

Rules for Decision
(Text - Chapter 30 - Section I)

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Temecula CA

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Part V
Rule 1 (cont.)

(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 1,2) This is your major problem now. You still make up your mind, and then decide to ask what you should do.

Obviously, everybody understands what this means. What is so striking is that when we read these words in a workshop like this, their meaning is clear. Yet when you leave this workshop and go back to your daily ritual of asking the Holy Spirit what you should do, you entirely forget what was so obvious before. Jesus is saying here that you are not aware that when you ask him or the Holy Spirit for help, what you are really doing is telling them *what they should tell you*. And because that is what you *think* they should tell you, that is what you will hear them telling you. Then you will be sure you are hearing their voice, when in reality all you are hearing is a projection of your own. And this occurs because you are not aware of your silent investment in being right—in knowing what the right thing is for you or for the world. This is very subtle and very insidious.

Many of you, I'm sure, through your own experience with the Course and the experience of other people who study the Course, have seen enough times how often people will swear they are hearing the Holy Spirit, and it is obvious that they are not: They are not acting in a loving or consistent way, and they are certainly not bringing peace to anyone. But they are so sure that they are right, because after all, they closed their eyes, opened up their ears and heard a voice. They forgot that a split mind can hear two voices. The voice of the ego is loud, raucous, and it shrieks. The Voice of the Holy Spirit, to quote from the Bible, is still and small, and very gentle. It will not be heard while the voice of specialness is clamoring in your ear. That is why it is so essential as a student of the Course that you work on recognizing that clamoring voice of specialness. It is only by recognizing what it is, and recognizing that you have chosen it and why you have chosen it, that you can begin to forgive yourself for having done so. Then the shrieking will diminish and you *will* hear that lovely gentle Voice. But you will not hear It as long as you are still identified with your specialness. Make no mistake: everyone in this world is thoroughly identified with their specialness; otherwise they would not be here. This is very, very important. This is what it means to cultivate an attitude of humility as you work with this

Course. Humility means that you don't deny the power of your ego, which really means you don't deny the power of your identification with your ego.

Jesus is teaching us that when we make up our minds, and *then* decide to ask what we should do, conflict inevitably results, because we have a hidden agenda about what we want to hear. We have a hidden agenda about what we want to come out of a situation, which means we don't want to hear what Jesus has to say, because we already know what is right, which in turn means we will be afraid to hear his voice. That is the conflict, the conflict born out of a split mind. There is a part of us that knows, on some level, that what we are doing, seeing, and believing is not real—it is not right and is of the ego. But we are terrified to let it go, because we are more afraid of that lovely Voice that means the end of our specialness. That is what the fear really is. So the more fearful we become of the Holy Spirit's Voice, the more we have to attack It by glorifying our specialness. The more we glorify our specialness by attacking the Holy Spirit, the more guilty we will feel. The more guilty we feel, the more we will believe that we deserve to be punished by Him. And then we go on and on in this very vicious circle. There is no way out except to understand what it is we are doing. But before we can understand what we are doing, we have to *look* at what we are doing, and before we look at what we are doing, we first have to understand that there is a serious problem in our minds. Just because the Course says the problem is all made up doesn't mean that we really believe it is made up. If we really believed it were made up we wouldn't need *A Course in Miracles*, and we wouldn't be here in this classroom known as the world.

So what this first rule for decision is pointing out is that we are all laboring under a tremendous conflict. Part of us more than anything else in the world wants to hear Jesus' voice, take his hand, and return home. There is another part of our minds that is terrified of that. That is what the old-time psychologists used to refer to as the approach-avoidance conflict: you want to approach something more than anything else, but you also want to avoid it because you believe it will bring you pain. And we believe that God's Love will bring us pain because that is what the ego told us. Unfortunately the devil we know is better than the devil we don't, and so we are *more* terrified of the Holy Spirit's Love. We are more terrified of His answer, because His answer means the end of *our* answer. You can't have two contradictory answers coexisting. If the Holy Spirit's answer is true, which deep in our hearts we know is the case, then, in the end, our answer is false. And our answer is not only the specific answer to a specific problem, the answer is our very identity. This means if Jesus' answer is true, it is not just that my answer is false, it means that *I* am false; which means I cease to exist. That is the terror. That is the hidden motivation that lies behind what seems to be an obstinate stubbornness in refusing to hear what Jesus says to us. We must really recognize that what underlies our refusal is the terrifying belief that if I am wrong, my specialness is out the window, which means I cease to exist.

So what he is asking us now is to be aware that most of the time when we are asking for help, asking for a specific answer to a problem, we are really setting it up so we will hear the answer

we want to hear. Having forgotten that we set it up that way, we will believe the voice we hear is the Voice of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is so easy to get off track with this Course. This is not a course on hearing the Holy Spirit or a course on getting specific guidance. This is A Course in Miracles, and the miracle is realizing that we have a choice between two voices. This is not a course in effect; this is not a course in learning how to decide what we should do with our lives. There is nothing in the Course that will tell us that. What the Course *will* tell us is what steps to take so that we will leave our ego and join the Holy Spirit. This is a course in *cause*, which is a course in the mind. It is not a course in the body, in the world, in *effect*. The way that we resolve situations and problems in the world is to go to the one Answer that underlies all the problems. And as we identify with that one Answer and experience that Love, that Love automatically translates itself to all the specific things we think we need here. We don't have to do the translating. The translating will be done for us automatically. What we have to do is join with that Love in our minds. That is what is important. Again, we really have to get increasingly in touch with the specialness that demands that the situation is the way we *think* it is, and therefore that it needs the solution that our past experience has told us will work. We have to realize that we are always wrong and that we are better off being wrong than right.

(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 3) And what you hear may not resolve the problem as you saw it first.

What he is referring to now is hearing the Holy Spirit. So the answer that we hear may not resolve the problem the way that we perceive the problem, which is through the eyes of our specialness. This means that all the problems we perceive are always through the eyes of our own self-interest: What's in this for *me*? I don't really care what happens to you. All I care about is that my own needs are met. That's what specialness is. What's best for my family, what's best for my social group, for my religious group, for my racial group, for my political party, for my country, for *A Course in Miracles*, for the labor union of which I am a member, for the lobbying group in Washington in which I am active—it is always what's best for me and the group that I identify with. It is never what's best for the whole Sonship. Not only does the ego not care about the whole Sonship, it doesn't even know what that means, because the ego does not know what wholeness is. It knows what separation is, what differentiation is, what fragmentation is. It doesn't have a clue as to what wholeness is.

The ego is the thought of separation—it can't conceive of something other than itself. That is the same as saying that the ego doesn't have a clue as to what love is. It certainly knows what special love is, because that's what it made. It doesn't know what love is, because love is wholeness. If God is Love and perfect wholeness, and if the ego is the thought of being separate from that Love and wholeness, how could it understand that Love and wholeness? That is why this is not a course on love. In fact, Jesus says right in the introduction to the text: "The course does not aim at teaching you the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught" (T-Intro.1:6). You can't learn about love here. What you *can* learn to do, as he goes on to say, is remove the interferences to your awareness of love's presence. This is a course in undoing the

ego, not in learning about love. There just is no way we can understand what oneness or wholeness is in this world. Therefore, anytime you are asking for specific help, you know that it is your ego, because anything the Holy Spirit would answer for you would in one way or another help the whole Sonship. That is another case Jesus makes for asking him for help rather than yourself, because we don't know what is in the best interests of everyone. There is no way we could know that. Therefore, it is in our best interests to let go of the illusion that we know—that is our one responsibility: to let go of the illusion that we know.

(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 3,5) And what you hear may not resolve the problem as you saw it first. [He is being kind. It is not that what you hear may not—it cannot and will not resolve the problem as you saw it first.] **This leads to fear, because it contradicts what you perceive and so you feel attacked. And therefore angry.**

This is why people don't love Jesus. They *hate* Jesus, because he represents the exact opposite of what they believe. This is why the world hated Jesus and his message, and changed that message when he was here two thousand years ago. This is why the world *still* hates him and his message. His message means the end of specialness. And to the extent to which you identify with your specialness, you must hate the one who represents its end—because it means *your* end. There can be no compromise with this. If you think you love Jesus, you are badly mistaken. If you loved him, you would still be with him in Heaven! That is why in this Course he does not say that you should love him, but that you should forgive him, because in forgiving him you will be undoing the barriers you are placing between you and him. What you want to do, therefore, is get in touch with the part of you that doesn't like him, not the part of you that does. You want to get in touch with the part of you that is ashamed of him and believes he is ashamed of you, the part that sees him as a rival, as someone, who, if let into your life will destroy you. (From the ego's point of view, of course, that's true.) This part of you will lead you to fear what he represents and fear anything that comes to you from him. In the general sense you will fear this Course, and in the specific sense you will fear anything that you experience on a personal level. That is what he is saying.

If you have a vested interest in perceiving the situation as you have set it up, and in having the outcome be as you want it to be, then you will have to be afraid and feel imposed on by an answer that comes from some place else. Jesus does not see the situation as you do. He does not see the situation in isolation. He sees the situation as but one more fragmentary reflection of the problem that the entire Sonship shares as one. Whatever answer he gives you, then, will be an answer that will benefit the entire Sonship as one. We perceive the Sonship as fragmented. He knows it as it is: as one. There is one Son in Heaven, and there was one mistake made. This is another way of understanding why Jesus keeps saying that this is a very simple course: There is only *one* problem, and there is only *one* answer to that problem. Again, setting it up so that you have a vested interest in the outcome will lead to fear, "because it contradicts what you perceive and so you feel attacked. And therefore angry." The anger then will be

directed at what is perceived as the enemy. Ultimately the enemy will be the Course. It will be Jesus. It will be the Holy Spirit. It will be God.

(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 6,7) There are rules by which this will not happen. But it does occur at first, while you are learning how to hear.

Once again—and we will see this all the way through—it is clear that Jesus sees this as a process—something we have to learn and practice. He is saying to us: "I fully expect you not to do what I'm telling you to do. It does occur at first that you will put your will ahead of mine, that you will believe you know better than I do what is in your best interests and the interests of the world." So you don't have to pretend anymore that you are this holy *Course in Miracles* student. What makes you a holy *Course in Miracles* student is realizing how *unholy* you are. This is not a course in doing. It is a course in *undoing*. This is extremely important. Don't let anybody tell you this Course is about anything else. It is not a course in *doing* anything. It is not a course in *being* anything. It is not a course in being loving. This is a course in realizing how filled with hatred and with specialness you are: *that* is the problem. Passages like this make it clear that Jesus fully expects his students not to let go of their specialness just because he asks them to.

This is Chapter 30, and he is saying the same things here as he said at the beginning. Now he is giving us some rules. And by rules he means guidelines—not rules in the sense that "you *must* do this." These are the guidelines that will help you learn that you have indeed made a *wrong* choice, which automatically means that you can make a *right* choice. Learning that you have made the wrong choice must mean that there was something else you chose against. This is the purpose of this section, and this is the purpose of the Course: to have us recognize that there is indeed choice. Remember again: the ego had us choose the ego, against the Holy Spirit. Then it caused us to forget that we did it, because the ego made us mindless. This word *mindless* on the chart is extremely important. The ego has made us mindless, so that we are not aware that we have a choice. The Course's purpose is to remind us—which is what the miracle does—that choice has no meaning with regard to what is external to our minds. Choice has meaning only with regard to what is *within* our minds. And that choice is always between the voice of the ego, the voice of specialness, and the Voice of the Holy Spirit, the Voice of undoing specialness.

These are the guidelines he will give us now: be clear about how much we *don't* want salvation—how we *don't* want to learn and do what this Course says. The reason people have so much trouble understanding the Course is not that they suffer from a learning deficit. The reason they have so much trouble learning this Course and understanding it is that they don't want to know what it says, because what it says is the exact opposite of what we believe, and who we believe we are.