

## Our Gratitude to God

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### Part XVIII

#### We Always Have a Choice

Before moving on to the workbook lesson I want to discuss, I would like to say a few more words about the issue of control. We seem to fight to keep control, yet we hand it over to the ego, which seems to invalidate the whole issue.

It is true that we have given over control to the ego, but then we forgot we did so and leave the middle chair empty where the decision maker is. In effect, we now sit in the ego's chair, which means we *become* the ego. Thus, we now feel we *are* the control we gave to the ego, having forgotten that we gave it *to* the ego. If we were to remember that we gave it away, we could take it back. That is another way of understanding the Course's main message, which is that we do have a choice. This is also one very important and helpful way of recalling why we should feel grateful to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus—because Their presence is saying to us that we have a choice.

Let me refer to some passages in the teacher's manual that have to do with healing in terms of what it means to be a teacher of God. The context of these passages is really healing sickness, but what they say would apply to everything. I will start with the second paragraph in the section, "The Function of the Teacher of God." The context is God's teacher representing the Holy Spirit or Jesus in the presence of someone who is sick—physically sick, mentally upset, or just someone who feels he or she has a problem. This is going to explain exactly what Jesus does and then what we are supposed to do in his name. Implicit in this, again, is why it is we should feel grateful to him.

**(M-5.III.2:1) To them [people who believe they are sick] God's teachers come, to represent another choice which they had forgotten.**

Our function is not to give them an answer, solve a problem, or heal their symptoms. Our function is simply to represent another choice. The sick person has forgotten that he or she has chosen sickness, which means that that person is sitting in the left-hand chair, having forgotten that he or she began in the middle chair and made the choice to move out of it. The sickness, problem, hurt, anger, suffering, or whatever the condition, is there; but the person has totally forgotten there is a middle chair where the choice was made, and also that there is another chair on the other side, which is where Jesus or the Holy Spirit is sitting.

As your brother in Christ who loves you, I do not fall for the ego's trick, which makes the error real and makes your problem real. In other words, this is an example of true empathy rather than false empathy. I do not feel sorry because your body is so sick and such a terrible thing has happened to you, whatever that may be. I empathize rather with the strength of Christ in you. My loving, comforting, and defenseless presence that does not make your error real—while at the same time I am fully present to

you—then becomes the reminder that there is another way of looking at this. Let us say, as an example, that your child was killed in a tornado, or your body or a loved one's body is dying, and you are upset and distraught, and I am with you and am fully loving and present to you, but I am not angry, anxious, or guilty in any way. At that point, what I am doing is manifesting to you that there is another thought system that you can choose. I am representing that thought system. Not only that, I am representing the *person* of that thought system. That is what Jesus is talking about here: the teacher of God represents another choice, which the sick person had forgotten.

**(M-5.III.2:2) The simple presence of a teacher of God is a reminder.**

To repeat, I do not have to do anything. My loving, defenseless presence has not made the error real. That is all I have to "do." That is the reminder that there is another chair you can choose, and that there is a part of your mind that can choose. You are not your ego thought system. You have chosen to identify with that thought system, but you can make another choice. As the text says right at the end, "Choose Once Again" (T-31.VIII).

**(M-5.III.2:3) His thoughts [the teacher of God's thoughts] ask for the right to question what the patient has accepted as true.**

You have accepted as true the fact that you are sick, that you are an innocent victim, and that you had no choice in this whatsoever. And so my loving presence then becomes a reminder that there is something else. In effect, then, my loving presence is asking for the right in you to question what you have made real.

**(M-5.III.2:4-7) As God's messengers, His teachers are the symbols of salvation. They ask the patient for forgiveness for God's Son in his own Name. They stand for the Alternative [the Holy Spirit]. With God's Word in their minds they come in benediction, not to heal the sick but to remind them of the remedy God has already given them.**

Again, I do not have to do anything. This does not mean that on the level of behavior I not do something; but within my mind, I do not have an *investment* in doing something. I no longer feel you have to get well so I will feel better, or so that I will not feel guilty or responsible because you are in so much pain. My love for you is great enough and true enough that I am able to stand by and respect the power of your mind to choose to be upset, without trying to interfere—to tamper with the law of cause and effect. I respect the power of your mind to choose to be angry, upset, critical, ungrateful, and to be in pain. I remind you that you have another choice, but I do not drag you back to the other chair. I do not compel you or force you to choose what I know as true. I do not have to say anything. I simply remind you by my very presence that there is another choice, and that you have the power to choose, but if you choose to stay in pain, my love for you will not change; my anxiety level will not rise, my guilt will not rise. My presence says what you choose is perfectly okay with me.

At no time in *A Course in Miracles*, if you read it carefully, do you ever get the feeling that Jesus is saying you *must* do this. He is really saying, "You will feel better if you do this, and I am calling you to come with me, not because I am lonely and want company, but because you will feel better if you come with me. If you come with me, you will be letting go of the ego." That is the same attitude we should have with each other.

Two of the important characteristics of God's teachers described in the manual are gentleness and patience (M-4.IV,VIII). Patience comes from the idea that there is no time, there is no need to hurry in this. No matter how long you take to change your mind, Heaven does not change. That is where the gentleness comes from. I do not have to force you, make you feel guilty, or compel you to be loving. But again, as I am with you, the presence of love and peace within me will be the reminder to you that there is another way, another choice you can make. When you are ready to make it is up to you, but my love for you and my peace of mind does not depend on your getting this.

If you find you cannot do this because your own mind is in the way, then step back and assure yourself, "I really would like to be more gentle and patient with this person, but obviously I am really upset by this person's problem; and obviously I am upset by this person's problem because I am making the error real; I do not want to believe in what the Course is telling me, and that's okay." The gentleness and patience you want to have toward your friend is exactly what you should have toward yourself. That is how we learn then the Holy Spirit's or Jesus' gentleness and patience with us.

**(M-5.III.2:8-10) It is not their hands that heal. It is not their voice that speaks the Word of God. They merely give what has been given them.**

In other words, it is not what we *do* that heals people—it is not the "holy" words we say, the laying on of hands, the medicine or wonderful advice we give. This does not mean, to stress this important point, that we not do any of that. After all, we live in a world of forms and symbols. We just recognize within ourselves that the healing comes from simply being quiet within our own mind. The Course tell us that we give what has been given us, which means that the peace and love we experience from Jesus' presence in our own mind is the same peace and love we want to have extended to others—whether the extension is simply by having a loving thought about you, putting my hands on you, saying a prayer over you, or giving you medicine. The form does not matter. What I do want to give you is not the specific but the love that underlies it.

**(M-5.III.2:11-12) Very gently they call to their brothers to turn away from death: "Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. Would you choose sickness in place of this?"**

All that we do for each other, which is exactly what we want to have done for ourselves, is to represent to others that there is another way, another choice we can make. It does not mean that we say any of these words—most of the time, these words would be meaningless to other people. We really are saying by our love that there is another way of responding to a situation. From our point of view, it does not matter whether others choose to accept the love or not; we do not have an investment in their doing so.