

True Empathy

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part XXIII Concluding Excerpts

It is terribly important, as I said right at the beginning of the workshop, that we recognize what the Course's metaphysics is really teaching. The entire world is an illusion, which means nothing here is real. That means the whole perception of differences in this world is made up. What unifies everything in this world is that it comes from one source—guilt. And guilt comes from one source—it is a defense against God's Love. Everything here is an expression either of the ego's guilt or of the Holy Spirit's Love. We are all one, we are not different; we only have the illusion of being different. Sickness, suffering, and pain are wonderful devices the ego uses to keep us separate. You are suffering, I am not suffering. So we are separate, we are different, and in this is an inherent judgment made—a judgment that is an attack.

I do not have to experience everybody as one—that is not possible for a human brain. It is possible, however, for me to understand that we all share the same purpose. We are all different in form, but we all share the same purpose—that is what is important—that is what unifies. So we do not deny what our eyes see. There is an important passage in the teacher's manual which is extremely helpful in this regard. If you find yourself or those in your *Course in Miracles* circle saying, "I am not sick, you are not sick, we are all one, and I do not see your body I just see a white light," you are either in denial or you are on the verge of a psychosis if that is what you see. We are not asked to deny what we see. This passage is a wonderful way of describing that.

The context of the passage—**M-8.6:1-6**—is someone whose mind has been healed.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 1) The body's eyes will continue to see differences.

We are not asked to deny what our eyes see. We are not asked to deny that, on the level of form, in the world of symbols and names, we all have different names and we are all different.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 2) But the mind that has let itself be healed will no longer acknowledge them.

Actually, the phrase "let itself be healed" is important. The mind has not been healed, because we are already healed. We have simply allowed the healing of the Holy Spirit to be itself. And this is the double vision that I was talking about—I see the world and all the differences here, but my mind automatically corrects what I see. I recognize that all the differences are just different ways of expressing the unity of the ego-separated mind, which in itself is a defense against the unity of the Christ Mind. And we share them both. Within the dream we share the ego mind and in reality we share Christ.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 3) There will be those who seem to be "sicker" than others, and the body's eyes will report their changed appearances as before.

We are not asked to deny that someone is dying of AIDS or cancer, or someone's body has been mangled in an automobile accident, and looks different from a body that has not been in an accident; nor are we asked to deny that in the world some people are sicker than others—someone who is schizophrenic is sicker than someone who is not.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 4) But the healed mind will put them all in one category; they are unreal.

Those who are extremely sick, those who are moderately sick, those who are slightly sick, and those who are reasonably healthy—they are all unreal.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentences 5-6) This is the gift of its Teacher [the Holy Spirit]; the understanding that only two categories are meaningful in sorting out the messages the mind receives from what appears to be the outside world. And of these two, but one is real.

Again, we are not asked to deny what we see. We are simply asked to put everything into one of two categories—either an expression of love or a call for love. The ego sees many different categories, with everyone and everything expressing separation and differences, which are unreal. The Holy Spirit sees everyone and everything as all the same—we are all children of love. Some of us express it and some of us call for it. But the reality is that we are all one in that love. Even though we use different symbols and believe we exist in different forms, we all share the same basic content—we are all Sons of the same God, which means we are all one.

We are not asked to deny what we see—we do not deny what the dream is. We simply say we are not the dream. That is all. That is the double vision. When Jesus was here he saw what everybody else saw, but his experience was totally different. He saw people killing his body, his eyes perceived differences, but his mind did not react to the differences because his mind knew only the Love of Christ. And so he only experienced the love of the Sonship calling out for the love that it believed it did not have. The Course is asking us—and this, in a sense, is what the training of the Course, which is a process, is all about—to be aware that what we are seeing is not what the reality is.

Now, you may find yourself thinking, "This all sounds perfectly well and good, but I am afraid that I am not Jesus, and so I am not up to seeing the world the way he does." But we are not asked to see the world as he does. We are asked simply to *want* to see the world as he does. There is a passage in the Course that says that the question we should ask ourselves is, "Do I really wish to see him [my brother] sinless?" (T-20.VII.9:2). It does not say that I *see* him sinless. The question is do I *want* to see him sinless? That is the little willingness.

So when you are dying of cancer or AIDS and your body is withering away in front of me, I am not asked to see you as perfectly healed and whole. If I could see you perfectly healed and whole I would not be here, and I would not need *A Course in Miracles*. That is where students get caught. I am asked to see you just the way that I see you, but to be aware that I am seeing you this way because I am afraid of seeing the Love of God in *me*. Forget about seeing the Love of God in you—I am afraid of seeing the Love of God in me. I am afraid of letting that love get too close to me. I am not asked to see you healed. I am not asked to see you as perfect. I am asked simply to have the little willingness to be told that I am wrong, and that the dream in front of me is simply a dream, and that the reality is the dreamer, not the

dream itself. So when I find myself getting upset, the worst thing in the world that I can do as a student of *A Course in Miracles* is to feel guilty because I am upset. The purpose of the Course is to free us from guilt, not to make us even guiltier. The Course teaches us that to be free from guilt we need to accept that we are guilty and to say that that is all right. Jesus says in the text, "You are not guiltless in time, but in eternity" (T-13.I.3:2). He expects us to be guilty. He expects us to get upset when a loved one is sick or dying. He expects us to get upset by what goes on in the world. He expects us to get upset when we feel attacked or unfairly treated. We are not asked not to experience these feelings. We are simply asked to understand that experiencing in that way is coming from a choice that we have made—and it is a choice to push Jesus away. That is what we are asked to understand.

There is one of those places in the text where the whole course is summarized in one sentence: "All that is needed is that you look upon the problem as it is, and not the way that you have set it up" (T-27.VII.2:2). The context of the passage is suffering—all the suffering that we experience in the world, whether it is the suffering of others or our own suffering. The ego tells us that this is a suffering from which we can never escape—the world is a prison in which, as the workbook says later, "starved and thirsty creatures come to die" (W-pII.13.5:1). That is this world from the ego's point of view. And there is no way out, because we all know we are going to die. I may think I can lessen my suffering a little by making you suffer more, but in the end I know I am going to die. So Jesus tells us, "Now you are being shown you *can* escape" (T-27.VII.2:1).

Now, in this one line, just as I read earlier from "The Gifts of God," Jesus tells us how we can escape from all the suffering in the world—whether it is the suffering I perceive outside me that I identify with and feel sorry for and want to heal, or the suffering I experience within myself. This is all we have to do: "All that is needed is that you look upon the problem as it is, and not the way that you have set it up" (T-27.VII.2:2). The way that we have set up the problem is to see it outside us.

For example, say I have a friend who is sick and in pain or is dying—that is the problem. And I feel I have to do something about that problem. Basically, we have set up all things in the world so that we are upset because something has been done to us, or something has been done to someone or a group of people with whom we identify. Psychologically, it makes no difference whether the suffering is happening to me, to a loved one, or to a group with which I identify half way around the world. That is how we have set it up. I am in pain and am suffering because of something the body—mine or yours—has done to me. The truth is, I am upset because I first became afraid of the closeness of Jesus to me, so I dropped his hand and pushed him away, and I then felt terrible—because once again I have abandoned, rejected, and turned away from love. Then I project the responsibility for how I feel on to you, saying you are the reason I am feeling upset. Because you are dying of cancer or AIDS, or something awful has happened to you, I cannot sleep at night. I feel bereft and abandoned, lonely, upset, guilty, etc., and it is your fault. I have set up the problem so that my dis-ease is the effect of what you have done to me or what is happening to you. Jesus is saying that all that I have to do is see the problem as it is—I am the one who abandoned love, who turned away from it, and that is why I am feeling the way I am.

Going back to our earlier example—I am feeling wonderful and joined and loving and loved while here at the Foundation. And I am afraid that when I leave here all that love will be gone. The way I have set up the problem is that if I stay here I will feel happy and peaceful and I will feel the closeness of Jesus, but if I leave here these feelings will be gone. That means the cause of my distress is not anything I am doing.

The cause of my distress is a circumstance beyond my control. I cannot help it if I have a job that I have to go back to. This is not something I have done—it is simply the circumstances that I am leaving this place and so I am leaving love behind. All that I have to do to escape from the suffering that I am feeling is to look at the problem as it is—the way that I had described it earlier. The problem is that I am the one who is pushing Jesus away. I am the one who is limiting his love, saying, "I will let you love me here, but I won't let you love me where I live."

In other words, all I have to do to be able to leave the world of darkness—which is the world of form, the world of the body—is to go back to the place in my mind where I made the decision to exclude love and to exclude or limit Jesus, and say, "Yes, that's what I'm doing." That is all I have to do. Then I have done my part for the healing of the world, for the healing of all the pain and suffering that has ever existed, is existing now, or will ever exist. And this is because all the pain and suffering—past, present and future—comes from separating from the Love of God. So my part is simply to rejoin that love, that is all—being aware of and looking at what I have done, without judgment, without blaming the Foundation, without blaming people here, without blaming myself. If I can do that, I am already joined with Jesus.

Remember the passage that we read earlier from the text. We have no other choice—we join either with the dreams of fear or with the dreams of love, either with the ego or with the Holy Spirit. There is no other choice. If we join with the ego there will be judgment. There has to be judgment because that is what the ego is—judgment. If we join with Jesus there will be no judgment, no guilt, no attack, because that is what he is. So if I can recognize that the source of my distress is not my leaving one physical place and going to another, but rather that I chose to exclude love—if I can look at that in myself without coming down hard on herself, or blaming anybody else for it, then I have looked with Jesus. I have undone my mistake. My mistake was that I had pushed Jesus away, but now I am bringing him back. And I am finished. I have let myself be healed. I have let the world be healed. Now, in the next moment I may get frightened again and drop Jesus' hand, but then I simply do the whole process all over again.

That is all that is ever asked of us. That is what it means to accept the Atonement for ourselves. Remember, all the pain and suffering in the world, regardless of how big it appears to be, no matter how many billions of people it embraces, comes simply from moving away from love in our minds, because there is nothing else. There is no world out here. The whole world rests in that little gap. Remember, the entire world arose to cover over the guilt in the little gap—the guilt that came from separating from the Love of God. And we re-enact that over and over again. That is what the Course means when it says, "each hour and minute, even each second, you are deciding between the crucifixion and the resurrection" (T-14.III.4:1). Then in a later passage it says virtually the same thing, that we choose "to relive the single instant when the time of terror took the place of love" (T-26.V.13:1). We simply re-enact that moment over and over again. But it is always the same moment, because there is only one instant. We simply, as seemingly separated fragments, re-enact that one choice over and over again. In the instant that I feel separated from the love of Jesus, I am living out the mistake of the entire world, because it is all the same. This makes no sense from this side, in the body. But when we look at it from the place of truth and look back down on it, then we understand that it is all happening at once. All I have to do is simply say, "Yes, this is what I have done. And it wasn't a sin—I am not going to be punished for it—it was simply a silly mistake." And the Love of God is with me, saying with me, "Yes, it was nothing but a silly mistake and had no consequences." The guilt that led to the making of this

world—and my mind is a part of that—and to the sustaining of this world is the guilt over having separated from the Love of God, which the ego says had a disastrous consequence: God is furious. If we can have the experience of seeing ourselves turn away from love, and yet have love look with us on that sin without judgment, it is no longer a sin. And then I can say that my limiting Jesus, my pushing him away, my betraying him, my betraying this person, my betraying love, had absolutely no effect. Then it stops being a sin and becomes merely a mistake, which does not need defense. And the tiny gap has been made clean and the Love of God is there. That is all that is needed, and that solves all the pain and suffering that ever existed.

Returning now to **Lesson 184**—the final line:

(Paragraph 11 - Sentence 4) Use all the names the world bestows on them but for convenience, yet do not forget they share the Name of God along with you.

Nothing in this world means anything. We have given it a meaning which is murderous. When we see the world as a classroom, once we go back into the light, the symbols and the names and the words of the world become transformed by that light. And so we are asked to "use all the names the world bestows on them"—"them" would be all the seemingly separated fragments.

I will still relate to you as if you were a separated person—as if you were my mother or father, my sister or brother, my child, my spouse, my lover or friend, or my patient, my therapist, colleague, supervisor, boss, or employee, etc., etc. I will use all those names, but I will not forget that we are all part of the same Christ. That does not mean that I keep having to say the word "Christ" as I am talking to you or to envelop you in white light. It means I do not see your purpose as separate from mine. All I have to do is be aware of my temptation, my need, my investment in seeing you as separate and different from me, in order to justify my judgment of difference. I bring that to the place of light in my mind, and say to Jesus: "I am using this as a weapon, not only against my brother or sister, but against you, because I'm afraid of you." That is all I have to do. If I could do that without judgment of myself or you, then I would have accepted the Atonement. At that instant I am healed and the whole world is healed with me. That is real empathy. I am empathizing with the Love of Christ that is in you, because I have identified the Love of Christ within me.