

A Course in Miracles:
A Hope-filled Spirituality

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Part III

The lie of the world is that symbols mean something, and the meaning is that they differentiate. That is the lie of symbols. That is the meaning symbols have for the ego. The purpose of any symbol is to bring us back to the source. If it is the wrong-minded source, then we want to change our minds. If it is the right-minded source, then we want to strengthen it and share the love that comes from that right-minded decision. That is what makes this course so difficult. There is a section called "Salvation without Compromise" (T-23.III). If we truly want to be saved, which means saved from our decision for guilt, we must include everyone in our decision. This course is uncompromising. The tone of it is very gentle, and the experience of Jesus as our teacher is very loving, kind, and patient, but he is uncompromising. Jesus told Helen in a message, which is really for all of us: "I will love you and honor you and maintain complete respect for what you have made, but I will not uphold it unless it is true" (T-4.III.7:7). He does not uphold anything we say or believe. This course negates everything we think is true. Jesus respects what we think because it comes from the power of our decision. If we do not respect the power of our decision to choose the ego, we will never respect that power to choose the Holy Spirit, but Jesus will not uphold our choice for the ego because it is not true.

This course is uncompromising in that way. It is sweet, gentle, loving, and kind, but is it ever uncompromising and clear! Many students are tempted to fudge it, thinking that Jesus doesn't really mean what he says, or they fudge it by ignoring certain things they read. So when Jesus tells us our eyes don't see, we will make believe we didn't see that. Right, got it? Eyes don't see. We will make believe we don't see the statement that says our eyes don't see. We will see what we want to see.

Thus, in practicing this course, we should still share the kindness and gentleness of our teacher, but we should be uncompromising in not attributing cause to anything external. We are *never* upset for the reason we think (W-pl.5). We think we are upset because And we all have a long list of "becausees." We can just as easily say we think we are happy because ...

which means we are never happy for the reasons we think. The world lies. The world was made to lie. "Nothing so blinding as perception of form" (T-22.III.6:7). Form lies. It blinds us. The symbol blinds us to the source. That is why: "Nothing so blinding as perception of form." That is why we should not believe people who tell us that two plus two is four. They don't understand. They may help us with a bodily problem, but they will not help us get home. They may offer a particular form of magic that will help alleviate pain, or they may tell us how to get from place A to place B. There is nothing wrong with that, but it won't get us home. What will get us home is asking help of someone, but not taking the help seriously. We take the help seriously on the level of its effect on our body or the body of loved ones, but we do not take it seriously in the sense of its being real. Two plus two is not four; it is five, because nothing in this world makes any sense, especially the fact that it seems to make sense.

The world is based on laws that come from the belief in nothingness, which says there is a separation thought that gives rise to a world of time and space governed by different kinds of laws: the laws of physics, chemistry, biology, psychology, human development, etc. All of them are derived from a belief that time and space are real, which is derived from the thought that the separation from God is real. All of this is really a belief in nothingness—and nothing will come from nothing. Everything in this world is a product of our thought, just as the quantum physicists say. What the quantum physicists don't usually say, though, is that the thought is guilt.

We are told that the world "is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt" (T-13.in.2:2). The world is a "delusional system"—meaning it is insane—"of those made mad by guilt." Guilt is what made this world and guilt is what sustains this world. Forgiveness is the only thing that will undo the guilt. Forgiveness says there is nothing out there to forgive—you did not do anything to me. What that translates to is that you may have hurt my body or the bodies of my loved ones, but you did not take the peace of God away from me because that is in my mind and only I have the power to take the peace of God away from me. But when I say you took it away from me because you beat me, abused me, humiliated me, abandoned me, insulted me, stole from me, or whatever, I am saying I do not have the power to take the peace away from me. I do not have a mind. *You* have the power. In fact, you have the power and are utilizing it. *You* took the peace of God away from me. That is the lie.

The two-plus-two-equals-four world would tell us that yes, this is what people did, and look at the effect it had. It had an effect on a body, but there is no body. The body is a projection of a thought that never happened. I keep coming back to that because that is the only way out of the questioner's mess. So if you all want to help, you have to tell him that what I am telling you is true. That is the only way out of the mess. There is no hope in this world. The world was made *not* to offer hope. Why? Because hope lies only in the decision-making mind. That is where the hope is because that is where the problem is. When we take ourselves from the

mind and put ourselves in the dream as a dream figure, as a body in a world, we are making ourselves mindless, which means we are cutting off the only source of hope there is.

This course, to reiterate, is the only thing I know that offers true hope because it takes us back to the mind by teaching us why we made the world in the first place, why we continue to come into this world, why we continue to argue for this world, why we even think *A Course in Miracles* is about living in this world and that Jesus will tell us something. What in God's name would he tell us except that we *are* God's Name? That he would tell us. He does not talk to us. That is an auditory hallucination. It could be a helpful one if it leads people beyond the hallucination so that when they grow up they become like him—as in Helen's poem "A Jesus Prayer": people look at you and see Jesus instead of you (*The Gifts of God*, pp. 82-83). Then the voice is helpful because it leads beyond itself.

God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus do not speak in specifics. Love is non-specific. We translate it into something specific. That can be a right-minded symbol and be very helpful, but we need to use the symbol to get back to the source. Recall the lines in Lesson 161: "Hate is specific. There must be a thing to be attacked" (W-pl.161.7:1-2). An earlier line states, "Thus were specifics made" (W-pl.161.3:1). That refers to why the world was made. We made a world of specifics to keep us rooted in a thought system of specifics. There is a specific Son who attacked His specific Father—two specifics now.

That is why the Course says, "The world was made as an attack on God" (W-pll.3.2:1). It is a projection of the thought of attack—that we are better off outside the Love of God. Therefore we made a world the opposite of Heaven. We made a self the opposite of the Christ that we are. Heaven is abstract, meaning it is non-specific and non-dualistic, and so we make specific worlds, specific bodies, specific problems, specific needs, hearing specific voices telling us specific things—all of which make the world of specifics real. We will never get home that way. We use the specifics to lead us to the non-specific. That is different, but *do not confuse symbol with source*.

We are taught in the Course that the purpose of time is to teach us there is no time. The purpose of specifics is to teach us there are no specifics in Heaven. The purpose of being in the world is to learn there is no world. The right-minded purpose of being in a body is to learn that we are not bodies. The workbook says over and over again, "I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me" (W-pl.201-220). God created us as spirit. And when we believe we are something other than that, it is because we believe we are a separated mind. We are always a separated mind, never a separated body. That is the illusion, the lie. "Nothing so blinding as perception of form." Perception sees the symbol. It sees the form and stops there. It does not go beyond the form. This course teaches us to use words, bodies, and relationships as a way of getting beyond them. *Do not confuse symbol with source*.

A symbol represents something or symbolizes something that cannot be expressed in any other way. Love cannot be expressed here. Love is perfect oneness. The Course says that forgiveness is the reflection of Heaven's love. It is the earthly equivalent of love, but it is not love. The reflection of the oneness of Heaven's love is the sameness of the Sonship, and in that recognition that we are all the same there is no judgment. How can one judge what is the same? One can judge only what is different. "Love makes no comparisons" (W-pl.195.4:2) because love is perfect oneness. The ego's love compares all the time, *a//*the time. That is how you know that it is the ego.

Once again, what makes this course difficult is its uncompromising nature, but that is also where the hope of this course lies; that is where salvation is; and that is why this takes a lot of hard work. There are a number of passages that are very comforting. One of them tells us: "Fear not that you will be abruptly lifted up and hurled into reality" (T-16.VI.8:1). It does not happen like that. There is an even more powerful passage in Chapter 27: "So fearful is the dream, so seeming real, he could not waken to reality without the sweat of terror and a scream of mortal fear, unless a gentler dream preceded his awaking, and allowed his calmer mind to welcome, not to fear, the Voice that calls with love to waken him ..." (T-27.VII.13:4). We have to proceed in steps. We do not go from the self to the Self. The self becomes transformed. A few times in the Course Jesus tells us that the Holy Spirit does not take our special relationships away from us, but transforms them (see for example, T-17.IV.2:3).

We are transformed from a guilty, angry, depressed self to a peaceful self. Our perception is transformed from seeing everyone as different, some good and some bad, to the perception that sees everyone as the same. It is still within the illusion, but it is the way out of the illusion. That is what the Course calls the happy dream (T-18.V). It has nothing to do with anything physical. The happy dreams are those gentle dreams that precede our awakening, leading us to the point from which we can awaken because we are no longer so afraid. We are gradually transformed from a wrong-minded self to a right-minded self. The wrong-minded self attacks, judges, and differentiates. The right-minded self forgives, looks beyond sin to error, and beyond error to the truth. It sees everyone as the same. The right-minded self does not judge, and should there be an act of judgment, the right-minded self does not judge that decision. In a right-minded state we are patient, gentle, and kind with our own egos, which allows us to be patient, gentle, and kind with everyone else's ego. Being more patient and kind with others' egos reinforces our patience and gentleness with ourselves.

This takes a lot of hard work and practice. We have to look at every ego thought we have and not justify any of them or feel guilty about them, or punish ourselves, no matter how large or small the thought may be. The Course says twice that a slight twinge of annoyance is a mask over the face of intense fury (W-pl.21.2; M-17.4).

We come to understand an ego thought as a defense. We feel guilty because we pushed love away. This left a vacuum in us, a lack we have to fill by taking from the outside, either by developing special love relationships that meet our needs, or by stealing others' innocence by attacking them, thereby giving them our sinfulness and getting their innocence because it is *one or the other*. All of this occurs simply because we became afraid of love, because in the presence of love we do not exist. We therefore push love away to protect ourselves. We preserve this self by taking our sin and guilt and projecting them onto other people. That is what we do all throughout the day.

We realize there is a purpose in getting angry, making judgments, and feeling sorry for ourselves. None of this just happens. The reason or the purpose is to escape from the terrible burden of guilt by not seeing it in ourselves but it in others. "Hate is specific" (W-pl.161.7:1). There must be someone out there we can hate, and since there is no one out there, we have to make a person up, or make something up. That is why we walk this world always being angry, always making judgments, always being anxious, always being fearful, always making comparisons—always seeking something outside that would fill up this hole we believe is inside.

The ego tells us that if we go inside, we will disappear into the Heart of God and there will be no more self. That is why, again, we need gentle steps. We do not go from the self to the Self; we transform the sense of self that we have. The process of doing that involves learning to see everyone as the same, and then forgiving ourselves when we do not see the sameness but instead see everyone as different.

Remember, this is not a course in doing; it is a course in undoing. We just keep looking, and if we keep looking, we will learn over time not to take the ego so seriously. We will learn not to give the ego power over us. We will realize that we have power over the ego and we will be much more tolerant of our mistakes. We will say, "I just became afraid. This is not a big deal. It does not mean I am failing the Course." There is only one ego, one ego thought system, so we are always doing the same thing over and over again. It is the attitude that we have toward the ego that is important.