* what I should do because I have already chosen my ego. So by asking him to help you, you are already undoing the cause of the confusion, which is your having separated from him. If you ask him to help you, you are joining with him and therefore undoing the problem.

You don't even have to know how to listen. The problem again is when you think you *do* know. The fact that you don't know may seem to be confusing to you, but the reason it is, is that all your life you have labored under the idea that you understood and you knew how to act. Now all of a sudden you recognize that you don't understand anything. That is a big, big plus, even though it may not feel that way.

Let me read the lines from the end of the text, which I often quote or refer to: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: *I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself*" (T-31.V.17:6-7). Now, does that describe everybody in this room? You have a lot of company! Remember again how this begins: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this ..." This is why we become so uncomfortable—because now we realize that we don't know anything. It seemed as if this course is saying that we should listen to the Holy Spirit, but now we realize that we don't even know what that means or how to do it. But now the way this ends is: "Yet in this learning [learning that you don't know anything] is salvation born. And What you are will tell you of Itself" (T-31.V.17:8).

Remember workbook Lesson 24 which emphasizes the idea that we do not perceive our own best interests. The problem is that we think we *do*; and therefore we do not believe we have to be taught, because we already know what to do. If you already know how to listen (so you think), then you won't be *taught* how to listen. And then you will think that you are listening, when all the while you indeed *are* listening, but to the ego's voice, not to the Holy Spirit's Voice. Understanding that you don't understand anything, especially how to listen or what asking the Holy Spirit means, is very, very helpful because now your mind is clear. Now you are saved from your own arrogance, and then "What you are

will tell you of Itself." Now you have made room for Jesus to come to you and speak to you. And you realize that what *listening* means is getting your ego out of the way. Remember what we had discussed before about the last unanswered question—that to say *yes* means to say *not no*. To say *yes* to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit—to say: "Yes, I want your help, I want your advice"—means that you must look at your ego and say: "I don't want this anymore."

That is what listening really is: getting the interference out of the way. So then you can be more and more assured that the voice you *are* hearing (and of course that is a metaphor, you don't literally hear a voice) is not your own but is coming from the Holy Spirit. It feels very uncomfortable—that is why "there is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this." Most people pride themselves when they reach a level of maturity, in thinking that they really know how to get by in the world: they know how the world works. They may not like it, but at least they know how it works and they know how to survive in it. All of a sudden you are told everything you believed in is wrong. That is very disconcerting. In one series of statements Jesus describes the experience as disturbed, disjunctive, and distressing (T-17.V.3:3). That is what happens when you suddenly realize that everything you have believed in is false, and it seems that there is nothing to take its place. That is when the ego is tempted to rush right in and call a psychic, perhaps, because then somebody else will tell you what to do. That's very nice, because then you don't have to do your own work of undoing your ego. Somebody else's ego will tell you what to do, and then say it is the Voice of the Holy Spirit or they are channeling it. It is very tempting to take this route when you are feeling so uncomfortable. It is best, though, to just stay put and not do anything, because your ego will want to rush right in and fill in the empty space, and the empty space will always be filled in by itself, by the ego. If you can stay put, then your fear will abate, and then that loving Voice will indeed speak to you, and you will know what it is saying.

One further point: Many students fall into a trap when they try to take seriously that "I do not know the thing I am." They stop taking all their roles seriously, but in the wrong way. Using an example from a student here: You never stop being a mother, a friend, a daughter, a lover, or a wife: you never stop these roles. What you begin to realize is that it is a role, it is not me. But it is a role that I have chosen so I can learn lessons in it. That is really important, otherwise you will skip over the step and say that this is silly, it is all made up—I'm not any of these things. It *is* important that you recognize that your identity is not in the role. But nonetheless the role is something you have chosen because you don't really believe in your true Identity. You may begin to understand that you are not the person you thought you were, but there is a part of you that still does not want to understand or remember the Self you truly are. So you need steps that will get you through your fear. Those steps are the classrooms that we choose—the roles. So the trick is really to be increasingly faithful to the role—not because it means anything, but because it is a classroom for you.

I urge you to study Lesson 184—paragraphs nine through eleven—in this regard. The material in these paragraphs is extremely important in clarifying this major issue: If the world is an illusion, why should I pay any attention to what I am doing here? These paragraphs in Lesson 184 make very clear why you should pay attention. Paragraph eleven, for example:

(W-pl.184.11) Use all the little names and symbols which delineate the world of darkness. [Again, these are all the symbols of your work, all the symbols of your personal life, all the roles that you are in: use them, don't separate from them.] **Yet accept them not as your reality.** [This again is the split vision: you are still a mother, you are still a father, you are still a child, you are still a friend, you are still a

spouse, you are still a lover, you are still whatever your profession is. But you realize that this is a classroom.] **The Holy Spirit uses all of them, but He does not forget creation has one Name, one meaning, and a single Source which unifies all things within Itself. Use all the names the world bestows on them but for convenience, yet do not forget they share the Name of God along with you.**

This is a reflection of the point that I have been making frequently during this workshop: this is a very, very simple course. The reflection of the unity of Heaven in this world is the idea that everything and everyone serves the same single purpose. We are not united here in form at all, but we *are* united in purpose, which then becomes the reflection of the union that we all share in Christ and with God. There is no way in this world of knowing what that oneness is like, but we can be the reflection of it when we realize that everything and everyone shares the same purpose. That is what you remember when your mind leaves the world, goes back to the mind (which is what the miracle does), so then you remember: "Ah! This is all the same! This is all a learning opportunity for me that I have chosen so that I can remember why I am here, and I now have chosen Jesus as my teacher. I am not here to do all the things that the world thinks I am here to do; I am here to remember Who I am as God's one Son. And the way that I will remember that, is by taking certain classes. This situation I am in right now is one of those classes. It may seem to be a very painful class, but it can be a helpful class if I choose the right teacher. That will save me a thousand years, because it will undo a big chunk of my guilt. And I will realize that this is the way that I will learn that *my* interests are not separate from anyone else, especially those people that I am involved with right at this moment."