

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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Part V

What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?

Tolerance (M-4.III)

This characteristic of the teacher of God, *tolerance*, is not tolerance as the world usually speaks of it, but rather the absence of judgment. The world's meaning is really a mask for attack—that I tolerate you, or that I am a tolerant person. The Course is talking about something totally opposite to that—a perception or a vision that sees no differences or, in other words, that sees only the unchanging and the unchangeable.

Now certainly to the body's eyes everyone is different. When the Course says not to judge, it does not mean that we deny the differences that exist on the physical plane. It means that we do not make the differences into a big deal. When the Course says not to judge, it really means not to attack. Everybody here had to make a judgment to be at this workshop. Everybody had to make a judgment to study the Course. Those are judgments. We cannot study every form of spirituality in the world, so we have to make a judgment. The Course is not against making judgments. It simply asks us not to make them on our own.

But above all, when it says not to judge, the Course means not to *condemn*. Similarly, when the Course says not to see our brother as a body, it does not mean to deny that there is a physical organism in front of us. That is silly and the Course is not silly. It is simple, but it is not simple-minded. When we are asked not to see our brother as a body, the Course means not to judge him as a body, and not to see the body as the ego does—always as a means of attack and separation and of proving that God is an illusion.

We are not being asked to deny the body in front of us or the body that we experience as ourselves. We are being asked not to share in the ego's interpretation of the body as a means for attack—as something to attack with and to be attacked.

(1:1-2) God's teachers do not judge. To judge is to be dishonest, for to judge is to assume a position you do not have.

The Course repeats this theme many times in the manual as well as in other places. The only One Who can judge fairly and openly and with great wisdom is the Holy Spirit. We are insane to believe we can make any reasonable judgment about what is in anybody's, including our own, best interest—that we can in any way know what would be best in any circumstance. To do that, as the Course explains in another passage (M-10.3:3-7), would involve a knowledge of everything that has gone on in the past, everything that will happen in the future, and how this particular judgment will affect all the people who are involved in any way with it. And obviously no one in this world has that kind of perspective.

So it is dishonest to presume that we can be in that kind of position. But that position is exactly what the ego has assumed right from the beginning—kicking God off the throne and supplanting Him, usurping His position and then asserting that *it* is now God. Whenever we believe that we know what is best, we are once again reflecting that original ego idea and that original instant when we bumped God off and took His place.

Let's just turn to the end of the manual and read another passage about this idea:

There is another advantage,—and a very important one,—in referring decisions to the Holy Spirit with increasing frequency. Perhaps you have not thought of this aspect, but its centrality is obvious. To follow the Holy Spirit's guidance is to let yourself be absolved of guilt. It is the essence of the Atonement. It is the core of the curriculum. The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear. The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so, making fear inevitable. To return the function to the One to Whom it belongs is thus the escape from fear. And it is this that lets the memory of love return to you. Do not, then, think that following the Holy Spirit's guidance is necessary merely because of your own inadequacies [the ego in us always takes that as a personal insult]. It is the way out of hell for you (M-29.3).

Right at the beginning we took God's place—that is the source of guilt. The essence of the Atonement then is the undoing of the insane belief that we can attack and kill God, take His place, and actually be God. The essence of the Atonement is recognizing that none of this ever happened. The Love of God is still what it has always been; and we, as an extension of that Love, also are still what we have always been. Asking for the Holy Spirit's help, thus, is an expression of our recognition that the presence of Love, to Whom we can turn and on Whom we are dependent, is there in our minds.

So the ego's mistake has been to believe that it is independent and can function on its own. We can only barely approximate the amount of terror that is involved if we consider how a small child feels when it temporarily gets lost and feels it is all alone. That is just a very mild expression of the overriding terror within each of us over the belief that we have actually pulled this off—that we have kicked God out and are now totally on our own.

The whole world, then, has become the screen that protects us from our terror over taking God's place. As the passage we just read says, "The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear. The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so . . ." So my learning to trust in the Holy Spirit really is my acknowledging that I cannot undo my ego on my own and that I do not *want* to do this on my own. That, then, is what Jesus means by the dishonesty of our judgment in assuming a position that we do not have. Our thought is also dishonest because judgment implies something to choose from or to choose between, which can only be true in a world of separation and duality. In Heaven there is no judgment because there are no choices to be made.

So the belief that our judgment is important and makes a difference is the ego's attempt to convince us that the world and the ego are real and important. We want to recognize that it does not matter what we choose at the level of the world. What does matter is which teacher we choose. Recognizing that is a helpful part of the process of returning home.

(1:3-5) Judgment without self-deception is impossible. Judgment implies that you have been deceived in your brothers. How, then, could you not have been deceived in yourself?

Judging against you implies that there must have been some kind of attack—either you have attacked me or I have attacked you. Of course, in my own mind it will usually be both. And once I believe that separation and attack are real, I have not only been deceived in you, but I have been deceived in myself as well. For how I perceive you will be exactly how I perceive myself—there will be no difference.

(1:6-7) Judgment implies a lack of trust, and trust remains the bedrock of the teacher of God's whole thought system. Let this be lost, and all his learning goes.

If I don't trust in the Holy Spirit but trust rather in the ego, I have already made a judgment—against myself. The reason I don't trust in the Holy Spirit is that I have already accused myself of being guilty of sinning against God. And so I fear God's punishment and become afraid of the Holy Spirit's loving, gentle presence in my mind, believing instead that it is a hostile presence that will destroy me.

So I have already made a judgment against myself. I have made a judgment that says there is a battlefield in my mind, as I said earlier. That judgment, that thought system of a battlefield in my mind, becomes projected out, giving rise to a world that is a battlefield. And I can trust no one in the world because my self-hatred demands that I be punished for my attack on God. I then make judgments in terms of what is safe and what is not safe. And when I make a judgment that some situation I am in is not safe, then I make a judgment about what will protect me. I attempt to determine who I can manipulate to guard and protect me from danger. And I need to find protection because of my prior judgment against myself; namely, that I have sinned against God and deserve to be punished.

(1:8) Without judgment are all things equally acceptable, for who could judge otherwise?

When I let go of judgment, which means I let go of my distrust of God, I remember who I am and can identify with that presence of Love within my mind. And that Love is unity. There is no separation or division there. That Love then extends through me and I see all things in this world as embraced by that Love. And I do not see differences—I am not deceived by the superficial differences that my body's eyes perceive. All that I see—as the Course says, the only judgment that the Holy Spirit makes in the world—is either an expression of love or a call for love. There is no other possibility.

That makes my response extremely simple. If you are my brother or sister in Christ and you extend and express love to me, then obviously I will express it back to you. If you are my brother or sister in Christ and you are calling for love, not believing that you are worthy of it, then as your brother or sister in Christ, I will extend love to you. So it makes no difference. And that is the only judgment that the Holy Spirit makes—a judgment that calls for the exact same response.

(1:9-11) Without judgment are all men brothers, for who is there who stands apart? Judgment destroys honesty and shatters trust. No teacher of God can judge and hope to learn.

Jesus is referring here to judgments of attack and condemnation against others. He does not mean we should not make any judgments in this world—we must. But we should not make judgment into a big deal—we do not have to ask the Holy Spirit every time we are going to do something, as it explains in that section we just read from (M-29.5:4-8). In other words, when I get up in the morning I don't have to make a big deal about what color slacks or shirt to wear, unless, for whatever reason, that kind of choice

has become a major symbol of fear or guilt for me. For example, if I find myself thinking that I'm going to see so-and-so today and that person likes blue, I will wear blue because that's going to help me manipulate that person into giving me what I want. At that point my judgment about wearing blue is an attack. That's when I should turn to the Holy Spirit. Not that the color I wear matters, but the motivation for my choice does.

We do not have to ask the Holy Spirit every time we want to do something. We simply want to be reasonably attentive to when our judgments have ego thoughts associated with them. At that point we should ask for the Holy Spirit's help, not with the specifics of the choice, such as what color to wear, but rather with letting go of any attack thoughts or fear thoughts, etc., associated with the decision.

Consider another example—voting in an election. We should simply vote for whoever we think would be the best president, prime minister or whatever, without any investment. In other words, we make a judgment just as we would decide whether to have coffee or tea, or to wear a white dress or a pink dress, or to turn left or right. Or to come here to a class or do something else. The point is that we not make a big deal about it. And since one of our roles is being a citizen of our country, then we do what citizens in our country do when we vote.

Unless we are very specifically guided otherwise—and we should be very cautious about such guidance—we should always remain within the roles that we have accepted—wife, mother, child, daughter, sister, friend, citizen, etc. And we should do what the role says we should do because that is the classroom that we have chosen. We might as well obey the rules of the classroom, unless we are very clear that we have been guided otherwise. So when it comes to voting, vote for the Republican or the Democrat, or whatever political parties are involved, but don't make it into a big deal.