

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

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part XIII
Excerpts from Rule 7 & Conclusion

Editor's Note: A line-by-line commentary was presented on the remaining paragraphs in the "Rules for Decisions" section. Some excerpts follow:

(Paragraph 14 - Sentences 1-3) We said you can begin a happy day with the determination not to make decisions by yourself. This seems to be a real decision in itself. And yet, you cannot make decisions by yourself.

If you think he is bringing you back to square one, you are absolutely right. Except now he is saying that he can talk to you about this on another level. As we will see, he is going to talk about this first rule in a different way from what he did at the beginning, because now you have been through the process and have a better understanding—at least that is the assumption of this section—of your investment in being right, and how being right does not make you happy. In fact, it makes you very *unhappy*. And again, this basically is the way he approaches everything in the text, which is why he says the same thing over and over again. He is gently leading you through a process, even if you are not aware of his doing so, which will help you get past a lot of your investment in your ego, so you can begin to understand what he says on page one, even though he says it on page two, and ten, and twenty, and all the way through.

So now he is taking us back to that first rule, but he is taking it to a deeper level of sophistication. What he is going to explain now—let me do it first—is that the decision maker *must* decide between the ego or the Holy Spirit. He cannot decide with *neither* of them; he cannot decide with *both* of them. This is why it is not a decision. The rule of the mind is that the decision maker cannot do anything without either the ego or the Holy Spirit. It is as if the decision maker is in neutral, and no matter how much gas he gives to the accelerator pedal, the car won't go until he engages one of two gears. The ego's gear will go backwards, the Holy Spirit's will go forwards, just to carry the analogy further. But he must do one or the other. He can't do both. You can't put your car in reverse and forward at the same time. And if you stay in neutral, nothing happens. This is exactly what he is talking about in terms of the decision

maker, or the power of the mind to choose. You must choose one or the other. Not neither, and not both. You can certainly go back and forth, as everyone does. So again, this highlights even more the idea of how important it is to know that you have a choice, and that you be fully aware of what is involved in both choices.

That is what we have seen in this section, and certainly the whole Course is about this, where Jesus very painstakingly sets out for us what the ego's thought system is like, and what will happen when you choose it—all the horrors of specialness, all the ravages of fear, all the awfulness that occurs when you choose the ego. But you must know that, because without that you can't make a meaningful choice. On the other hand, he then explains what happens if you choose *him*. And when you see clearly what the choice is between, what the alternatives are, then there is no problem in choosing. And again, that is what the miracle does. It makes it clear to us 1) we have a choice, and 2) what the choice is between. So that is what he is saying now: you cannot make decisions by yourself.

(Paragraph 14 - Sentences 6-7) The first rule, then, is not coercion, but a simple statement of a simple fact. You will not make decisions by yourself whatever you decide.

Because you can't make decisions by yourself! Remember he is talking about the same rule, but totally differently. In the first presentation of Rule 1, Jesus meant: don't decide with your ego; decide with me. Now he is understanding this in a more sophisticated way (because we have gone through this process), which means that you *can't* decide by yourself—you must choose either your ego or the Holy Spirit. What is important about this is, if what he is saying is true (that you must choose between the ego and the Holy Spirit), *who* is the you that is choosing? In other words, what this statement is reflecting is that you do indeed have a decision maker. There is a part of your mind that chooses between the ego and the Holy Spirit. Why is that important? Because then you are no longer your ego. See, the ego had us convinced that when we chose the ego, that was the end of the ballgame: we *were* the ego. There was no longer any Holy Spirit. God now became a split-off part of our own self. And there was nothing else. That is why the world is so hopeless and there is so much pain, suffering, and misery, culminating in death. Because there is no hope. When we chose the ego, we became the ego, and for all intents and purposes, the right mind disappeared. In reality, of course, it didn't—but we believe it did. God disappeared, and His place was taken by an idol; which is a split-off part of our own ego self.

So what he is reflecting here is that that is not true. You are not the ego. You *chose* the ego. And there is a part of your mind—which we are calling the decision maker—that chooses the ego. And if it chose the ego, it can now make another choice. That is why this is so important. The *you* that he is addressing when he says that "you will not make decisions by yourself" is the decision maker. That is the Son of God—the one who chooses—and therefore the one who has tremendous power in his mind. So the idea is to begin to separate yourself from your ego,

which is why looking at your ego is so essential to forgiveness. In fact, it *is* forgiveness. If you are looking at your ego, who is the you that is looking at your ego? Obviously it is not your ego! Again, this is a very tightly argued, logical Course. Even if you may not agree with it or like it, the logic is very tightly presented. If you are looking at your ego, you *cannot* be your ego. You must be something separate from your ego that is looking at it. If you are looking at your ego with judgment, you are not looking at all. Then it is just the ego playing games with you. But when you look without judgment and say: "Oh! There's my ego again! It's up to its old tricks of attacking love, attacking this one, attacking that one, making trouble, making me sick, making everybody else sick, confusing me, making the world real, making the body real . . ." and then say: "Ah! That's my ego, what else is new! That's what egos do!" then you are beginning the process of separating yourself out from that thought system. You are breaking the identification that got the whole world in trouble—in fact, that *made* the whole world. Remember again: when the Son of God chose the ego, he *became* the ego, and he knew nothing else. Jesus comes along and says: "Wait a minute, there is something else. Look at me and you will see the reflection of that something else in you." That is what his message was 2,000 years ago, and that is what it is again now in the Course. That is what you have to understand—that you are *not* the ego. That is why it is so important again, to be able to look at it without judging it. When you judge it, you make it real.

Another way of saying this, which is what I said earlier, is that the ego has no power within itself. It has absolutely no power within itself. When you identify with it, you give it total power. The power rests in the decision maker—in the power of the Son's mind to choose. What gives the ego thought system its power is your identification with it. Again, all the seeming power that the ego has, on a physical level, on an emotional level, on a pseudo-spiritual level is all found within the Son's belief in it.

When you begin to separate out from it, the ego begins to lose its power. And as you separate more and more, its power wanes more and more, until at the very end you are totally separated from it. This means you now choose the Holy Spirit, because it is *one or the other*. Whatever you invest in the ego, you have taken from the Holy Spirit; whatever you invest in the Holy Spirit, you have taken from the ego. When all the power is gone, then the ego, as I said before, disappears back into its own nothingness. The process of looking is disengaging the gears. Then the ego will just disappear. What gives the ego its power is your having joined with it, your identification with it. When you *fight* against it, obviously you make it very real. That is why you don't want to fight it. When you want to *change* it, you are making it real. When you want to *love* it and embrace it, you are making it real. When you look at it and smile gently and sweetly at it, then it begins to disappear, because then you are saying: "This is just a silly idea." And you go back to that original mistake when we all looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said it was serious. Now you begin the process of undoing that. You look at the "tiny, mad idea" in whatever form it comes to you in your experience, and say: "This is not serious; this is silly!" But you must be able to step back and look at it.

(Paragraph 15 - Sentences 1-4) Your day is not at random. It is set by what you choose to live it with [the ego or the Holy Spirit], and how the friend whose counsel you have sought perceives your happiness. You always ask advice before you can decide on anything. Let this be understood, and you can see there cannot be coercion here, nor grounds for opposition that you may be free.

You can see how often in this section he comes back to this idea of coercion and opposition, because again, he is fully aware of how people feel about him. He is fully aware of how people feel about his Course. Unfortunately, the students of the Course are *not* fully aware of how they feel about the Course. But *he* is fully aware of how they feel about it. It would be good if they *asked* him, instead of judging themselves.

Again, it is so easy to feel you are being coerced—that Jesus is stronger, he represents God, and you don't stand a chance. So you better do what he says, even though you don't particularly like it. That is all part of the ego's version of God, which is a split-off part of itself. That God *is* harsh, and that God *does* demand, and that God is hardly loving. He may act loving when you give Him what He wants, but when you don't, He is fierce. That is the God, again, that we believe in, because that is the God we made. And you know you made up that God and still believe in it because it was to run away from that God that the world was made. The world was made to hide from that ferocious God, a God we believed was in opposition to us, because that God believes we were in opposition to Him. We project everything onto God, so we seem to be the innocent victims. We forget that we threw the first stone, that we attacked first, and the God that we made up was a projection or a split-off part of our own belief in sin and guilt.

So once you understand the purpose that the world was made to serve on the macro-cosmic level, and the purpose that the body was made to serve on the micro-cosmic level, then you have no trouble understanding all these things in the Course. They are all logically deduced from the idea that we made up a God in our own image, a God Who would destroy us. We had to flee from Him and make up a hiding place, which is the world. We had to make up a body, which is our individual hiding place. That is the nature of our existence. We are always running away from God's hatred and His punishment, which the *ego* calls God's love. That is why love is so frightening in this world; that is why people then become so frightened of letting other people get close to them, unless they can be in control. The fear is always: if I let go of my guard, or my defenses, I'll be vulnerable, and I will be hurt, and I will be crushed. This does not make you alone in the world as you experience this. Everybody experiences this.

Remember, the world was made as a hiding place, a defense, an attack on God. And the body is the individual fortress that you make to protect you from the split-off part of yourself you don't want anything to do with. Again, we made up that wrathful God to get rid of the guilt we found unacceptable in ourselves. That is the paradigm that underlies what we do all the time in every aspect of our dream. There is a part of myself I don't like: I split it off, I project it out, *I make you*

up—and then, of course, I have to hate you, because I believe you are going to do back to me what I did to you. I make up a body as a fortress and I give you a body, because that keeps you separate from me, just as my body keeps me separate from you. I am terrified then of having those boundaries violated: that is why people get so crazy about boundary violations. Nations get crazy about it, individual people get crazy about it, home owners get crazy about it—everybody gets crazy about it. It doesn't matter whether you are talking about a physical boundary or a psychological boundary, because that is what protects you from the wrath of God. Everybody has that thought inside. That is why you are not going to willingly embrace this Course without a lot of hard work and practice. Again, if you read this section very carefully, you will see how often Jesus talks about this issue of opposition and coercion. That is what we believe. That is why, again, there are seven rules for decision instead of one! Because you are so terrified of that first one.

(Paragraph 16 - Sentences 8,9) Whose kingdom is the world for you today? What kind of day will you decide to have?

These, basically then are the final questions of the section. Whose kingdom is the world for you today: is it the kingdom of the ego, of anger, specialness, murder, death; or the kingdom of the Holy Spirit, which is a kingdom of forgiveness and peace? And what you choose will determine the kind of day that you have.

What happens after this paragraph is that there is an intervening step which is not specified. The intervening step is that you have made the right choice, i.e., to have Jesus or the Holy Spirit be your adviser. You will then understand what Jesus discusses in the last paragraph. Having already joined with the Holy Spirit allows you to understand the importance of not seeing someone else's interests as separate from your own. What gets talked about in the last paragraph is not joining with the Holy Spirit—you have already done that. That is the intervening step which is not specified here. Once you join with Jesus or the Holy Spirit, you understand that when you meet someone, it is a holy encounter. And what he is really talking about, which is what I will elaborate on later, is that this special person that you are involved with (and you are always involved with one person in any given moment in your life—one special person who is the object of your attention and thoughts) is literally a split-off part of a larger self that you are a split-off part of. And it is joining with that other person who you think is outside you (because you think *you* are outside the mind) that really represents joining or re-uniting with yourself. Joining is undoing that dynamic of splitting off and making up a self that you now believe is in another person and is outside you. There is no way you can understand that without first joining with the Holy Spirit. What follows from these questions "Whose kingdom is the world for you today? What kind of day will you decide to have?" is that you then choose that it is Jesus. And once you do that, you will understand what he teaches you in the next paragraph.

SUMMARY

Before moving on to the final part of the workshop, I want to give a brief summary of what we have covered:

At the beginning, when we had the "tiny, mad idea," when we believed we had separated from God, our already split mind—the mind that we believed had split off from God—now split again, and we split into two thought systems: the ego's and the Holy Spirit's. The ego's thought system says that the separation is real, and therefore I am real as a separated self. The Holy Spirit's thought system, which is reflected in the Atonement principle, says the separation never happened, and the person you think you are does not exist. You remain at home in God.

The decision maker, which is the part of our minds that has to choose between these two thought systems, chose the ego. At that point what it did was split off from the Holy Spirit, so that all that seemed to be reality now was the ego's thought system. And as we have seen, when we chose the ego thought system, we *became* the ego thought system. A psychological term for describing this is "dissociation," where you disassociate from something: you split it off. That is what the word literally means: you were associated with the Holy Spirit and now you disassociate—you move away from (*dis* being a negative prefix). So dissociation merely refers to the splitting off, which specifically here means that we split off from the Holy Spirit, thereby forgetting about the Holy Spirit. What we split off *to*, namely the ego, became the only reality for us. Then the ego made up its whole big story, which is basically what attracted us in the first place: the idea that specialness was really grand and that we really would be happy being right, while God would be wrong. Then following the ego's thought system in terms of its inevitable logic, the Love of God becomes fearsome, avenging, wrathful, and punitive. So we have to escape, and then we make up the world.

What happens when we make up the world is that we split off, basically, from our minds. So in a sense we are always going through a process of splitting off. This process of splitting off from the mind—projecting out into the world—gives rise to whole process of fragmentation. The section "The Substitute Reality," at the beginning of Chapter 18, explains and describes that clearly. The outcome of this process of fragmenting and subdividing, and subdividing still again, over and over and over again, is this world—what the Hindus refer to as a world of multiplicity. In our context, we can refer to it as a world of fragmentation and separation: the exact opposite of wholeness. And that one Son of God that made this choice then fragmented into billions and billions of fragments. Each of us, now, is a representation of one of those fragments. It believes it is on its own, and is its own self-contained universe.

And at this point, we seem hopelessly trapped, because there is no way out once we find ourselves here. There is no way, that is, except to remember that we are not here, and to

remember that all this came about because we simply made the wrong choice. We fell into a state of mindlessness, a state of a deep sleep, and the only way to awaken from this sleep and from this dream is to remember. This, once again, is what the miracle does: it reminds us that all this came about simply because we made the wrong choice. We chose *against* the Holy Spirit, *against* truth. We dissociated from it, and then identified with the thought system of the ego. That is the problem. The solution then is remembering that.

Jesus is the name we give to one of those fragments, one of those parts of the Sonship who *remembered* who we all are. There is nothing in the Course that would indicate when he remembered—everybody always wants to know when he did it. Please don't go by the Bible, because the writers of the Bible certainly did not know anything about Jesus—otherwise the book would not have turned out the way it did. Basically you have to go within yourself, and get that answer for yourself. And, of course, it doesn't matter *when* he remembered, because there is no time anyway. So it simply becomes something that you would like to argue about when you get a little drunk or something. There's no point to it. Simply be grateful that he did.

Since he is part of the Sonship, and we are all joined as one thought in that mind, then he remains within our mind as the shining example and reminder that we can do what he did. What he did was realize that all this was silly. When the Course says that the Son of God remembered not to laugh . . . *he* laughed, because he realized it is simply preposterous that we could be separate from our Creator and our Source—that a part of God could wrench itself away from the All and the Everything. Therefore, when we join with Jesus, we are joining with that thought. In the Course he says: "I am in charge of the process of Atonement" (T-4.III.1:1). Elsewhere he says: "I *am* the Atonement"(T-I.III.4:1)—because he is the correction principle. In him is found the answer, because in his remembering that nothing happened he *knew* that he was still part of the Christ. And Christ is perfectly one, perfectly whole, and perfectly united with His Source. So by joining with Jesus, we are joining with that oneness, and therefore we are joining with Christ.

That is why it is so important that you join with him—because he is the symbol of the end of the dream. He *is* the Atonement principle. He says also, earlier in the text, that the Atonement principle which came into existence at the time the separation seemed to occur (which is what the Holy Spirit is), is basically too general, and had to be put into action (T-2.II.4:2-3). What he really means by that was that it needed a concrete symbol within the world that people could identify and recognize. *He* is that symbol. He makes it clear that he is not the only symbol. He does say he is the first. But clearly he is not the only symbol. For our purposes, since we are studying within the context of his Course, we will speak of him as the symbol. But it is also important that you realize that he is not the only one. But he is the one who set the Atonement principle in motion—the phrase used in the Course (C-6.2:4). And all these really are metaphors to simply describe the fact that Jesus, within our dream, is the symbol of the Atonement principle—that the separation from God never happened. If he is the Love of God, if he is the manifestation of the Love of God in form and in the dream, then by joining with him and

accepting his love as truth, what we are really doing is joining with the same principle that he represents.

Then we will become like him, as expressed in that beautiful poem of Helen's, *A Jesus Prayer*. He says in the Course that he is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. He then asks at one point that we become *his* manifestation in the world (C-6.5:1). So just as he has symbolized for all of us the Love of God in the presence of the dream, he asks, as students of his Course, that we become more and more like him, so we would become symbols within the dream for other people of what it means to really accept the Atonement for yourself. In one sense, you could say that that is one of the purposes of the Course: to have people do this. Basically, it only takes one, as we have seen, because there is only one Son. But as long as there is the illusion of many, then you have the illusion that many people have to do this. It is an illusion, as we have already seen before. This whole idea of quantification of salvation is an illusion. But again, as long as we believe that we are here, we have that illusion. So the purpose of the Course is to have more and more people become like Jesus. Even though in reality we are all only one person, we are all split-off parts of one person.

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I want to do one more section with you before we go over the last paragraph of the "Rules for Decision" and conclude the workshop. This is a section in Chapter 8 of the text called "The Undivided Will of the Sonship." It is a very beautiful and moving section on a number of levels, especially in terms of the clarity of what Jesus says, as well as his plea for all of his students to join with him. It is one of the clearest statements in the Course on this theme, although it is referred to in many, many different places.

Editor's Note: *A line-by-line commentary followed on "The Undivided Will of the Sonship" and then the last paragraph of "The Rules for Decision." This commentary has not been included in these excerpts. We conclude this series with one of Helen Schucman's lovelier poems, A JESUS PRAYER, which was read as a meditation during the workshop.*

For those unfamiliar with Helen's poetry: It is collected in a book called *The Gifts of God*. Her poetry "came" and was written down the same way the Course was. These were not poems that Helen herself wrote, as she might have written something herself. She experienced the same process she did when she took down the Course. The only difference is that with the poetry, she always felt that her voice was somehow part of it, as well as Jesus'—that basically, the poetry was a collaborative venture, while the Course was not. In other words, she felt that she had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the transmission or the scribing of the Course. But with the poetry she felt that her voice was like a part of Jesus' in doing this—not her voice as she identified herself as an ego. Many of the poems come in the first person, where it is Helen's voice that is the speaker. All of the poems—the early poems that are relatively simple, as well as the later poems that are more complex—deal with themes that are in the Course in one way or another.

There is one whole series of poems that deal specifically with Jesus and with Helen's relationship with Jesus. This one, *A Jesus Prayer*, which is one of my favorite poems, does not specifically deal with Helen, though. The speaker in the poem really should be each of you. It is really a prayer addressed from each of us to Jesus. And it does make very clear his importance in our lives—the model that he holds up to us, that we can become like him and join with him. Another important theme in this poem is that in joining with him we also are joining with everyone else. So what you find in this poem is exactly what we will be spending time talking about now, namely the importance of our joining with him and joining with everyone else, and that in fact it is impossible to join with everyone else *without* joining with him, and equally impossible to be joined with him and not with everyone else.

For those of you who don't know the poem, let me also mention that the poem begins with the phrase: "A Child, a Man, and then a Spirit"—which refers to Jesus and his life. Two stanzas down, the same phrase appears, but now it refers to us—again with the hope that we would become like him. And the lines at the very end of the poem are based upon the prayer of Cardinal Newman, a famous 19th-century convert to Catholicism, in which he basically said what is echoed here. His prayer was that as people would look on him, they would not see him, but only Jesus. It is with that prayer that this poem ends.

A JESUS PRAYER

A Child, a Man and then a Spirit, come
In all Your loveliness. Unless You shine
Upon my life, it is a loss to You,
And what is loss to You is also mine.

I cannot calculate why I am here
Except for this: I know that I have come
to seek You here and find You. In Your life
You show the way to my eternal home.

A child, a man and then a spirit. So
I follow in the way You show to me
That I may come at last to be like You.
What but Your likeness would I want to be?

There is a silence where You speak to me
And give me words of love to say for You
To those You send to me . And I am blessed
Because in them I see You shining through.

There is no gratitude that I can give
For such a gift. The light around Your head

Must speak for me, for I am dumb beside
Your gentle hand with which my soul is led.

I take Your gift in holy hands, for You
Have blessed them with Your own. Come, brothers, see
How like to Christ am I, and I to you
Whom He has blessed and holds as one with me.

A perfect picture of what I can be
You show to me, that I might help renew
Your brothers' failing sight. As they look up
Let them not look on me, but only You.