

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

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Part X Rule 2 (cont.)

Returning now to "Setting the Goal," let me re-read the second sentence in paragraph four:

(T-17.VI.4:2) You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.

To reiterate, you don't deny what you see; you simply deny that what you see has any validity. You don't deny what you perceive, you just deny that it has any validity in determining how you feel.

(T-17.VI.4:3-5) It is quite noticeable that this approach has brought you closer to the Holy Spirit's sorting out of truth and falsity. The true becomes what can be used to meet the goal. The false becomes the useless from this point of view.

As you practice this more and more you will begin to understand the difference between truth and falsity, truth and illusion, which is not the way the world looks at the difference. This is a totally utilitarian practical approach.

There is nothing in this world that is true. Forgiveness is not true. This "holy" *Course in Miracles* is not true. Nothing is true in this world. Truth is only of God. We can, however, have the *reflection* of truth in this world. This course, therefore, is the reflection of truth. Other spiritualities are reflections of truth. Forgiveness is a reflection of truth. It is not truth, but rather the reflection of truth. That is why Jesus says that love is not possible in this world, but that forgiveness is this world's equivalent of Heaven's Love. Holiness is not possible in this world, but it is possible to be the reflection of holiness. In fact, "The Reflection of Holiness" is the title of a section in Chapter 14 in the text. Jesus speaks about the holy relationship as being the "herald of eternity." It is not eternity, but it is the forerunner of eternity. Thus, what is true in this world is anything that reflects the truth of Heaven, anything that helps you awaken from the dream.

Again, we are talking about a purely practical way of understanding truth. This certainly doesn't mean that anything in this world is true. It means rather that I can give this world a purpose that reflects the truth. If the truth of Heaven is perfect Oneness and perfect unity, then the purpose in this world that reflects that truth is realizing that we all share the same interests and the same goal. By my not seeing your interests as separate or apart from mine, I am reflecting the truth of Heaven that we are one. That is what Jesus means when he says that what is true is what meets our goal of peace. It is not true literally, because truth is only of God, but it is the *reflection* of truth. The perception of you as separate

from me becomes false, because it is the reflection of the ego's original false idea that I can be separate from God.

What is true is not based upon the fact, the form. It is the *content* or the *purpose* that establishes it as true. The second of the ten characteristics of God's teachers given in the teacher's manual is *honesty*. And the definition Jesus gives for honesty is not in terms of form; rather, that your behavior is consistent with your thinking. If your thoughts are loving, then whatever you do will be honest, even if in the eyes of the world it is not true. In other words, you could say something that is literally not true, and yet it would be honest because it serves a loving purpose. This is what we call a white lie, for example. Obviously you have to be very careful not to abuse or misuse this principle. But the definition of honesty is centered on purpose. The definition of truth in this course also centers on purpose—at least in this world within the dream. So again, you can see that Jesus takes the same idea and applies it to seemingly separate thoughts. Truth and honesty both are defined and interpreted and understood in the Course by fidelity to purpose. If your purpose is love, whatever you do will be honest and will be true.

Therefore, once you have set the goal (that you want to remember who you are as God's child), once you have set the goal of truth, everything that occurs in your day will serve that purpose. And you will see everything in that light. That is what will make it true. A false interpretation, for example, "what's in this for me?" you will discount, because it is not going to contribute towards the goal. You give it no meaning, no importance, no power. When your goal is specialness, you will give the ego thought system tremendous power. You will just lie in wait until somebody does something from their ego. And if they don't do it, you will make it up anyway. You want people to reflect the ego because that is what will prove that your goal of specialness has been served. But if your goal is truth and the undoing of specialness, you will see other people's specialness as having no effect at all on you. And you will realize that it is their call for help which mirrors your call for help.

(T-17.VI.4:6) The situation now has meaning, but only because the goal has made it meaningful.

If you think back to the early lessons in the workbook, you will recall that Jesus wants us to see that nothing in this room means anything, nothing around me means anything—everything is meaningless. The reason that it is meaningless is that the ego has given it its meaning. These early lessons help us realize what is meaningful. And what is meaningful in this world is anything that fulfills or reflects the Holy Spirit's purpose. On another level, nothing in this world has meaning because there is no world. The only Meaning is in Heaven. Within the dream, however, what is meaningless is whatever roots you still further in the dream, and what is meaningful is whatever leads you beyond the dream.

Everything in this world, then, will become meaningful to you if you see it as a way of realizing that you have projected your unconscious sleeping guilt onto the world. Now the world shows it to you, and you can look at it and say: "No, it is not out there, it is in *me*." That makes the situation very meaningful. What makes the situation meaningless is thinking that there really is something out there that you want—or just something out there, period. So to sum up: What establishes something as *meaningless* is that it has been given the ego's meaning; what establishes it as *meaningful* is that it has been given the Holy Spirit's meaning. This means *you* are the one, the only one in the whole universe, who can control life's meaning for yourself, because you are the one who chooses whether to identify with your ego, which makes everything in your life totally meaningless, or to choose Jesus or the Holy Spirit as your teacher, which gives everything in your life total meaning. You are the one who is in control of that. Lesson 253 says "My Self is ruler of the universe." It is my universe, my dream. And this dream could be

anything that I choose to have it be. Whatever my dream becomes is solely my responsibility. There is absolutely no one who can do it for me.

(T-17.VI.5:1-3) The goal of truth has further practical advantages. If the situation is used for truth and sanity, its outcome must be peace. And this is quite apart from what the outcome is.

This second "outcome" is something behavioral, external. The "outcome" spoken of in sentence two is a result in your mind. Here again you see, in two sentences, how Jesus uses words differently. If the situation is used for truth (i.e., this is a classroom that I have chosen, and I have chosen Jesus as my teacher so I can learn that your interests and mine are not separate), then the outcome must be peace. This is so because if this is the goal that I have established and it is my dream, then I will achieve what I want. I must achieve what I want because it is all occurring within my mind. If I want peace, I will be in peace. If I want conflict, I will have conflict. No one outside me can do that for me. So that, again, if I see the situation as the means that I have chosen to achieve truth and sanity, then it must do that and I will be at peace. And this is totally independent of what happens externally. What happens externally is irrelevant. To use an extreme example: you could be in Auschwitz where the physical outcome is not very happiness-inducing. But what if the goal of your being in Auschwitz is to learn that you are not your body and that they can do nothing to you—and the *they* is not really a *they*—the Germans are as much a part of the Sonship as you are—we are all part of the same whole—they are not your enemies. The "enemy" is the decision maker within our own minds that perceives others as the enemy. If that is your goal, that you learn that lesson, then regardless of what happens in that death camp, to you or the people that you love, regardless of what happens, you will still be at peace. That is what this is about.

Again, what these sentences at the beginning of the paragraph are saying is that once you have set the goal of truth, regardless of the form of the classroom, regardless of what happens to you or what happens around you, you will still find truth because that is what you wanted. You will see that the situation is the classroom which will help you learn that. Your outcome will be one of peace, therefore, regardless of the external outcome. This gives you perfect freedom. There is absolutely nothing in this world that can imprison you. There is nothing in this world that can take the Love of God away from you. And in the most extreme form, which is what Jesus taught, there is nothing in this world that can take life away from you—because you will realize at some point that you are not alive here. You are not dead here either. You are just plain *not here*. You are not born; you don't die; you are not here. All of this is a dream. Therefore no one can take your life away from you. The reason Jesus was perfectly at peace and had absolutely no pain on the cross was that he knew he was not here. He knew he was not his body. Since he is part of the mind of the Sonship, he was aware of the dream. But he also knew he was part of God, and so he knew that this was only a dream and nothing was happening. Therefore for him, literally, nothing happened. A great deal seemed to happen in the eyes of the world, but nothing happened to him, because he knew he was not here.

That is the most extreme form. But that is what you learn when your goal is love and peace, and you know that that love and peace is within you, and that you have simply chosen against it. Having recognized this, you will then see all the situations and circumstances in your life as opportunities for learning in the specific forms that are needed in order to learn. We learn through the specific forms that we have chosen *against* love, but we could just as easily now choose *for* it. The situation then becomes the laboratory or the classroom in which we practice that lesson. And the ultimate meaning of the lesson is that I am simply remembering what is already inside me. I don't have to find Jesus; I simply

have to accept him, because he is already present in me. So I can learn that lesson regardless of the form that my classroom takes. I am the one who chooses the form of the classroom, because it is my script. I chose the form of the classroom in which my ego spoke first and wrongly by telling me that I was a victim. Now I go back into the same classroom with a different teacher and learn a totally different lesson. The Course says that the ego speaks first and is wrong and the Holy Spirit is the Answer (e.g., T-5.VI.3:5; T-6:IV.1:1). So we go through the same scripts over and over again until we learn the lesson.

When we learn the lesson the script disappears. When the right mind corrects the wrong mind, they both disappear. When my dream of attack and separation with you as a specific relationship in my life is replaced by the dream of forgiveness, the dream ends. Then we no longer have to be together in a classroom. We may still be together physically, but the lessons are gone. When you learn the forgiveness lesson which undoes the lesson of judgment, then *both* disappear. The only purpose of forgiveness is to correct and undo the ego's thought of judgment. When the thought of judgment is undone, forgiveness has served its purpose and is no more. At the very end of the process, just before you attain the real world, your ego is replaced once and for all by the Holy Spirit—which means the ego disappears, the Holy Spirit disappears, and you become, just as Jesus was, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, no longer separate from you. That is at the very end of the process.

What helps us make our way step by step is keeping in mind our goal of truth, the goal of really wanting to learn what forgiveness is. As we learn that more and more, we see more and more that everything that occurs in our lives is simply another opportunity to learn that lesson.

(T-17.VI.5:4) If peace is the condition of truth and sanity, and cannot be without them, where peace is they must be.

What Jesus is saying is that if your goal is truth, and therefore you see the situation as being the means to reach that truth, then you will feel peace. And it is by that peace that you will know that you have accomplished the purpose of the situation, which is truth.

(T-17.VI.5:5) Truth comes of itself.

In other words, you don't have to worry about truth. This is the same as saying that you don't have to worry about love, you don't have to worry about God. All you have to do is remove the interferences that you have placed between yourself and truth. There is a passage in Chapter 16 in which Jesus says: "Your task is not to seek for love [truth], but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it" (T-16.IV.6:1). So again, this is why this is not a course on anything positive, it is not a course on love. It is a course in miracles, because it is the miracle that helps you remove the interferences that you placed between yourself and love.

(T-17.VI.5:5-6) Truth comes of itself. If you experience peace, it is because the truth has come to you and you will see the outcome truly, for deception cannot prevail against you.

If you want truth, if that is your choice, then whatever deception is around you will have no effect on you. "Deception" here is just another term for the ego thought system. If you turn away from the ego thought system and turn towards Jesus or the Holy Spirit—which means that your goal now is truth (which is what the Atonement principle states)—then whatever ego behavior or ego thoughts are going

on around you will have no effect on you whatsoever. You can only be affected by your own choice to identify with the ego, not by what anyone else's ego does to you.

(T-17.VI.5:7-8) You will recognize the outcome [truth] *because you are at peace. Here again you see the opposite of the ego's way of looking, for the ego believes the situation brings the experience.*

I experience peace because the situation has worked out a certain way. I experience happiness, joy, love, whatever, because the situation has worked out a certain way. We always, then, are the victims of what other people do. We are at the mercy of forces beyond our control, as the Course says at one point (T-19.IV-D.7:4). We are affected by the dream: the dream is dreaming us, rather than—which is what the truth is—that we are the ones who dream the dream.

(T-17.VI.5:9) The Holy Spirit knows that the situation is as the goal determines it, and is experienced according to the goal.

Thus there is no objective anything in the world. What gives anything its meaning or its purpose and helps us to understand it, is the goal that we ascribe to it—the means that we ascribe to the situation to help us achieve the goal that we choose first. So the point of all this is that we are asked to set the goal first; we would then automatically see the situation, relationship, meeting, or circumstances as a means to help us achieve that goal. If the goal is the reinforcement of specialness, then *that* is what we will experience in our daily life. If the goal is the end of specialness through forgiveness, then that is what we will experience. And the experience has absolutely nothing to do with the situation. The experience rather has to do with which teacher we have chosen. The world then, as it is, is irrelevant to that.

This is as far as we will go in this section ("Setting the Goal"). Before returning to the second rule in the "Rules for Decision" section, I wanted to go back over the meaning and application of "forgiveness" using a student's situation to illustrate what I've been teaching. She is still quite angry with her ex-husband and is aware that she does not want to forgive him. She is not fighting herself on that, but realizes that she cannot be peaceful without forgiveness. I explained to her that she is not getting peace because she doesn't want it. And that is where she must stop. The reason she is not going to forgive her ex-husband and maintain instead that she is justified in holding grievances against him, is that she doesn't want the peace that would come from letting go of the grievances. And that is extremely helpful information to have, because now she knows the reason she is upset: it is not because of her ex-husband!

The temptation at this point—for anyone involved in this kind of situation—is to feel that you have failed forgiveness. And yet you are doing exactly what forgiveness asks of you. One of the best definitions of forgiveness comes from the workbook summary called: "What is Forgiveness?". That is where Jesus says: "Forgiveness . . . is still, and quietly does nothing. . . . It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-pII.1.4:1,3). So you are doing that. You are looking at your ego in action and realizing you still want to hold on to it. Then you wait patiently until you are ready to let it go, and all the while you don't judge yourself. Forgiveness, thus, as Jesus uses the term, does not forgive the way the world understands it. Forgiveness involves the process of realizing that the problem is not outside me in somebody else, but that the problem is *inside* me, and it is inside of me because I chose to have it be inside me. And the "miracle" basically is the term the Course uses for the dynamic by which forgiveness occurs—they are virtually interchangeable.

Forgiveness doesn't mean that your heart is filled with sweetness and light. Forgiveness means that you forgive yourself because your heart is filled with evil, darkness, sin, and murder. You are much more honest with yourself that way. And then you don't have to feel that you have to make believe that you are feeling something that you are not. Go right ahead and feel all the hatred, all the obstinacy of holding on to it that you want to, but be aware that you are doing it because you don't want to be peaceful. Remember the first obstacle to peace, explained in Chapter 19 of the text. In the Introduction Jesus talks about how it is these obstacles that prevent peace from just flowing through you. The first obstacle to peace is the desire to be rid of it. That is the first obstacle to peace: you don't *want* it! So the problem is that most people are not aware that is not what they want. Most people say they want peace, love, and joy, and they want to do what the Course says, and they want to forgive, and all of that stuff. And they don't mean it at all!

The workbook lesson "I want the peace of God" begins with: "To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything" (W-pl.185.1:1-2). As I have been saying throughout, a statement like that makes it very clear that Jesus understands his students very well. Why would he say something like that if it were not for the fact that most people don't want the peace of God? And yet those people will mouth the words and say them. But they don't mean them. And what the Course helps you to understand is why you don't mean those words. All of us in our right minds would say: "Of course I want the peace of God." But we are not aware that to say: "I want the peace of God" means to say: "I don't want my specialness." That is the kicker.

That is what Jesus means in the section "The Last Unanswered Question," when he discusses four questions, the first three of which are relatively easy to answer. It is the fourth one that is very difficult, and the fourth one which we have not answered yet: "Do I want to see what I denied *because* it is the truth?" (T-21.VII.5:14). Do I want to see what I denied, which is the Love of God, because it is the truth? And in his discussion of this Jesus explains that the reason you haven't answered this yet is because you don't understand that to say yes (that I want to see what I denied because it is the truth), means you must first say *not no*. This is exactly the same statement we discussed earlier, that the task of the miracle worker is to deny the denial of truth. To say *not no* means that you look at the ego's thought system which is the negation of God's thought system, or the Holy Spirit's thought system (that is the *no*), and then you look at that and say: "I don't want this".

So to say: "Yes, I want the peace of God, I want to be with Jesus, I want his love, I want to practice his course," means that you must look at the ego's specialness (which is the negation or the denial of the Holy Spirit's Love) and say: "I don't want this anymore." How many people are going to say that and mean it? Very, very few. Especially when they begin to understand what they are really saying. To say: "I don't want my specialness" is to say: "I no longer want my individuality, I don't want my uniqueness, I don't want what makes me different from anybody else, whether it is better or worse." And the ego doesn't care if you are the best person in the whole world or you are the very dregs of society. It does not care, as long as you are different and special.

Those of you who grew up Catholic probably can recall that sometimes you had a contest about who was the most miserable sinner. Some of the most widely known saints in Christianity are those people who made a real big deal about being the most miserable sinner going. And the ego doesn't care, as long as you are the most. The most miserable or the most best—I just made that up. So that you have to realize that the reason you don't want the peace of God, really, is that you don't want to give up your

self, your self-importance, your specialness. I think what happens, as you work with the Course over many, many years is that you begin to understand what that really means. It takes a while until it begins to penetrate, because it is very easy to read this book and skip over all the awful passages—the ones that deal with gore, violence, viciousness, murder, guilt, and hatred—and see only the wonderful ones that talk about love, peace, joy, unity, and oneness. As you begin to pay attention to the ego passages, you realize what they are really talking about and what the ego thought system is really all about, and how much identified with that thought system you are. Again, it is very, very frightening to realize this.

So to say yes to Jesus is to say *no* to the ego, which means you cannot say yes until you first are able to look at your ego thought system and say: "I am not willing to pay this price anymore." When you look at it and say: "Obviously I still *am* willing to pay this price," then say: "That's all right. I am not as far along as I would like to be, but at least I am far enough along to know I am not that far along." That is wonderful progress. So there is hope!