

## **Our Gratitude to God**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
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### **Part I Introduction**

This theme, "Our Gratitude to God," is one of the nicest themes we ever deal with in our classes—a little nicer than the laws of chaos, special relationships, or other such themes. I will divide this topic into three sections. The first is our gratitude to God: what it means to be grateful to God, as well as to accept His gratitude to us. The second is our gratitude to Jesus as well as his gratitude to us and our acceptance of it. And the third is the gratitude that *A Course in Miracles* asks us to feel towards each other, which, really is the means whereby we remember Who we are as God's children. It is through accepting our gratitude to each other that we learn to accept our gratitude to God. We will be discussing three workbook lessons that deal primarily with gratitude.

As an introduction, I want to talk about the idea of gratitude itself. Gratitude is unknown in Heaven. Similar to forgiveness, the miracle, and salvation, gratitude is part of the illusory world. Obviously, you do not feel gratitude toward someone unless you experience yourself as separate from that person. Gratitude can only be part of the dualistic world, which means that it plays no part in Heaven, which is totally unified. When the Course talks about our feeling grateful to God, what it is really talking about is the undoing or the correction of the *ingratitude* we feel toward Him, just as forgiveness is the correction for the unforgiveness we feel. When forgiveness comes to replace all of the unforgiveness in our minds, then the ego dream disappears, and eventually the split mind disappears. Then we awaken to the reality of God, Whom we never left. Gratitude is the same thing. When we can truly experience our gratitude to God for creating us, our gratitude to Jesus for helping us remember God, and finally our gratitude for all the people and circumstances in our lives, then the need for gratitude disappears. As with everything else in *A Course in Miracles*, we are really talking about the undoing of what the ego has done.

### **Gratitude to God**

Let me talk first about the ego's ingratitude to God, and then what gratitude means in that context. We feel grateful to God for having been our Creator and our Source. What the ego did right at the beginning when the thought of separation first entered the mind of God's Son was to see itself as separated from God, with God now its rival. Rather than feeling grateful to God for being the Source of the Son, the Son now looked at God and felt that what God had done was not fair—God was the Creator, and the Son of God was the created. Thus, rather than being grateful to God for Who He is and for the love that created us, we felt angry about it and turned away from Him. Basically, the position of the ego is not that it was ungrateful, but rather that God did nothing deserving of gratitude. The ego, then, would not feel ingratitude, but rather that gratitude was not justified or warranted for the simple reason that the ego decided it did not need God, and that it could be on its own. That basic response of the ego to God the

Creator is what is filtered down through the consciousness of us all. Thus, the lack of gratitude we feel toward our experiences in this world stems directly from that feeling of lack of gratitude toward God. The basic idea, again, is: why should I feel grateful to you, or for what have you done for me? I do not need you because I can act on my own. Gratitude is an experience of humility that comes from the fact that I need you, not in the specialness sense of needing you to complete me or to fill certain lacks in me. It is a need that recognizes that you are a part of me, and if I do not recognize that, then I will not remember who I am, because the Son of God is perfectly unified. A lack of gratitude is basically a way of perpetuating the separation system.

Likewise, our feeling of ingratitude towards Jesus is also born of the same idea: who needs you?—I can do this on my own! This would hold not only for Jesus, but for the Holy Spirit or any name we give to the presence of God's Love in our mind. *A Course in Miracles* simply stops with Jesus and the Holy Spirit, but it really does not matter what name you give to that presence. The basic idea, again, is that *I can do this on my own—I don't need you*. I do not need you as my brother or sister in Christ; I do not need an internal teacher who reminds me of who I am; and I certainly do not need a God Who claims that He created me, when I know that I am the one who created myself. Thus, right at the very start of the ego's thought system, the separation dream, we find the denial of gratitude. This is why gratitude is such a major theme in the Course. You will be astounded at how many times the words *gratitude*, *grateful*, *thankfulness*, and *thanks* appear in all three books. I will just cite a couple of those references. The point, as we shall see, is that God does not need our gratitude; in fact, God does not even know that we are ungrateful.

The Bible repeatedly states that you should praise God. This hardly means that you should tell Him how wonderful He is. He has no ego with which to accept such praise, and no perception with which to judge it (4.VII.6:1-3).

Chapter 6 of the text says basically is the same thing, except now Jesus is not only talking about God, but about himself as well.

I do not need gratitude, but you need to develop your weakened ability to be grateful, or you cannot appreciate God. He does not need your appreciation, but *you* do. You cannot love what you do not appreciate, for fear makes appreciation impossible. When you are afraid of what you are you do not appreciate it, and will therefore reject it. As a result, you will teach rejection (T-6.I.17).

The Course teaches that we are all afraid of God. The ego tells us that because of our terrible sin against Him—separating and usurping His place on the throne—He will punish us. So how can we feel grateful to a Being Who we believe is hellbent on our destruction? The point of this is that God does not need our gratitude; Jesus does not need our gratitude; but *we need the experience of gratitude to Them*. We need each other's gratitude, because we still believe that we are egos, and we still believe that we do not deserve gratitude. To express gratitude and love to Jesus or to God is not for Their benefit, clearly, but for ours, as it is the correction or the undoing of the ingratitude, the lack of appreciation we feel for Them. Again, any experience that we have in this world of not feeling appreciative or grateful stems directly from that idea: who do you think you are that I should feel appreciative of what you have done or be grateful for who you are?

Every single negative experience we have, whether it is ingratitude, anger, guilt, fear, shame, anxiety, etc. all stem, without exception, from the original separation thought. Therefore, each day, each minute,

and each instant we but relive the time when terror took the place of love (T-26.V.13:1). We are continually reliving that original instant, which is the only instant there ever was, even though we believe time is real. In reality, of course, time is simultaneous. We relive that original instant when we believe we stole from God and felt perfectly justified in doing so. Feeling grateful to God for creating us is, to the ego, the arrogance of God; certainly not the arrogance of the ego itself. From the ego's point of view, it is arrogant of God to demand that we be grateful to Him. From that moment, then, terror arose, because we became afraid that our hatred of God was going to be returned to us from Him, and that would mean our instant destruction. That is the fear that everyone holds deep within. Again, the root cause of all the feelings of ingratitude that we have, and all the lack of appreciation that we feel, stems directly from that arrogance of the ego that says I can be on my own; I do not need anyone else.

Another way, therefore, of talking about the separation from God and the beginning of the thought system of the ego is the idea that *I can do things on my own*. We believe that we are self-created rather than God created. Once I believe I am a physical/psychological self, whose origins and beginnings are independent of God and are only of this world, an experience of gratitude to God makes no sense at all. Why should I be grateful to Someone Who has nothing whatsoever to do with me? One of the major purposes of *A Course in Miracles* is to help us recognize and remember that God has *everything* to do with us—not with this ego self that we believe we are—but with Who we are as Christ. Our gratitude to God, therefore, simply is the awareness, remembrance, and recognition of Who we are as God's child. The dawning of that memory is the end of the ego, which is the thought that we are on our own.

One of the ideals of our society is what people call self-made persons, those who have done it all by themselves without help, or in spite of the lack of help that they have received. This ties in with the ego thought system that we are self-made and do not need God or anyone else. But, as the Course explains, when it comes to the people we do believe we need—our special love partners—we hate them most of all, because they remind us that this idea that we are on our own is a myth, that we cannot sustain ourselves on our own. There is a part of us that knows we cannot survive without outside help, and therefore we hate those who become symbols of that. We hate ourselves because of that weakness. Then there is a part of us that hates God, Who does not, or will not, fix it all for us.

Some people think of themselves not as self-created, but rather as a kind of biological accident. They feel that the world presents tangible evidence in support of that, whereas there is not much tangible evidence in support of God as Creator. This is really everyone's experience on one level or another, and it points out the clever job the ego did, because as we know, the entire physical world was made as a way of keeping hidden from us the memory of where we came from. (To go into this in any depth would require another workshop, so I will be brief here.) Since we all believe that we are part of this world, that we are bodies, and that other bodies made us, then there is no place for God. That is what *A Course in Miracles* means when it says that not only was the world made "as an attack on God," but that it was also "meant to be a place where God could enter not" (W-p11.3.2:1,4). The ego uses that as proof that its position is correct. However, the only witnesses that the ego calls to its defense are the witnesses that *it* made: the body and the world. It never allows us to think, even of the possibility, that there is another witness, because that other witness, the Holy Spirit, is in our mind. And the mind is the last thing the ego ever lets us look at. The part of us that thinks about issues such as evolution and accidents of nature is the brain, and the brain is simply part of the body and of the ego system. Thus, the Course asks us to consider why we ask the one thing in all the universe that does not know what reality is to tell

us what it is (T-20.III.7:5-7). That is what we are always doing—asking the body, our sensory organs, our brain, etc., to investigate and tell us what our reality is.

The evidence for another source of creation cannot be found in the world, at least not in terms of how the body would see it. The evidence and argument that the Course presents is basically Jesus asking us to look at what we have done and realize that nothing has ever worked, so why not give him a chance? Combining two lines from different places in the Course, he says, "Resign as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught." (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). His point is that even if you do not believe in what I am saying, why not at least give it a shot, because what you have done has been an abysmal failure. If you look openly at what your life has been, as well as the lives of everyone else, both in your personal world and in the history of the world, it is obvious that this does not work. In a sense, then, the only reasonable question or statement you can make is that *there must be another way*, because this way does not work. That is how the Course started, and that, basically, is what the witness is.

At the end of the Introduction to the workbook, Jesus says that we will find many of the ideas in this course difficult; we will resist many of them; we will not like some; and some we will want to attack. But none of that matters, he assures us. We do not have to believe in any of it. We need simply do what he tells us to do. The doing of the exercises will show that the ideas on which they are based are true (W-in.8). That is what the witnesses would be: if I really do practice what the Course says and I forgive—or in the context of this workshop, if I allow myself to feel gratitude—then I will feel much more peaceful. If I am really being open and honest with myself, I will realize that the peace I am feeling, because I have joined with you and forgiven you, is a much deeper peace than all the things that I have labeled peace up to now.

In one sense, you have to say that acceptance of what *A Course in Miracles* says and the commitment to at least practice what it is saying is an expression of faith—faith in something that you cannot see, that your brain cannot understand, that you cannot hear with your ears, but faith that there is something else that is beyond this body and this physical self. The Course does not ask us to believe what it says simply because it says it. Jesus is saying, "believe what I am telling you because it will work for you; it will make you happier." He appeals to the purely selfish part of our nature: namely, that we are not happy now, but if we practice these principles we will feel happy and more peaceful, maybe not right away, but in the long run we will.

Our personal experience thus becomes our own witness. The feeling of peace and happiness within ourselves is the witness. And the awareness, Jesus tells us in the Course, is that you will see the miracles that are done through you, but will realize that you have not done them—something in you must have done them (see, for example, T-16.II.2). Most of us have had an experience that somehow, all of a sudden, something feels different. It is not necessarily that the outer circumstances or the world changes, but something in me feels different. I know I am not the one who did it, but something in me must have done it, because it happened in me. That "something" would be the presence of the Holy Spirit or Jesus. It does not matter whether one identifies that loving or peaceful presence with a specific name—the experience is authentic.