

## True Empathy

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

### Part II

#### Commentary on Lesson 92

Let's turn to the workbook, Lesson 92. We'll read a good part of this lesson, as it serves as a nice introduction. The title of the lesson is "Miracles are seen in light, and light and strength are one." This is a continuation of the previous lesson, "Miracles are seen in light," but extends it quite a bit.

**(Lesson 92 - Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-3) The idea for today is an extension of the previous one. You do not think of light in terms of strength, and darkness in terms of weakness. That is because your idea of what seeing means is tied up with the body and its eyes and brain.**

The ego has told us that our weakness lies in the mind. It teaches us that if we stay in the mind we will be destroyed, and that strength lies in opposing God—that strength really comes from stealing God's strength. To the ego, making up a world and a body is a source of strength, because this is the defense against God. If God comes into the picture, the ego is finished. So we confuse strength and weakness. We confuse light and darkness. The true light is in the mind, and that light is represented by the Holy Spirit. The ego stifles that light, drowns out the Holy Spirit's Voice of the Atonement, His Voice of Love. The ego hides in darkness and makes up its own world, which is a world of darkness and weakness, because it is the absence of light, strength, and love. Then the ego makes up a body with a brain; it's the body that tells us there is light and darkness. And the body, which carries out the dictates of the mind, tells us what strength is. Strength is always some aspect of making the body real. So in this world we define strength as courage, as overcoming great obstacles, as having a lot of muscles. We define strength as a quality of people who have very strong wills, who have overcome all kinds of problems, etc. All these definitions are different ways of glorifying the ego.

**(1:4-5) Thus you believe that you can change what you see by putting little bits of glass before your eyes. This is among the many magical beliefs that come from the conviction you are a body, and the body's eyes can see.**

So everybody who wears glasses ought to feel guilty, right? We actually believe that our eyes see, that our ears hear, that our taste buds taste, that our hands feel, that our brains think, etc. In reality, the body does absolutely nothing but carry out the dictates of the mind. In many other places, the Course amplifies this idea, but this is one of the clearest and simplest expressions of it.

I mentioned earlier that studying this topic, as we are doing, will help us recognize just how profound this thought system is, and how important its metaphysical teachings are for understanding what forgiveness really is. When Jesus tells us that the body's eyes don't see, he means it very literally. There is nothing to see, because there is nothing out here. All the world is is a projection of a thought that we

actually believe we see outside. All we are seeing is a mirror of a thought that is in the mind. There is no seeing here. There is no thinking here.

Earlier in the workbook, the Course talks about how the thoughts we think we think are not our real thoughts (W-pl.r1.51.4:2). The brain doesn't think. It's the mind that has the thought. And basically there are only two thoughts: the thought of the ego, and the thought of the Holy Spirit, one of fear and one of love. But there is no seeing or thinking here—no more than a puppet thinks. We can adapt what Shakespeare said in *As You Like It*, "All the world's a stage, and all the people are merely players on it," to "All the world's a puppet stage, and all the people in it are merely puppets." All we are doing is carrying out the instructions of the mind.

Since we represent thoughts of fear, we do not experience genuine thoughts of love. What we call love is really forgiveness. In other words, what we can do in this world is look at fear and smile at it and that undoes fear. As the Course explains elsewhere, forgiveness is this world's expression of Heaven's Love. However, when we look with the ego, we see a very bleak and hopeless picture of ourselves. Even though we may feel we yearn to get back home more than anything else, it very often can feel as if we're never going to get there. Hope starts when we can look at the ego's looking and say, "Yes, of course, that's what the ego's going to do; it's going to make all this look hopeless."

We'll see as we go on that the ego has caused us to take this world very, very seriously. False empathy is taking someone's problems very seriously. Feeling sorry for ourselves is taking our own selves very seriously. And this is simply the reflection of the original mistake, when we took the ego thought very seriously. Recall the line I quoted at the beginning, "Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh" (T-27.VIII.6:2). If we had laughed at it, as the Atonement principle would have us do, we would have realized that this is a preposterous thought. How could a part of God separate from Him? How could a part of God believe it could hurt and destroy God? How could it believe that it could make God into a raging maniac, etc., etc.? We would have seen that that thought of the ego makes no sense at all.

A couple of lines later Jesus says: "It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which means there is no time" (T-27.VIII.6:5). It is a joke to think that any aspect of the ego could have any effect on eternity and could rupture it. Remember, "not one note in Heaven's song was missed" (T-26.V.5:4). It's absurd and silly to believe that a note in Heaven's song could be changed on account of this thought.

Because we took the ego seriously—the words, *sin*, *guilt*, and *fear* are very serious words—the world which came from these thoughts must also be very serious. We then make up expressions of what is serious: sickness, pain, injustice, oppression, torture, etc., all of which seem to be very, very serious. And then we feel sorry or bad about what happens, and we want to change it. All that we're doing is falling right into the ego trap, because we have shifted our attention from the mind to the world and have forgotten the mind and where the suffering really is. The suffering is not in the world, it is in the mind. We'll come back to this theme again and again.

**(2:1-2) You also believe the body's brain can think. If you but understood the nature of thought, you could but laugh at this insane idea.**

One of the basic ideas in the work of Krishnamurti, the great Indian teacher, is the nature of thought. He said exactly what this passage is saying, that what we think are thoughts are not our thoughts. His purpose was to help us get to the end of thought, and the end of thought is love. Everything else is a defense against that. All pain and all fear are simply false thoughts—not our true thoughts at all. This is the same idea.

If we really understood the nature of thought, we would laugh at this insane idea that "the body's brain can think." The nature of thought is that it is in the mind, and there are only two thoughts: love and fear. One is real and one is false. In the section called "The Two Emotions," which could be renamed "The Two Thoughts," Jesus says, "You have but two emotions, one you made and one was given you" (T-13.V.10:1). The emotion that was given us of course is love, and the emotion or the thought that we made is the ego's fear, which is a defense against love. The Course says right at the beginning in the Introduction, "The opposite of love is fear, but what is all-encompassing can have no opposite" (T-in.1:8). The opposite of love is fear, but love doesn't have an opposite, because love is everything. Therefore, there is no fear. Jesus is saying: "If you but understood the nature of thought, you would laugh at the idea that the body can actually think." Not only is there no brain, there is no body, there is no world, there is nothing—just as there are no real people on a movie screen. That's simply an illusion. People are not walking or running on a movie screen—it's simply an optical illusion. The frames go by so quickly that it appears as if people are actually doing things on the screen. When we understand the nature of thought, when we understand the nature of a movie, we realize how silly it is to think that anything is happening on the screen. Most of the time we do understand what a movie is, so we are not taken in by the illusion. The problem is that the world is the exact same situation, but we are taken in, and we forget that the whole thing is made up.

**(2:3) It is as if you thought you held the match that lights the sun and gives it all its warmth; or that you held the world within your hand securely bound until you let it go.**

This is analogous to the section in the text called "The Little Garden" (T-18.VIII), where the same point is made. There the image is of an imperceptible ripple on the ocean that believes it's the ocean, or a tiny sunbeam that believes it's the sun. This is the same idea. This is what we believe. This insignificant nothing that we think is so incredible, the body, really has no effect on anything. The whole thing is simply an illusion; nothing is here at all. Yet the arrogance of the ego mind, which translates into the arrogance of the human brain, is that we believe that we are important. We believe that we can do things and that we can have an effect. We believe it's a great thing if we send a rocket ship to the moon, or discover a cure for AIDS or for cancer, or win the Super Bowl or the World Series. All the things that really make people excited and crazy in this world reflect the idea that we believed we could triumph over God. We forget that we are the ones who made up this entire physical universe, so what's the big deal if we move one part of the illusion to another, from the planet earth to Mars or the moon or any place else? We're looking in the wrong place. The idea is to move beyond our experiences in the world of the body, back to the mind that thought it.

**(2:4) Yet this is no more foolish than to believe the body's eyes can see; the brain can think.**

In other words, it's no more foolish to believe that you have a match with a tiny little spark that can light up the whole sun. If we think about these lines, or "unthink" about them, we will realize just how effective the ego has been, and how much we have bought into its magic. We really believe that we think and see and hear and feel and have pain and pleasure, etc. We really believe all this is important. And yet this is all part of the distraction—the smokescreen effect. The real problem, which is the choice we made in the mind between the ego and the Holy Spirit, is totally blocked off and has been covered over by all the seemingly important things that go on here in the world and the body.

**(3:1) It is God's strength in you that is the light in which you see, as it is His Mind with which you think.**

The Holy Spirit becomes the reflection of God's Mind within the split mind, being the memory of God's Love.

**(3:2-4) His strength denies your weakness. It is your weakness that sees through the body's eyes, peering about in darkness to behold the likeness of itself; the small, the weak, the sickly, and the dying, those in need, the helpless and afraid, the sad, the poor, the starving, and the joyless. These are seen through eyes that cannot see and cannot bless.**

"The likeness of itself," the ego self, is sinful, guilty, fearful, limited, small, suffering, and dying. That of course is all expressed in the body. So we look out in order to find the witnesses that will tell us that this self is true. Therefore we see: "the small, the weak, the sickly, and the dying, those in need, the helpless and afraid, the sad, the poor, the starving, and the joyless." These are all synonyms to describe the same basic thought of the ego—what sin, guilt, and fear are. And so this is what we see.

The ego has made a world that is the mirror of itself, which we see as the world and make real. We're not talking about seeing without making real. For example, when Jesus was here, his body's eyes saw what everybody else saw, but he did not react to it as if it were real, because he knew it was a dream. Living in the real world and having one's mind healed doesn't mean that you do not physically see with your eyes what everybody else sees, but you realize that what your eyes are seeing and bringing back to you is an illusion. You don't deny what your body's eyes see; you just give it a different interpretation, and therefore your experience is different. If we react to anything that we see in this world, whether it is a reaction of pleasure or of pain—if we hear on the news an account of a brutal rape, or a catastrophe like a building falling down and trapping people in it, or an earthquake, or an invasion of another country, or stories of torture, and we find ourselves getting angry, frightened, guilty, excited, terrified, or feeling sorry for the victims—we're doing exactly what this passage is talking about. The ego mind has told our eyes to peer about in darkness and to behold the likeness of itself.

Again, what we see are "the small, the weak, the sickly and the dying, those in need, the helpless and afraid, the sad, the poor, the starving and the joyless." And we know that's what we are seeing and making real when we get upset, when we choose up sides in a conflict, when our hearts go out to people who are in pain.

As we will see later, these are examples of what the Course would consider false empathy, when we identify with someone's weakness instead of someone's strength. The weakness is not of the body; the seeming weakness of the body is the reflection of the weakness of the ego thought system, which is weak because it opposes the strength of God. The strength of Christ in ourselves and in each other is the

reflection of the presence of the Holy Spirit. That is what true empathy is: we empathize with the strength of Christ in each other rather than with the weakness of the ego.

It is important to realize that there is a purpose that underlies our perceiving the world the way that we do and our making the world the way we did. This wasn't an accident. We made the world to mirror what is in the mind—the suffering, the fear, the terror, the littleness, and the sickliness that are in the ego mind. What was made real in the mind and projected out we now see outside us, not in the mind. If we saw it in the mind and stayed in the mind, we would at some point hear the Voice of the Holy Spirit and realize the whole thing is made up. The Love of God calls to us so compellingly that the fear of the ego would disappear. That is why the ego takes the fear, the littleness, the suffering, and the guilt, and projects them out into a world. It makes up a body that objectifies what is in the mind so that it is outside. And then we totally forget where it came from. We no longer have a choice here. The only choice that we have, which mirrors the choice in the mind, is "kill or be killed" (M-17.7:10). Do you die or do I die? What I want is not to see sickness in myself but to perceive it outside myself, in you. If you're the one who's sick, then I am well. We'll get into this more when we talk about sickness later on. But that's the purpose of perceiving pain and suffering and victims in the world—so we don't see them in the mind.

Another way of explaining the ego thought system is to say that the ego has made victimization real in the mind. The original victim from the ego's point of view is God, and we are the victimizer. We have victimized God. We have stolen from Him. Then the ego turns it around: God is hurt. God is angry. God is wrathful. God is going to victimize us. We become the innocent victims, and He is the mean victimizer. Since that is the original ego thought that was projected out into the world, the world then becomes a place of victimization. Before the victimization was played out in my mind, however, I still had a choice of whether to listen to the ego who tells me about its reality, or to the Holy Spirit Who laughs at the whole thought of victimization. Once that thought has been made real and placed in a world and I have a body that sees victimization all around me, I no longer think there is any choice. The only choice now is: Who is going to be the victim, and who is going to be the victimizer?

What is really important to understand is the motivation behind our perceiving pain and suffering and injustice in the world. And the ego never tells us what its ultimate purpose is. Its ultimate purpose is always murder (T-24.II.12:6). The ego would never let us recognize that "what is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10), and nothing here is love. So it tells us its version of love. Its version of love is compassion, concern, pity, feeling sorry for people, taking care of people, ministering to people, taking away people's pain, etc., and we call that love. The ego never tells us its ultimate purpose, which is to kill.

Instead it makes up a world of pain and suffering, and tells us we will be the good people, and we will undo pain and suffering in the world. These are the do-gooders in the world. That is why Jesus says, "Trust not your good intentions. They are not enough" (T-18.IV.2:1-2). It is the well-intentioned people who are the most terrible people in the world. They are the ones you have to watch out for, because they seem to be something other than what they are. An ill-intentioned person is a blessing, because you know exactly what you are up against. I am not saying that such a person is all-loving, but at least you know what you are getting. With Hitler, you knew exactly what you were getting right from the beginning. With the ego's version of love you don't know. That is what special love is. These are the people who are always trying to help others. The governments that are going to make the world safe for democracy are the governments you have to watch out for. These are the people who see the problems

in the world and are going to solve the problems in the world, which means that they fall nicely into the whole ego thought system. There is no problem in the world, because there is no world. There is no sickness in the world, because there is no body to be sick. There is no suffering in the world, because there is no self that can experience suffering in the world. The whole thing is one big magic trick, because the problem is in the mind, but it's seen out here in the world. Once seen in the world, we forget where the problem came from; that's what the veil of denial or forgetfulness accomplishes. The body tells us there is indeed something out here. So we believe that the body can see, the brain can think, etc., etc. And the whole thing is made up.