

"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part VII Rule 2 (cont.)

(T-17.VI.2:1-2) In any situation in which you are uncertain, the first thing to consider, very simply, is "What do I want to come of this? What is it for?"

"Purpose" is another key theme in the Course. Elsewhere in the text Jesus says that the only question you should ask about *anything* is: "What is it *for*?" (T-24.VII.6:1). Its purpose will help you understand the situation. This, too, reflects the very simple nature of the Course. There are only two possible purposes in the whole universe. One is that of *remaining* in the universe, which is the ego's purpose of maintaining specialness and keeping us all within the dream. The other is that of *leaving* the universe, which is accomplished through forgiveness. One is the *reinforcement* of specialness and separation, and the other is the *undoing* of specialness through forgiveness. There is no other purpose for anything. Thus purpose is a *major* theme of the Course. If you have gone through the workbook, you will recognize this—especially in the early lessons where there is a great deal of discussion about what things are for. This is true of the text as well.

In light of the first and second rules for decision this means that we should try to be as aware as we can throughout the day that we are choosing one of these two purposes. The world will give us all other kinds of purposes to distract us: to have a successful day at work, with this person, or the stock market, or whatever it is we are interested in and think is important. Always try to keep in mind—this is the mind-training part of the Course—that you want to get beyond the specific situation and the specific purpose you have assigned to your life or to your particular day, and go back to the only two purposes that are important: the purpose of the ego, which is to maintain separation and specialness, or the purpose of the Holy Spirit, which is to undo separation and specialness.

If you think you are serious about studying and learning this course, then you must be serious about the ultimate goal of this course, which is our awakening from the dream. If you are clear that this is what you want, then it must mean that you will strive to see your entire day as oriented towards that goal. What you want to pay particular attention to is how often you will do the exact opposite. When you find yourself upset, sick, feeling sorry for yourself, victimized, holding grievances, etc., it is because you have switched goals and didn't realize you had done so. This is what the mind-training aspect of the Course is about: Observe your behavior, reactions, and feelings. Then step *back* from them—the pathway of the miracle—from your

perception and experience of your body to the thought which gave rise to whatever it is you are experiencing. As I said earlier, if you find yourself angry, upset, miserable, or in pain of any kind, it can't be from anything outside you, because there is nothing outside you.

You are the dreamer of the dream. The dream is not dreaming you. Anything you are feeling you have put there. And you have put it there to satisfy *one* of these two purposes, to meet *one* of these two goals: to stay *rooted* in the dream of separation and specialness or to take the steps that will lead to *awakening* from the dream. This theme is clearly spelled out in two very important sections in Chapter 27: "The Dreamer of the Dream" and "The Hero of the Dream" (T-27.VII, VIII). Nothing happens to us by accident, because it is our dream. Similarly, when we dream at night while asleep, nothing is going on except within our own minds. What we see in the dream is the projection of thoughts within our own minds. These thoughts become images and forms. They become symbols in the dream. As I was saying before, in analyzing dreams our aim should be to move from the *manifest* content to the *latent* content —from the *form* of the dream to the underlying *meaning* of the dream. Our entire world is a dream, and our experiences are dreams, whether we think we are awake or asleep. We are actually neither. The body doesn't sleep and it doesn't awaken. It is the mind which is always asleep within the dream—just as within Heaven the Mind is always awake. "You are at home in God, dreaming of exile," as the Course states (T-10.I.2:1). We are the dreamers of the dream. Therefore, just as at night we are responsible for all of the characters and everything that occurs within the dream, likewise we are responsible for everything that occurs within *our* dream. Metaphysically speaking, everything is my dream. Everything that I experience I put there. Every other seeming fragment has done the same thing.

In terms of our practical experience as seemingly individual fragments within the dream, this does not mean that we are responsible for what other people do. It does mean, however, that we are responsible for how we *react* to what other people do, for how we *perceive* what other people do. This is an extremely important distinction. It is our dream only in the sense that we are to take responsibility for our reactions and perceptions. Whatever we experience in our daily lives comes directly from the goal we set at the beginning. The problem is that we forgot we set the goal, and so we think that things happen *to* us and that external things have an *effect* on us. We forget that we are totally responsible for our own dreams. The purpose of this section, to state it once again, is to help us realize that we *have* set the goal without realizing we have done so, and that everything we experienced from that moment on will have served the purpose of achieving that goal.

The Course talks a great deal about "means and end" (see for example "The Body as Means or End [T-8.VIII] and "The Consistency of Means and End" [T-20.VII]); and although those exact terms are not used in this section, the ideas are the same. We determine the end, and everything else then becomes a means to help us reach that end. The problem is never the means or the specific situation. The problem is the goal or the end that we have established for the situation. The idea again is to have us get back more and more quickly to that choice point in our minds when we established our goal for the day, or for a particular meeting, or situation. The goal has absolutely nothing to do with externals. The goal simply has to do with whether I want conflict, guilt, and anxiety, or forgiveness and peace.

(T-17.VI.2:3) The clarification of the goal belongs at the beginning, for it is this which will determine the outcome.

The outcome referred to here is not about specific behavior. It is not about the outcome of a difficult meeting you are going to attend or the outcome of a date you are going on this evening. The outcome is either that I will feel more guilty, more fearful, more anxious, more special, or I will feel more peaceful. We see over and over again that what makes this course so simple is that everything is seen only in terms of "two." There are two emotions, two worlds, two evaluations—everything is in terms of two. One of the two will be true; one of the two will be false. That is why this is so simple.

(T-17.VI.2:4-5) In the ego's procedure this is reversed. The situation becomes the determiner of the outcome, which can be anything.

In other words, I will feel peaceful if the meeting ends up the way that I wanted it to. Therefore, the outcome—peace—is directly dependent on the situation, which makes me vulnerable and a victim of forces beyond my control. "If only my fever would abate, I would feel better. If only this person who ran out on me would come back to me, I would feel better." The ego always speaks in an "if only" context. When what we want occurs, then we feel good. That means we are not in control of ourselves, because our happiness and peace depend on something outside us—just as our *unhappiness, disease, anxiety, pain, and guilt* depend on something outside us. The Course is teaching us something entirely different. It is saying that the outcome depends on the goal we choose right at the beginning. If peace is our goal, then the outcome must be peace, which means everything that happens will now be understood in light of its ability to help us reach our goal, which in turn means that each situation becomes identical to every other situation. It doesn't matter whether I get captured and am tortured as a prisoner of war or am released. It doesn't matter if nothing happens externally to make me more comfortable. It will make no difference. If my goal is peace and I know that Jesus is with me, absolutely nothing can change that. I am the author of my own dream. If I say I want to have a dream of peace, then that is what will happen—regardless of the situation.

Obviously the best example would be Jesus' own life and death. What happened to him on the cross was totally irrelevant to his state of mind. His state of mind was one of absolute and perfect love. Therefore what people did to him made no difference to him at all, because he was *not* the person on the cross. He knew that. He knew this was a dream and that he was not part of other people's dreams. He was aware of other people's dreams, but he did not let himself become part of their dreams. This meant that while people were victimizing him, he did not experience himself as a victim. In "The Message of the Crucifixion," he says that in the eyes of the world, he was "betrayed, abandoned, beaten, torn, and finally killed," but he did not share this perception (T-6.I.5:3; 9:2). He did not perceive himself that way; therefore, it didn't happen that way. Other people had other dreams. In fact, the whole religion of Christianity has been based on other people's dreams, dreams that have nothing to do with reality, which is why Christianity has not been a religion of love. What happened on the cross was totally misunderstood. And the correction of this misunderstanding is one of the purposes of the Course.

People just don't understand that the goal is set first. To state the point still once again: the purpose of the Course and of these sections is to have us *truly* understand that, so that when things don't go right for us and we find ourselves upset, we will realize that things are not going right because we made the wrong choice—we chose the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. *That* is the problem. The situation is not the "determiner," the cause, of what we are feeling. Remember, there is nothing outside us. That is an extremely important concept in the Course as I have been saying and as Jesus says very clearly in Lesson 132: "There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach" (W-pl.132.6:2-3).

If there is no world, then I am the only one responsible for how I feel. Nobody can make me feel anything that I do not choose to feel. In our experience of this world, there may be other people who have power over our bodies, but they have no control over our minds. Again, that is the lesson that Jesus taught from the cross. People may have control over our bodies, and they can make us do things we don't want to do. They can put us in prison camps we don't want to be in. They can bomb our villages, our homes etc., which will have adverse effects on our bodies and the bodies of those whom we care about, but this has absolutely nothing to do with the state of our minds. And if we are not even here in the body—that is all part of a dream—what difference does it make? What matters are your thoughts. Nobody can take Jesus away from you. *You* can take Jesus away from you, in your dream.

In other words, if you are clear about the outcome, then you will realize that anything that occurs in your life is a classroom with Jesus now chosen as your teacher to help you learn the lesson that there is nothing outside you that can hurt you, nothing outside you that can help you—in fact: there is nothing outside of you.

(T-17.VI.2:6-9) The reason for this disorganized approach is evident. The ego does not know what it wants to come of the situation. It is aware of what it does not want, but only that. It has no positive goal at all.

The ego doesn't know about anything positive, because the ego is, literally, a thought that denies what *is* positive—it is a *denying* thought. I think sometimes people in the past have spoken of the devil as being the great denier. In this sense the ego would be similar, except the ego is not outside us. The ego is not anything positive, the ego is literally the *opposite* of God. It is the attack on God, the undoing of God's perfect Oneness. So the ego doesn't know anything about love. It *does* know about the antithesis to love, the opposition to love: hatred, specialness, death, separation, guilt, etc.

The ego is aware of what it does *not* want: it does not want to cease to exist. What will cause the ego to cease to exist is our taking Jesus' hand and looking at specialness with a gentle smile, instead of with horror and with guilt. The ego is very good at helping us look at specialness with horror, saying: "This is so awful, I will never look at it again." But the ego doesn't know about looking at what is positive. So the ego then is the denial of truth. That is why Jesus says earlier in the text that the responsibility, function, or task of the miracle worker is to deny the denial of truth (T-12.II.1:5). Nothing is said about anything that is positive. Since the ego is the denial of truth, what we are to do is look at the denial of truth and deny that it makes a difference. That is the undoing of the ego's attack on God. If the ego's attack on God is the veil that keeps God's

Love hidden from us, and then it is removed through forgiveness, then the attack on God is gone and what is left is God and Love.

This is why, as we have been saying, this is not a course in love, it is not a course in what is positive; it is not a course in having beautiful experiences or beautiful feelings. This is a course in getting in touch with *negative* feelings and *negative* experiences, because these are the interferences to the awareness of God's Love. When you can look at your negativity and your opposition to God and to everyone else, which is the glorification of specialness, and you can look at all of that without judging yourself for it, you are denying the denial of truth. You are undoing what never was. And then what is left is the Love which always has been.