

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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Part IV

What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers? Honesty (M-4.II)

We will skip the next section, "Development of Trust." It is an important section, but it would take us a little off track.

Let us turn now to the second of the characteristics, honesty. Honesty in the Course is not what we think it would be. It is not about behavior or words. It refers to the consistency of what we do or say with what we think. For example, from the world's perspective, visiting a funeral home and looking as if I am sad as I kneel by a coffin and pray for someone who is not even there is dishonest. But it is not dishonest if my behavior is consistent with the loving thought in my mind. My behavior is a way of joining in love with the others who are there grieving. And that is what makes my behavior consistent with the thought in my mind.

(1:1-2) All other traits of God's teachers rest on trust. Once that has been achieved, the others cannot fail to follow.

As we know, the whole ego thought system rests on our denying that God can be trusted. Acceptance of the Holy Spirit's thought system rests on denying the ego's denial. So once I really know I can trust the Holy Spirit, I have no need at that point to hold on to the tiny wings of a sparrow. The only reason I would hold on to fear, sin, guilt, separation, attack, and loneliness is that I am afraid of God's Love.

The ego thought system is purposive. Its function is to protect us from God's Love because our minds do not value it. At the beginning, in that original instant, we chose not to value the Holy Spirit's teaching that the ego and its effects were made up. Instead we said that we did not want the Holy Spirit's correction—we wanted the ego. But once we change our minds and say that we do not value the ego anymore, and that we value only God's Love as all we want and are not afraid of it, then everything that the ego has taught us no longer has a purpose for us. We simply let it go, and all the other characteristics automatically follow.

(1:3) Only the trusting can afford honesty, for only they can see its value.

The whole ego thought system is based on a lie. Just as in the Adam and Eve story, which is really a wonderful way of symbolizing the birth of the ego, the devil or the serpent lies. The entire ego thought system is based upon a dishonest thought, namely, that we have indeed separated from God and God is angry at us. God does not even know about us, so how could He be angry?

In other words, right from the beginning, when we chose the ego we valued dishonesty. We became afraid and did not value honesty. So when we now say "I trust the Holy Spirit and not the ego," we are placing value on honesty or the truth.

(1:4-6) Honesty does not apply only to what you say. The term actually means consistency. There is nothing you say that contradicts what you think or do; no thought opposes any other thought; no act belies your word; and no word lacks agreement with another.

Right at the beginning the ego thought opposed the Holy Spirit's thought, so that the split mind became a battlefield, a place of opposition. From the ego's point of view, it is at war with God, it is opposing God. And the ego tells one lie after another, first by making up a God Who is angry, and then by making up a world that the ego tells us will make us safe and protect us from God's wrath. But then it becomes apparent that the world is not a safe place, because everyone in the world suffers pain and everyone dies. This world is hardly safe.

So the ego lies all the way down the line, right from the beginning. It makes up a world out of a lie, the lie being that the world will defend and protect us—the body will protect us. Well, the body is a hell of a thing to protect us—it is always breaking down and eventually it is going to die. From the beginning, one inconsistency follows after another.

(1:7-9) Such are the truly honest. At no level are they in conflict with themselves. Therefore it is impossible for them to be in conflict with anyone or anything.

That is what enables me, then, to go to a funeral parlor and join with everyone by appearing to be upset. There is only love within me and love only joins. The only thing that is important is my joining with everyone else. I join with all the people in the funeral home—all my family and friends who believe they have suffered loss and that something terrible has happened, which reminds them of the original loss that they believe they suffered.

But if I come in speaking the words of *A Course in Miracles*, I am separating myself from them. I am telling them that their perception of separation and loss is correct because I am demonstrating that separation is real. They are all joined in grief. My coming there, holding high the banner of "truth" and "love," etc., is not joining with them. It is separating from them. So I want to join with them on a level they can accept and understand—that is honest. My honesty is not in speaking the truth of *A Course in Miracles*. My honesty comes in first joining with the love within my mind that then directs me and guides me to join with people on the level of form.

Let me read something from the text that makes this point clear. This passage is helpful whenever we are tempted to fall into the trap of preaching truth in a way that is really an attack. The context of this section is the use of magic, or medicine. It is saying that the use of magic or medicine is not sinful, and in fact very often is loving because we are joining with people on the level where they are.

The value of the Atonement does not lie in the manner in which it is expressed [the level of form]. In fact, if it is used truly, it will inevitably be expressed in whatever way is most helpful to the receiver. [So if the most helpful thing for someone who is mourning the death of a loved one is to join with them there, then that is what we do.] This means that a miracle, to attain its full efficacy, must be expressed in a language that the recipient can understand without fear (T-2.IV.5:1-3).

If I come into the funeral home, believing I am this symbol of God's perfect Love and mouthing all these perfectly wonderful truths, the other people almost certainly would experience that as rather threatening. It therefore would not be helpful because it would only increase their fear.

This does not necessarily mean that this is the highest level of communication of which he is capable. It does mean, however, that it is the highest level of communication of which he is capable *now*. The whole aim of the miracle is to raise the level of communication, not to lower it by increasing fear (T-2.IV.5:4-6).

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What is honest is not the form. It is not the form that is true but the love that inspires it. And the love will always lead to an expression of joining. We do not want to get trapped in the idea that to be the perfect *Course in Miracles* teacher, etc., we have to look and act like a holy, spiritual person—that is an ego idea.

(2:1-2) The peace of mind which the advanced teachers of God experience is largely due to their perfect honesty. It is only the wish to deceive that makes for war.

The reason I am not at peace has nothing to do with anything outside me. I am not at peace because I have chosen *not* to be at peace—I have seen myself at war with God. And when I make my war with God real within my mind, that thought must then be projected out and make a world that believes it is at war as well. So everybody's experience is that the world is a battlefield—I have to take care of myself and I have to see to it that other people don't hurt me. Thus, I am not at peace because I believe I am living in a battle zone.

But if I could be perfectly honest—which means that I identify with the honesty of God and the Holy Spirit's truth—I would know there is no war. And if there is no battlefield in my mind, I won't perceive the world as a battlefield. Then no matter what goes on around me, I will be at peace.

(2:3) No one at one with himself can even conceive of conflict.

That basically is a tautology. If I am at one with myself, then my mind is not split and there can be no conflict.

(2:4) Conflict is the inevitable result of self-deception, and self-deception is dishonesty.

Conflict arises because I have deceived myself about who I am. I have listened to the ego's voice, which is the dishonest voice, and have blocked out the Holy Spirit's Voice, which is the Voice of honesty. Once I have chosen against myself, I must be in conflict. I must be in a state of dishonesty, which means I will value dishonesty and I will not value honesty or truth. Once I believe that I am in conflict or at war with myself, I also must believe that I am at war with everyone else, and everyone in the world is in conflict with me.

I am not only deceiving myself about who I am as a child of God, but I am also deceiving myself about who *you* are as my brother or sister in Christ. Since we are all part of the same self, I am not only in conflict about the self that I am experiencing as myself, but I am also in conflict with the larger, collective self. I am seeing everyone within this greater self or mind at odds with everyone else. So

everything in the world seems to be in conflict, and everything therefore must be a deception, because conflict is not the truth. The truth is that we are all one.

(2:5-6) There is no challenge to a teacher of God. Challenge implies doubt, and the trust on which God's teachers rest secure makes doubt impossible.

Our society always values people who overcome great challenges and adversity. These are the heroes—people who possess great courage. From the Course's point of view, these are all aspects of the ego's attempt to triumph and prove that it is greater than God.

Consider Jesus as an example—he was not a brave man. He had no courage whatsoever. He simply was who he was. There was nothing he had to overcome, nothing he had to be brave about. Bravery, courage, etc., are attributes of the ego. The ego has made up a world that has to be overcome, and then spends a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to overcome those obstacles that it itself has made. Their purpose is to distract us from the only thing we ever have to remember: Who we are. That requires no bravery, no courage, no effort. Everything else that we have put between ourselves and God simply has to be undone. So there is no challenge.

But once we are dishonest, we have separated ourselves from the honesty of God. And so we make up a dishonest world as a dishonest answer to a dishonest question. Our great challenge in life then is to overcome all of the obstacles. But the whole thing is made up. There is no challenge. Once we remember Who we are, all doubt disappears, all obstacles disappear, and all need to triumph disappears. Remember, the ego thought system begins with the premise that it has triumphed over God, that it has overcome its enemy. It has broken free at last from the tyranny of perfect love and has set up its opposite world, its world of opposition. From that moment, everything the ego does will involve some kind of triumph. And so in this world we are always trying to triumph over each other, over adversity, over others who are trying to attack us, and so on. The popular expression, "Love triumphs over all" implies that something out there has to be overcome. However, once we accept God's honesty and the Holy Spirit's truth as our own, God becomes Someone Whom we trust. There is no doubt of Him or His Love, and no doubt of our true Identity. Therefore there is no challenge.

(2:7) Therefore they can only succeed.

This does not necessarily mean that God's teachers will succeed in the world. But neither will they necessarily fail. It is irrelevant whether they succeed or fail in the world. When we strive after anything in the world—seeking to overcome, to succeed, to avoid failure—obviously we are making the world out there real. And the world was made simply as a defense against our true nature as God's Son. The world is a giant smokescreen. Once we believe something out there has to be changed, overcome, or triumphed over, we have fallen into the ego trap.

(2:8-12) In this, as in all things, they are honest. They can only succeed, because they never do their will alone. They choose for all mankind; for all the world and all things in it; for the unchanging and unchangeable beyond appearances; and for the Son of God and his Creator. How could they not succeed? They choose in perfect honesty, sure of their choice as of themselves.

The line "they never do their will alone" means, as we mentioned earlier, that they do not believe in separate interests. They recognize that their will is one with the will of the Sonship as well as with the Will of God. So, in choosing to be at peace, I must be choosing that everyone else be at peace as well. If

we are all children of the one God, part of the one Mind and the one Son, then it cannot be that I can have a will different from anyone else's, including my Creator. The belief that I do have a will separate from God's was the original ego thought. That thought was then protected and defended by making up a world in which separate interests appear to be the law.

What follows then is that I do not care about what happens to *you* or your family or your religion or your country. I only care about what happens to *me*, my family, my religion, my country, and all the groups with whom I identify. But when I recognize that we are all one and that I cannot hold any separating or attacking thoughts and be peaceful, then I also recognize that it is within my decision-making power to choose differently.

The choice "for the unchanging and unchangeable beyond appearances" is the choice for the Christ that is in all of us. Despite all the seeming differences that keep us separate in this world, what unites us is that we all have the same Source, we all have the same Mind. The world was made to give witness to the lie, namely, that we are all different. So my allegiance is not to the world as a group of separate bodies, nor to the planet as a living organism in and of itself, as many people speak of it today. My allegiance and my fidelity is to the truth beyond all appearances—to the Christ that we all share.

What we will find as we go through each of these characteristics is that we will be saying the same thing over and over again—just as we find in every paragraph in the Course. Different words, perhaps, and different forms, but the content is always the same.