

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

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Part XI

What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?

Faithfulness (M-4.IX)

This section is basically about generalization—having faith that the Course's teachings work in all situations. This, of course, must be true because all situations are the same. The ego teaches that everything is different—each problem is unique and different and has to be addressed differently based on its own special circumstances. But in truth, all problems are one problem. Every problem is just another expression of separation, which means that all problems have one solution: the Holy Spirit's forgiveness or joining.

So faithfulness means knowing that we only have to shift the way that we are looking at a problem, and the Love of God will solve it for us. Not on the level of form, of course. The Love of God will simply be the content that filters through our minds, and any way that we approach the specific problem at that point will be peaceful and loving, and it will work. Again, not necessarily in form. But it will work in the sense that we will be peaceful. Our only problem is that we are not at peace. So when we are at peace again, the problem has been solved. And that is what faithfulness is about as it is presented in this section.

(1:1) The extent of the teacher of God's faithfulness is the measure of his advancement in the curriculum.

The "curriculum" is learning that all problems are one problem, and therefore all solutions are one solution. So the extent of our being faithful—of having faith that all our problems will be solved—is the measure of how far we have come. This is really implying that the spiritual path, the path of becoming an advanced teacher of God through practicing this Course, is a process.

(1:2) Does he still select some aspects of his life to bring to his learning, while keeping others apart?

We all, of course, do this. We allow the process to work in some areas of our lives, but not in all. So for example, we will let the Holy Spirit help us to forgive this person in this situation, but not that person in that situation. Or He can help us deal with this particular form of pain and suffering, but not with another one that we have decided is too big. All we are doing is saying that there are differences in this world. And once we say that, we obviously are making the world real.

The very powerful section "The Laws of Chaos" (T-23.II) in Chapter 23 describes the ego's five laws. The first law is that there is a hierarchy of illusions. Some illusions are better, some illusions are worse than others. Some illusions are holy, some are not. These judgments are all based upon form. Everyone in the world thinks in terms of form. Thus we can solve certain problems more easily than other problems.

Now, in the world of form, this is undoubtedly true. But remember the whole world of form is part of the dream. And when we recognize that the only problem is that we believe the dream is real—and that is the problem—then everything is simple. So within the dream it does appear as if there are differences. But when we recognize that all the differences come from the same, basic thought of separation—which is illusory—then they are all the same.

(1:3) If so, his advancement is limited, and his trust not yet firmly established.

In other words, we still withhold certain problems from the Holy Spirit, which basically means that we still believe certain things that go on in the world have the power to keep us from being peaceful and from feeling God's Love. We are saying that there are certain sources of pain or sickness, or certain conditions in the world, or certain things that people do that have the power to keep the peace of God away from us. That is what we are all saying when we do not generalize the lesson of forgiveness to all situations. The truth is that, regardless of what is going on around us, we can still be at peace and know that God's Love is within us. Not knowing that is the only problem, and accepting it is the only solution.

(1:4) Faithfulness is the teacher of God's trust in the Word of God to set all things right; not some, but all.

As used in the Course, the phrase "the Word of God" is almost always some expression of God's Answer, the Holy Spirit's Atonement principle. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for the Holy Spirit, sometimes for the Atonement principle, sometimes for the plan of the Atonement, sometimes for forgiveness, etc.

So faithfulness is knowing that, regardless of the source of our distress, the Holy Spirit's Love in our minds can set all things right. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit's Love will fix everything in the world. Think of Jesus: his life was not fixed up at the end. Not externally, certainly. Or think of people in the concentration camps who went to their deaths there. Their lives were not set straight, as the world would judge it. All things are set right in our experience or perception of them so that, regardless of what is going on around us, without exception, we are filled with the Love and the peace of God. Once we make exceptions, we are saying there is a hierarchy of illusions and the world of separation and the ego's thought system of separation are real. And we are trapped.

(1:5) Generally, his faithfulness begins by resting on just some problems, remaining carefully limited for a time.

At the beginning, that would be natural for us.

(1:6-8) To give up all problems to one Answer is to reverse the thinking of the world entirely. And that alone is faithfulness. Nothing but that really deserves the name.

Again, that is what makes the Course so incredibly simple. And this cannot be understood, let alone deeply experienced, without really knowing—experientially as well as intellectually—that the entire world is made up and that, in fact, there is no world. The whole thing is a silly dream whose only purpose is to keep us from awakening. Without exception, the entire world is that. As that idea grows in us, first intellectually and then as part of our experience, we begin to understand why there is only one problem and one answer, and why there is no order of difficulty in miracles.

The only problem is that I think there is a problem—that is the problem! And so again, the problem is not the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God. The problem is making it into a problem, taking it as

something serious—that is the problem. And we replicate that basic mistake over and over and over again. We get upset about something that is not there. Recall we talked earlier about the closed fist as a metaphor for the closed mind—we really believe something terrible is in the closed fist. So we never go anywhere near it. But it is a made-up problem. When we reach the point where we can look at it and see there is nothing in there, it all disappears. All the anxiety, concern, and guilt disappear.

Everything in this world is like that. And so that is what it means to be a teacher of God: recognizing that there is nothing that has to be taught and nothing that has to be learned. We simply accept the truth that is already present in us. That means we look with honesty at the ego thought system and all its manifestations—all the things that upset and concern us. We look at them and say, "This is not the problem—this is not what it appears to be." So growing in *A Course in Miracles* means recognizing that there is nothing out there that has to be forgiven or corrected. There is nothing or no one out there that has to be helped or healed. What has to be helped and healed is my mind that perceives something out there to be helped and healed.

This does not mean that our bodies do not do anything, or that our bodies do not take the form of helping other people. But I do not experience *myself* as doing the helping. I experience myself as being the instrument through which the help comes. In a lovely passage in the workbook, Jesus says, "For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands, through which I save the world" (W-pl.rV.9:2-3). What is particularly important about this passage is that Jesus says *he* is the one who saves the world, not us, but that he cannot save it except through us—just as he could not give this message unless he had Helen's body to speak through.

So again, this does not mean that we turn our backs on what goes on in the world. It simply means we turn our *minds* over to the One Who really knows what is going on in the world. And then His Love works through us, guiding our bodies to do whatever we do. When we do it right, we no longer experience ourselves as doing it. And so we have no investment in people being healed or getting well or getting fed, and no investment in there being peace in the world, or anything like that. Once we have an investment in anything, we obviously are making it real. We want to have an investment in having our minds healed by bringing all our thoughts of separation, guilt, fear, and attack to the Presence of Love in our minds. When we rejoin with Jesus' love, his love then works through us.

Now although we just read that faithfulness has no exceptions (it means giving *all* our problems to the one Answer), Jesus then says:

(1:9-10) Yet each degree, however small, is worth achieving. Readiness, as the text notes, is not mastery.

In other words, Jesus is saying that the ideal and the goal is to be able to apply this principle to all situations, all problems, and all relationships, without exception. But he is also telling us that we are not going to do this right away. And so we take small steps, and every small step is worth it. He is saying that at any given moment, when we are able to turn a problem over to him, we have made progress. And we are ready to do that, even if we have not mastered the whole principle. Even if we are not perfect, we can still walk along the road to becoming perfect.

What is helpful about this—and we find this throughout the three books—is Jesus' gentleness and patience, if we can use such a word for him. He is not expecting us to be perfect. We may be tempted to

say, "Well, I can't do this because I keep getting angry, or I keep getting sick, or I keep getting depressed, and then I feel so guilty." But the goal of the Course is not to be finished with all this—one, two, three. The goal rather is to provide a means whereby, step by step, we take all the small steps along a longer path, which will eventually lead us beyond all of our ego thoughts. But it is a process. It is not something that happens overnight.

So another way of understanding patience, then, is having patience with ourselves, knowing that we do not have to be perfect. We can be ready to learn the Course and practice it without having mastered it. Because if we have mastered it, then we do not need it. So the purpose of the Course is to address our need for something that helps us undo all of our anger, guilt, anxieties, etc.

(2:1) True faithfulness, however, does not deviate.

So now he is going back to the ultimate sense. In other words, when we are truly faithful, there is no going back and forth.

(2:2-12) Being consistent, it is wholly honest. Being unswerving, it is full of trust. Being based on fearlessness, it is gentle. Being certain, it is joyous. And being confident, it is tolerant. Faithfulness, then, combines in itself the other attributes of God's teachers. It implies acceptance of the Word of God and His definition of His Son. It is to Them [God and His Son] that faithfulness in the true sense is always directed. Toward Them it looks, seeking until it finds. Defenselessness attends it naturally and joy is its condition. And having found, it rests in quiet certainty on that alone to which all faithfulness is due [which of course is God].

To summarize: *Faith* is another of those terms that the Course uses in a way that is different from common usage. The Course is not talking about faith in God the way people usually talk about faith in God. In the Course, and especially in this context, it means having trust in the process, of which the Holy Spirit obviously is in charge. And in our faith and trust in the process, we also recognize that our egos have no power. So despite all the ego's attempts to trip us and others, we are able to look beyond the ego—our own and everyone else's—and trust and have faith that the light of Christ is still shining within our minds. Despite all the murderous thoughts that the world holds—that made and sustain the world—the Love of God and the peace of Heaven have not been touched at all. And I live that faith in my everyday life by trusting that, no matter how upset I get, there is still an unswerving, unyielding, and constant presence of love in my mind that is always there for me. And not only is it always there for me, but it is in everyone else as well. I have trust that I am on the right path, and that love is guiding me and love is the goal. And I will achieve it. *When* I do does not matter. All that matters is the certainty that I will make it home. That is faith.