

"I Will Forgive, but Never Forget"

Excerpts from the Academy class held at the
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Part IV

Q: You said that somebody could hurt the body. Would it not be with my permission then?

A: On the level of the mind, sure, because it is your dream. But on the level of our experience in this world, not necessarily. For example, you could be driving on the freeway when the brakes on the car behind you fail and it crashes into your car. I am saying it is part of your dream, but on the level of our experience here, it would not be that way. I am trying to help people avoid feeling guilty because they think they made things happen to them. Now their mind certainly did, because this is a dream; and not only is it a dream, but it is a dream that has already happened, so they are reviewing it.

Q: The randomness of somebody running into me feels worse than the thought that there's something in my consciousness that's not cleaned up yet.

A: Again, on the one level, yes, absolutely, it is your dream, and within that dream you have chosen to re-experience that event. But you do not want the self you experience yourself to be to feel guilty—as though your unhealed thoughts or your guilt attracted this to happen. A lot of New Age people talk like that. It is really a confusion of levels. You as a person had nothing to do with it. The person you experience as yourself driving in your car had nothing to do with the other person rear-ending you. In terms of the mind of which you as a person are a dream figure, it is entirely different. That mind chose the color of your eyes, your gender, your hair, your family, the car that you are driving, and so on. On a practical level, though, that is not helpful. In most people that would just be a source of added guilt. People watch a news program about an earthquake or a bomb falling someplace and they feel they are a part of that—it is their dream and they are responsible. That is a confusion of levels.

On a practical level, you want to stay where you are, which is your experience of yourself. When the car rams you—now that it is a fact in your dream that a car has rammed you—what is important is with whom will you interpret that event: the ego or the Holy Spirit? That is much more important, and that is much more practically helpful. If you practice the lessons on that level, then in the end, it will be clearer to you that yes, this is something your mind has chosen. So now you have another chance to look at a situation like that, but you can look at it differently. Rather than see yourself as a victim, you can now see this as a classroom in which you can learn that while your body can be hurt, you cannot be hurt, and that you are not your body. It does not matter whether you have a clear trip home on the freeway, or

you are in bumper-to-bumper traffic, or you have an accident. You can be at peace regardless. But once the event occurs, what is helpful is not why or how it happened, or who chose that it happen, but with whom you look at what happened. That is what is helpful. Otherwise, you skip over steps and end up as a metaphysical idiot, where you are being metaphysically correct, but are shooting yourself in the foot and obscuring the waters. Instead, you can keep it all very simple and realize, okay, this happened; now do I look at it with Jesus or do I look at it with the ego? One will bring you peace and the other will not bring you peace.

Thus, to be metaphysically correct, you would say, "Yes, this is my dream. And yes, on a level I am not aware of, I chose this. But on a level that I am aware of right now, I have a choice: through whose eyes will I look at this?" It is always good to refer back to the tiny, mad idea because it is helpful as a model. Once the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God seemed to happen, to agonize over how it happened and why misses the whole point and will not get you anywhere. Once the tiny, mad idea appears, it is much more important to say, "Do I look at it through the eyes of the ego, which means I take it seriously, or do I look at it through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, which means I remember to laugh?" If that is what we choose, then the tiny, mad idea disappears. If we agonize over it—why and how it happened—we are just making it more and more real, which means we are taking it seriously, which means we have already listened to the ego.

To say it once more, it is much more helpful to accept the classroom as it appears to us, without worrying or wondering why it is happening. That really is a dead end, and will get you nowhere. All that will help is the thought that now that it happened, do I make it a source of anger, anguish, and conflict? Or do I see it as just another way of learning that I could be at peace regardless of what happens in the world? That is much better. On a practical level it will work. It will really make you peaceful, at which point you will not care why it happened.

It is enough to say that the very fact that we are in this world is a mistake. Therefore practically everything we do here is a mistake, so why compound the mistake by agonizing over it or trying to analyze it? That is a wonderful example of what *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet also says: Do not make the error real (S-2.I.3:4). Again, it is much more helpful to say, "Yes, this is a mistake, and now how am I going to look at it?" Remember, again, the problem was not the tiny, mad idea. The mistake was remembering not to laugh at it (T-27.VIII.6:2). That is such an important line, which is why I quote it in almost every workshop. The problem was not the tiny, mad idea. The problem was not that you got rammed from behind on the freeway. The problem is, do I take it seriously or do I remember to laugh at it? That is the only issue on the table.

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Q: I am thinking that it's better not to have thoughts in my mind that someone is going to hit me from the back or that someone is going to break into my house and steal things. I simply don't choose this kind of thing so this doesn't happen to me. I'm choosing the right thing in my mind; I'm choosing the right thoughts for things to happen the way I think is better for me.

A: The problem then is that you think it is important that right things happen. Then you want to choose

the right thoughts so right things happen. There aren't any things!

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Q: The way I've been thinking is that if something wrong happens, I say, oh well, I chose the wrong thought. That's it.

A: But that's the same mistake. Just say something wrong happened, but maybe it was right. And what difference does it make? I could be peaceful. You see, whenever you take anything in the world seriously, you are gluing yourself to the body and the world. The shift in emphasis from what happened to with whom you look at what happened is the shift from the body to the mind, from the mindless to the mindful. The ways of looking originate in your mind, with the ego or the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 294, "My body is a wholly neutral thing," speaks to this in a very helpful way. Interestingly, at first glance this lesson seems to be saying the exact opposite of what the rest of the Course says. The Course says the world was made "as an attack on God" and that the body was made to be a limitation on love (W-pII.3.2:1; T-18.VIII.1). These are heavily ego-laden thoughts. The body is a parody of God's creation, a travesty of our Identity as Christ. These thoughts reflect the purpose of the world and the body. However, once we are here in a body; once we are driving on the freeway and there is an accident, the body, the accident, the situation, and the relationship are neutral, awaiting our choice for the ego or the Holy Spirit. Thus, it doesn't matter anymore why it happened.

So worrying and trying to analyze why it happened gets us rooted in the past all over again. Remember, the whole idea is to stay in the present, the holy instant, not to be in the world of linear time, which is to be in the heart of the ego thought system. To wonder why we caused this is a statement about the past. What is important is that we are choosing right now to be either with the ego or the Holy Spirit. That is meaningful. At that point, the traffic accident, the cancer that the doctor just told you that you have, the war that is being waged in the Middle East become neutral. The relationship you are in is neutral. It does not matter why it was made or how it arose; what matters is what you do with it right now.

Each of these circumstances now is neutral, awaiting your choice as to whether you will look at it through the eyes of the ego, which means taking it seriously, giving it power and reality, or you will look at it through the eyes of the Holy Spirit and then laugh, in the sense of seeing that it is silly to think this has any power over your peace. In other words, you could be in an accident and still be peaceful. Your body may be hurt, your car may be hurt, the other person may be hurt, but you could still be at peace by remembering to laugh at the tiny, mad idea that is expressed now in this form.

Here is what this lesson says:

(W-pII.294.1:1-5) I am a Son of God. And can I be another thing as well? Did God create the mortal and corruptible? What use has God's beloved Son for what must die? And yet a neutral thing does not see

death, for thoughts of fear are not invested there, nor is a mockery of love bestowed upon it.

Even though the body is a mockery of love—it was made to be a mockery of love—once we are here, we do not have to add to that. We now can see it as a classroom, in which it serves a holy purpose. It was made to serve an unholy purpose, to be a mockery of love and of the Son of God, but now that we are in it, it does not have to be like that anymore. It can now be a classroom in which we learn we are not a body, and that the thought of separation, which is the original mockery of love, no longer is operational in our mind because we can now see our body as the same as every other body. We all have the same purpose. That is the difference.

(W-pII.294.1:6-10) Its neutrality protects it while it has a use. And afterwards, without a purpose, it is laid aside. It is not sick nor old nor hurt. It is but functionless, unneeded and cast off. Let me not see it more than this today; of service for a while and fit to serve, to keep its usefulness while it can serve, and then to be replaced for greater good.

Even though it was made to attack God and His Son, it can now serve a different purpose. It is now nothing. "It is not sick nor old nor hurt." It has no function. Once you have given it the function of being a classroom and you learn the lessons, you do not need it anymore. Again, to agonize about why the body was made, why you were born into this world and into this family—why this, why that?—serves only the ego's purpose. The ego loves that. Remember the line in the text, "The ego analyzes; the Holy Spirit accepts" (T-11.V.13:1). Accept that this is what the situation is now and that it is a classroom. From whom will you learn: the ego or the Holy Spirit? This will simplify your life greatly. It will make you a nice person again!

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Q: So thought is useless.

A: Exactly right. To turn Descartes' famous statement upside down, "I think, therefore I am not." Then there is a line near the end of the text that says, "Salvation can be seen as nothing more than the escape from concepts. It does not concern itself with content of the mind, but with the simple statement that it thinks" (T-31.V.14:3-4). Thinking is the problem. That is one way of talking about the original separation thought. The Son of God had a thought that he thought was his own. Instead of being part of God's Thought, which is non-thought, he had a thought. Then he worshipped the thought and took it seriously, which is what worshipping means; and then he built a whole world around that thought and just kept thinking and thinking.

The whole purpose of thinking about this course is to learn to not think about it. Let it think through you. That is why the analysis of the ego or the analysis of the situation just does not work and is so counterproductive. Analysis gets you rooted in the situation; you take it seriously. You do not analyze something unless you think it is serious. When you smile at something, you are saying it has no power.

It's nothing. The problem, thus, is thinking.

That gets back to forgiving and forgetting without thinking about the past because it does not exist. And all thinking has to do with the past. If you think about what you think about and what you are doing when you are thinking, you realize it is all about the past, your past learning that you now apply to something here. And it is all a defense, designed to lead you absolutely nowhere, under the illusion that you are getting somewhere. Remember, this is not a course aimed at your brain. That is really interesting and a kind of paradox about this course, because it is written on a relatively high intellectual level so that your brain has to work if you are going to read this. But when you really begin to understand it, you realize it is trying to lead you past your brain to your mind where there are no thoughts except the ego thought and the Holy Spirit's Thought, which are really not thoughts as we usually think of thoughts.