

"I Will Forgive, but Never Forget"

Excerpts from the Academy class held at the
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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part V Questions

Q: At the end of our classes when you close with a reading and then several minutes of silence, I notice that when it first happens, it's very peaceful. Then the thought comes in and there's a build-up: Okay, what am I going to do next? Am I going to go home? Am I going to go to lunch? And I can hear papers rustling beside me; there begins to be a buzz going on because that peace is almost too threatening.

A: I think that's helpful. Everyone experiences that. People are terrified of being still and being thought-less, in the good sense of that word. The fear is that if we are thought-less, then the Thought of God will come. We therefore substitute our thoughts, which is what we all did at the beginning. Then we start thinking, thinking about where we are going to go to eat and with whom, or what this workshop meant and what this Course means, and so on. The whole idea of this course is to lead you beyond thought, and it uses thinking as a way of doing that, because we think we can think, and we think we have brains that are important. Recall the wonderful line I quote every so often, "You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is" (T-18.IV.7:5). Well, understanding is thinking.

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Q: Isn't that the same thing as Buddhist meditation, where you sit and just quiet your mind? You quiet your mind to go beyond thinking, and at that point, you can reach enlightenment.

A: *A Course in Miracles* adds to that by helping us understand why we don't do that, and how resistant we are to that. The workbook lessons—the early ones especially—can be thought of as similar to Buddhist mind-training exercises, in the sense of watching your thoughts. What the Course helps us see is that there is a reason thoughts come to us when we are trying to be quiet. They don't just appear; they are purposive.

All thinking serves the same purpose, which is to distract us from the truth. Remember that line about concepts: the problem is not what you think; the problem is that you are thinking (T-31.V.14:3-4). Even more to the point, the problem is that we chose thinking because we are afraid of non-thought. Analyzing our thoughts, their symbolism, how they interact, and what they mean might be fun to do and may be a nice intellectual exercise, but it will not get us home. Again, the problem is not what we think, but the fact that we are thinking, which then means the problem is why we chose to think. The answer is

we chose to think in order to keep the ego alive and well, and keep the Holy Spirit's thought-less Thought out of awareness. That is what the Atonement is: a thought-less Thought. Thinking keeps that Thought out of awareness.

Looking with the Holy Spirit suspends judgment. There is the line that says, "Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. ... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-pII.1.4:1-3). Asking the Holy Spirit means that you do nothing but look at your ego, wait patiently for your fear to dissipate, and not judge, which then means there is no guilt. You do not use dirty words like sin. That is what the Course means by "the little willingness" (T-18.IV). In that section in Chapter 18, Jesus is pleading with us not to do more than he asks us to do, which is just to look and wait and not judge. We want to do all kinds of other things.

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Let me go over what we have been talking about because I think it is extremely important and goes to the heart of what leads a lot of students of this course off on a detour. In one sense, the Course itself is responsible for this, as it is easily misunderstood in some places. While there is a lot of talk about the ego in the Course—much more than one finds in any other spirituality I know of—the purpose of talking about the ego in the way Jesus does in the Course is to have us learn not to take it seriously. The trap we fall into is that once we become aware of our ego and the egos in others, we kind of seize on it, because our guilt is so enormous, and then we try to analyze it. We need to remember that the purpose of the Course's talking about the ego is to get us beyond the ego, not to see it everywhere.

Remember also, the problem was not the tiny, mad idea and it was not the ego. The problem was and is how one looks at the tiny, mad idea, how one looks at the ego. When we study the ego and look at it in ourselves, we are almost always thrown back into the past. That is a clue that there is something wrong. The idea is to stay in the present moment as much as we can. There is a great deal in this course about living in the now, staying in the present moment, which is where we can choose the ego or the Holy Spirit as our teacher, where we can choose between the unholy instant and the holy instant. So we accept as a given whatever is on our plate because that is what's there. The question then is, what do I do about it now? Then see how tempting it is to try to analyze it or understand it, which ends up being a very subtle form of judgment. That only mires us further in it, instead of getting us unstuck from it.

More than anything else, the ego loves to be paid attention to. It loves to be studied, analyzed, explained, and understood, because that gives it a reality it does not have. The issue is getting back to the part of our mind that can choose which teacher to follow: one has us look at the ego and make it real, and the other has us look at the ego and smile. Remember, "my body is a wholly neutral thing" (W-pII.294)—my ego also is a wholly neutral thing. What is not neutral is how it was conceived, but once we are here as egos—and we all are—it becomes neutral. We use the ego either as a prison from which we will never escape (we try to imprison others by projecting our own guilt onto them) or as a classroom. But the idea is not to fight against the ego. Analyzing it is a way of fighting against it, trying to get hold of it. It does not matter how you got here; what matters is what you do once you are here. It does not matter why you had an accident on the freeway; what matters is how you handle it once it has happened. It does not matter why you have cancer; what matters is how you look at it right now. It does

not matter why there was an earthquake that devastated villages; what matters is how you look at it—whether you are sitting in front of your TV screen seeing it on the news or you are actually in the midst of it. To analyze it and say it was your bad thoughts or someone else's bad thoughts that made it happen, or God is punishing the people who are suffering, because they're living in a sinful country or something; all of that gives it a reality and a power it does not have. The only question is: This is what has happened. Now how do I look at it?—as a classroom or as a prison? That's it!

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Q: Say you're in a situation where you have to make a critical decision. You have suspended your judgment, you are listening for the Holy Spirit. Now nothing comes. You have no inspiration or feeling to go one way or the other.

A: Then what I would do in a situation like that is begin with the premise that there is an answer—all conflict has an answer; all problems have an answer. So I would go on the assumption that the answer is within, and all I have to do is let it out. If nothing is coming out, it's because I'm not ready to hear the answer. That's the end of it. Don't go in with a derrick. Don't try to get it out. Just say the answer is there because every problem has an answer, and if it is my dream and the problem I set up, there is an answer for it, but obviously I am not ready to hear it or accept it, and that's okay. That way you are being honest about what is going on, but you are not pressuring yourself. Just say you are not ready. If there is a deadline and you need an answer on the level of form, then just do the best you can. But if an answer is not forthcoming, don't be upset. Accept the fact that you are not ready to hear it, and that's okay. Remember, "Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. ... It merely looks, and waits, and [most importantly] judges not." So don't judge yourself if you don't get an answer, however the answer would come. The Holy Spirit speaks in any form that we can accept. But if nothing comes, it's only because we are too afraid of the answer, which means we are not ready yet, and that's okay.

When Jesus says this is an easy course and it is simple, he is referring to just that—that we are not asked to do a lot. In this case, less is more, because when we want to do more, we are messing it up. The Holy Spirit doesn't do anything. We are the ones who do things, and so we want to make things happen. Then we want to "unmake" things that have happened. We want to do things. Bodies do things. And bodies do things listening to the mind telling them what to do. This does not mean you should not do things in the world. It just means that what you do in the world will automatically flow from what is in your mind.