

## What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Temecula CA

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

### Part XVIII

#### How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17) (cont.)

**(4:1-2) Perhaps it will be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact. It is always an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions, regardless of their seeming justification by what *appears* as facts.**

This is another of those ideas that are extremely important to keep in mind. We are never angry at a fact, we are always angry at an interpretation. The tiny, mad idea of being separate from God is a fact, at least within the dream. We had the thought. The interpretation is: "This is horrible! This is sinful! This is terrible!" It is at that thought then that we get angry. Or the fact is that you are picking up a gun and are going to shoot me. That is a fact. The interpretation is that you are going to attack and victimize me. But that can only be true if I identify both you and myself as bodies.

In the *biblical world*, it is a fact that Jesus was crucified. People drove nails into his body and put him on a cross. The interpretation is that he was being attacked. The lesson, of course, is that a Son of God cannot be attacked because God cannot be attacked. Jesus' body was attacked, but he knew he was not being attacked because he knew he was not his body.

Anger always comes from an interpretation; it never comes simply from a fact. Interpretations always personalize, in one way or another, what has happened so that I see myself as a victim. For example, I am driving down a highway and another driver cuts me off. That is a fact. But the interpretation is that he did it *to me*. I am a victim of his insensitivity, his bad driving, his callousness, etc. If you come up to me and start to insult me and hit me, that is a fact. You are saying certain words and carrying out certain actions. That is a fact. The interpretation is that you are doing this *to me*, and that I am a victim of what you are saying and doing.

I cannot change a fact. I cannot change the fact that you are saying insulting things about me or to me. But I can certainly change the way that I am perceiving what you are saying and doing. That is the interpretation. The ego's interpretation is always, "You are doing this *to me*," because victimization is the principle and purpose of the world. If I am feeling unfairly treated or attacked, it is because I have chosen the wrong teacher. I am not upset because of what you are saying. I am upset because of the meaning I am giving it.

The problem is that I chose the ego as my teacher instead of Jesus. That is the issue. Once that is clear, I can easily shift my interpretation by saying, "I don't want to exclude Jesus' love or his peace. And it is with that love and peace that I wish to perceive you." Then I will see that what you are saying or doing is an expression of love or a call for love. And as we have seen, whether it is an expression of love or a call

for love, my response will be the same. That makes being a teacher of God very simple. The learning process is not always easy, but the principle is very, very simple.

**(4:3) Regardless, too, of the intensity of the anger that is aroused.**

We are seeing the same thing here that is talked about in the workbook (W-pl.21.2:5).

**(4:4-6) It may be merely slight irritation, perhaps too mild to be even clearly recognized. Or it may also take the form of intense rage, accompanied by thoughts of violence, fantasied or apparently acted out. It does not matter.**

The reason Jesus says "apparently acted out" is that we really cannot act out anything, because a body does not do anything. Psychologists explore people's fantasies, and whether or not they are acted out. Often they will say it is much better to keep our fantasies to ourselves. But from the Course's point of view it does not make any difference, because the thoughts are always there. And it is not really my body that is acting out the fantasies. My mind simply gives my body orders.

**(4:7-11) All of these reactions are the same. They obscure the truth, and this can never be a matter of degree. Either truth is apparent, or it is not. It cannot be partially recognized. Who is unaware of truth must look upon illusions.**

You are either with the Holy Spirit or you are against Him, but there is no in between. It is one or the other. I have either the ego or the Holy Spirit as my teacher. Now in this world we often experience an in between of going back and forth between them. In reality, we choose either the Holy Spirit one hundred percent, or the ego one hundred percent. And we just go back and forth between them very quickly so that it does not feel like all or nothing. But in reality, it is all or nothing: *one or the other*.

Even if I am only mildly annoyed, I am still seeing myself as a victim. I am mildly annoyed because you did something. And if I am in an intense rage, I am seeing myself as a victim. In both cases the *content* is the same. So on that level it does not make any difference. Whether I act out my fantasy of murdering you or I simply have it as a fantasy within my mind does not make any difference. I am still perceiving myself as separate from you. I am still perceiving myself as your victim. And so on some level I am still believing that magic is going to help me.

The form of magic may be to deny the problem. As we will see a little later, defense mechanisms are forms of magic. I may act out behaviorally by shooting you, or excluding you from my life, or being nice to you so that you do not attack me anymore. Or I may use sleep as a way of denying or avoiding the problem. Sleep is a defense, obviously. I may be listening to something that I do not want to hear any more and I suddenly get bored and tired. But then I think I am sleepy because I did not have enough sleep last night, or because it is too hot in the room, or because what I am hearing is boring. However, it is really not for any of those reasons.

When Helen and I were editing the manuscript of the Course, we would usually sit on her living room couch. As we would be working together I would sometimes look over at her and find her yawning and sinking into the sofa. And yet otherwise she was always hyper alert. She had a lot of energy and never got tired except late at night. But here it would be three o'clock in the afternoon and Helen was slumping into her seat. She would yawn, go into a coughing jag, and laugh at herself, all at the same time, which is really a feat! So sleep is a very powerful defense. But anything that I do without looking at

the real problem—seeing myself as a victim and you as a victimizer because I have chosen to listen to the wrong voice—is a form of magic.

The miracle tells me that the problem is not what either you or I have done. The problem is that I have chosen to screen out the light from my mind and I have chosen darkness instead. And so the miracle brings my mind's attention back to that choice point, and says, as the Course says over and over again, especially at the end, "My brother, choose again" (T-31.VIII.3:2). That is the fundamental message that we are given all the way through the Course. Jesus or the Holy Spirit are always saying to us: "My brother, choose again." And so the idea is that if I am upset, it is because I have chosen wrongly. It has nothing whatsoever to do with anything else. A teacher of God is always aware of that.

**(5:1-2) Anger in response to perceived magic thoughts is a basic cause of fear. Consider what this reaction means, and its centrality in the world's thought system becomes apparent.**

Anger leads to fear because, if I perceive your magic thoughts as sinful or bad, justifying my anger at you, then I am attacking you. I am seeing my sinfulness in you and I am denying it in myself. I am attacking you unjustifiably and falsely because, from my point of view, it is really me and not you who is sinful. So I am attacking you, knowing that I am attacking you falsely, which only makes me feel guilty. And when I feel guilty, I must believe that I deserve punishment because guilt demands punishment.

And I believe that I deserve punishment not only from God, but also from you, because I know I am attacking you falsely. So I will be afraid of your attack in response to my attack on you. And I will then need a defense against that attack, which is where the fear comes in. Now my reasoning may have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with what is going on in your mind, because you may not be aware of my attack on you—it is in my mind. But in my own mind, if I have attacked you falsely—which all attack obviously is—I will feel guilty. And I will believe I deserve to be attacked in return for what I have done to you. And I will be afraid of your attack. That is what this is talking about.