

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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

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Part VI

What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers? Gentleness (M-4.IV)

The first paragraph of this section does not actually talk about gentleness. It talks about harm. The reason for this is that the undoing of the negative is what establishes something as positive. The Course says that love in this world is impossible because the whole world was made as a defense against love and an attack upon love. It also says that "what is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). It follows thus that everything in this world is murder. The closest we can get to love in this world is to undo the barriers to love. And what undoes the barriers to love is forgiveness. The workbook also says that forgiveness is this world's equivalent of Heaven's Love (W-pl.60.1:4-5). Forgiveness undoes the harmfulness that is at the core of the ego's thought system: the belief that we harmed God, which is an absolutely insane and arrogant belief. We then project harmfulness onto God, and now we believe God is going to harm us. Next, we deny this whole massive thought system of terror (the thought, however, still remains deep within us) and project it outside our minds, so that we now live in a world of harm. Remember, "what is not love is murder," and no love is possible in this world.

(1:1) Harm is impossible for God's teachers.

"God's teachers" here refers to *advanced* teachers—those who have already advanced to complete trust in the Love of God within all of us. They trust because they know that power within us makes all of us safe. They are not misled by the ego's claim that the power of God will destroy us. Once we recognize that, we have undone the belief in sin, which is the belief that we have attacked God and destroyed the Love of Heaven. And once those thoughts are gone, we can no longer project what is no longer within our minds. If hate is in my mind, then hate is exactly what will be projected onto my world. If only love is in my mind, then only love will be projected out.

(1:2) They can neither harm nor be harmed.

In the eyes of the world, Jesus was harmed on the cross. And so Christianity for two thousand years has built itself up on the misperception that Jesus was harmed—that he suffered and died on the cross. As he explains in the text, however, all of that resulted from a basic misinterpretation coming from the apostles' fear (T-6.I.14:2-3). If there is no body and the body is only a lifeless puppet, the body does not suffer pain, the body does not die. The *mind* chooses to suffer and then projects that thought onto the body, which follows accordingly. Since Jesus had no *thoughts* of suffering, or guilt, or fear, and he knew who he was, he had nothing in his mind to project onto his body except love. But the fear and the guilt of those around him caused them to perceive him as suffering and to perceive God as a wrathful God, Who demanded vengeance for our sins against Him and demanded that His only Son be sacrificed. So

again, Jesus' body was not harmed. It looked as if it could be. Actually, we could say that his body was harmed, but *he* was not harmed because he knew he was not his body.

(1:3-4) Harm is the outcome of judgment. It is a dishonest act that follows a dishonest thought.

The original judgment and the original dishonesty is that I have attacked God and taken His place—that I actually have done it. I not only have *thought* of accomplishing it, but I *have* accomplished it. And the world seems to attest to the fact that I have indeed pulled it off, because this is a place, as the workbook says, where God cannot enter (W-p11.3.2:4). That is why the world was made. God is in our minds (represented there by the Holy Spirit), and the world was made as a defense against the mind. We are all like puppets whose arms and legs and bodies, etc., are manipulated by a puppeteer above the stage. But none of us is aware of the puppeteer. And our whole purpose in setting up everything in this way has been to keep the true power and function of the mind out of our awareness. So it appears to us as if our bodies and brains act on their own, independently of anything else. That is the magic trick that the ego has pulled on us. The original judgment that I have attacked God and sinned against Him continues to be projected over and over again.

(1:5) It is a verdict of guilt upon a brother, and therefore on oneself.

So if I attack you, which is what harm is, I am saying you are the guilty one, not me. However, I first attacked myself when I said that *I* am guilty and sinful. But I cannot bear to look at the extent of my self-hatred, and therefore I push it down in my mind so that I don't see it. Then I project it out onto you, saying that you are the guilty one, the one responsible for how terrible I feel about myself. It's not my fault. You have done it to me. And so I have transferred my guilt onto your body and, in so doing, have attacked you.

(1:6-7) It is the end of peace and the denial of learning. It demonstrates the absence of God's curriculum, and its replacement by insanity.

Harm or attack is obviously the end of peace—none of us could maintain that we are peaceful when we are attacking. And if I am not peaceful, I cannot learn, because the only real learning is the learning that comes from listening to the Holy Spirit. The Course says in many places that the ego cannot learn. What *can* learn, though, is the part of the mind that listens to the Holy Spirit. But once I attack and make attack real, I blot out the Holy Spirit's presence from my awareness. At that point, I cannot learn anymore, because I have already judged what reality and truth are, which means I have closed the door on any other kind of learning. I have already said that attack, separation, and guilt are reality and the truth. At that point, my mind is closed and I cannot hear any other voice. I have denied the curriculum of the Holy Spirit: the Atonement, or forgiveness.

(1:8) No teacher of God but must learn,—and fairly early in his training,—that harmfulness completely obliterates his function from his awareness.

In the manual for teachers, a section on the peace of God talks about how we lose the peace of God when we get angry (M-20.3:3-4). It is as if a curtain drops. The peace of God can come only from the Holy Spirit, Who is the Voice of love and unity. Attack, obviously, is a voice of disunity. No one would believe that he is joined with someone he has just hit over the head! All of us must be afraid of God's peace if we identify with the ego. So if we do not want God's peace, we give it away by attacking

someone. But then we deny that we are the ones who gave peace away, and we accuse another person of stealing it from us. And that justifies our attack.

(1:9-12) It [harmfulness] will make him confused, fearful, angry and suspicious. It will make the Holy Spirit's lessons impossible to learn. Nor can God's Teacher [the Holy Spirit] be heard at all, except by those who realize that harm can actually achieve nothing. No gain can come of it.

This is another way of understanding the central lesson of the Course, which is that I must recognize that attacking someone else does not pay for me. Jesus is rather clever in the Course, you know. He does not tell us to do what he says because he says we should do it. He says rather, "Do what I say because it will make you feel better." And he tells us as well that we do not understand what will make us feel better. We confuse pain with joy, and imprisonment with freedom—we always get it upside down. And so it could be said that the purpose of the Course is to help us discern the difference between what will make us really joyful and what will give us pain, because we don't understand. As he explains in the text, we believe there is a difference between pleasure and pain, which he uses to show us how insane we are (T-19.IV-B.12). What we believe will give us pleasure really does the opposite, because it is an attempt to deny its opposite, which is pain.

If I believe anything in this world has the power to give me pleasure or make me happy, I am making the world real. And if I make the world real, I am making separation real. If I make separation real, I am making my guilt real. And my guilt is the source of all my pain. So whether I say something is pleasurable or painful, it is opposite sides of the same mistake. Both are predicated on the premise that the world is real.

A derivative of this is the belief that attack will get me what I want, so attack is pleasurable. And I will avoid the pain of my self-hatred by attacking you—by making you responsible for my pain. That is why everyone gets angry. Anger is not a basic human emotion in the sense that it is something we cannot control. Anger is the basic emotion of the ego. It is anger that keeps the ego thought system alive.

One of the purposes of the Course is to help us realize that anger will not make us feel good, it will not get us what we want. We think anger gets us off the hook and allows us to avoid confronting our own guilt because we have put it onto someone else. We are not aware that when we attack someone else, it makes us feel even guiltier. The very guilt we are trying to remove by projecting it onto someone else through attack makes us feel guiltier. That is a vicious circle, a cycle that just keeps repeating over and over again.

The manual says that sickness will disappear when we are able to say we have no further need of it (M-5.II). The same thing is true of anger. Anger, as a problem for me, will disappear when I can recognize that I have no need of it, that it really will not get me what I want. What I really want is the peace of God, and I cannot have it when I get angry or when I attack someone. When that is clear to me, then I will have no trouble making the decision.

There is a wonderful line that closes Chapter 23 that says, "Who with the Love of God upholding him could find the choice of miracles or murder hard to make?" (T-23.IV.9:8). The problem is that we do not know that there is a difference. And so with the Love of God, with the Love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit next to us, we could look very clearly at the choice we have between forgiveness, which is the miracle, and a grievance or attack, which is murder. We could see both of these choices clearly and understand

their effects. And then we would have no trouble making the choice. But the ego keeps the clarity of that choice obscure and hidden from us so we don't see it. And then we believe that getting angry is okay. We may say that physically murdering others is not okay, but *thinking* it is okay, or yelling and screaming at others is okay. We don't understand, as we discussed earlier, that it makes no difference whether I actually physically kill you or I simply *think* about killing you. The guilt will still remain. I cannot think of attack or war and be peaceful, because they are mutually exclusive states.

And even just wishing that someone were not around is the same thing. We are still saying that this person is a pain in the neck. This person is obnoxious. This person has interfered with our peace. It's no different. As the Course says, there is no difference between a slight twinge of annoyance and intense fury (W-pl.21.2:5). But the point is that Jesus fully expects us to be angry. We could say that the goal of the Course is not that we have no anger, although that would be the *final* goal, but rather that we not justify it. The Course never says, "Don't get angry." But it does say anger is never justified, and there is a big, big difference. Otherwise we get caught in the trap of saying, "I've been a student of *A Course in Miracles* for seven and a half days (weeks, years, or seven and a half decades) and I'm still getting angry. What am I doing wrong? I'm failing the Course!"

We are failing the Course if we make a big deal about it. Our reaction to our anger should simply be to say, "Oh, I got angry. What else is new?" So the idea is not to be without our anger or our attack thoughts, but rather not to make a big deal about them, not to take them seriously. And above all, not to justify them.

As we practice the Course, we will become more aware of our murderous thoughts, and so on one level, it will seem that we have only gotten worse. But those murderous thoughts were always there—we just had them covered over. And so we start uncovering them—it's like peeling off the layers of an onion. And then we are horrified at what we see. That is why one of the Course's essential points, in terms of its practice, is that we not do this on our own. We do it with the love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit beside us. Then when we look at the awful mess inside us that is in everyone's mind, we are not quite as horrified.

When we start getting in touch with those deeper levels of guilt, attack, and murder within our minds, it is a good sign. But that is when the going can get rough because we are looking at what we have pledged never to look at, as the Course says in the text (T-19.IV-D.6:1-3). And it is not a pretty sight. The Course means it literally: "What is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). If we consider that the whole world was made as an attack on love, then we are left with the inevitable conclusion that this world is really a place of murder.

(2:1-2) Therefore [when we let go of harm], God's teachers are wholly gentle. They need the strength of gentleness, for it is in this that the function of salvation becomes easy.

It becomes easy because we don't do anything. So what does it mean to be a teacher of God? It means that we don't do anything. Life becomes very, very easy because everything is done through us. The work comes in undoing all the barriers to that easy flow of love through us.

Jesus' life was very easy—he didn't do anything. There was no strain in what he did. It didn't matter to him whether he took a nice walk in the morning or was crucified. If we say that there is a difference—as obviously we would be tempted to say—it is because we think there is a difference. If we think there is a

difference, we are making the world and the body real. But there is no difference. When we really learn this lesson, life becomes very, very easy.

(2:3-5) To those who would do harm, it [the function of salvation—to forgive] is impossible. To those to whom harm has no meaning, it is merely natural. What choice but this has meaning to the sane?

The choice, namely, is to be harmful or to be gentle. That is all it is. It is the same as saying that the only choice is to listen to the ego or to the Holy Spirit, "to be hostage to the ego or host to God," as the Course says (T-11.II.7:1; T-15.III.5:1).

(2:6) Who chooses hell when he perceives a way to Heaven?

Of course the problem is that we don't perceive forgiveness as the way to Heaven. We don't perceive that the problem has nothing to do with the world. The problem has to do with how we *think* about the world. Forgiveness does not do anything in the world, but it does undo the guilt and the fear in our mind.

(2:7) And who would choose the weakness that must come from harm in place of the unfailing, all-encompassing and limitless strength of gentleness?

Obviously the world does not look at it that way. The world always gets weakness and strength upside down. To believe that our own strength, physical and/or mental, is what will protect us and is needed to protect us in the world, is really to reaffirm our own weakness as an ego. Only an ego would believe that it has to be protected in the world, which was the lesson of the crucifixion. In the eyes of the world, Jesus looked weak because he did not defend himself and ended up in a denigrating death. But the world was looking at everything upside down.

Strength comes from the quiet acceptance of the Love of God within us. When we are identified with that Love, we are perfectly safe. From that position, the body and the world are seen for exactly what they are: flimsy veils that are attempting to keep the light of truth away from us.

(2:8) The might of God's teachers lies in their gentleness, for they have understood their evil thoughts came neither from God's Son nor his Creator.

Our question then is, "From where did they come?" They came from a nonexistent mind. The only truth, the only reality is the Mind of Christ and the Mind of God. Within that Mind there cannot be a separation thought or an attack thought. So that means those thoughts came from a nonexistent mind. And once it is clear that there are no evil thoughts in me—there is just a *belief* that there are evil thoughts in me—then there is no sin, no guilt, and no fear. And therefore there is no need to defend myself by building up a fortress, which is what the world and the body are.

(2:9-10) Thus did they join their thoughts with Him Who is their Source. And so their will, which always was His Own, is free to be itself.

When the Course speaks of "freedom" or "free will," there are two ways of understanding it. On the level of the world, there is free will, or freedom of choice—the choice between God and the ego. Once we have made up a world of duality, with something to choose between, then we have freedom of choice to choose between the Holy Spirit's thought system and the ego's thought system.

But in Heaven there is no free will in the sense of choosing, because there is nothing to choose between. The state of Heaven is a state of perfect unity and perfect oneness. At this level, freedom of will means that God's Will is free despite all the ego's attempts to imprison it—the ego thought system is an attempt to imprison God's Will and therefore to imprison our own will as well.

The Atonement principle teaches that we cannot be in prison. Therefore we cannot be freed from prison, because nothing has happened. I just *believe* my will has been imprisoned. And when I awaken from the dream, I will realize that being in prison was just a dream. "And so their will, which always was His Own, is free to be itself." My will is simply allowed to be what it always was and is. It has been totally unaffected by the ego's thoughts of attack.