

What It Means to Be a Teacher of God

Excerpts from the workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Roscoe NY

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part XX

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

(8:1) Into this hopeless situation God sends His teachers.

This refers to all of us. We are the hope of the world.

(8:2-4) They bring the light of hope from God Himself. There is a way in which escape is possible. It can be learned and taught, but it requires patience and abundant willingness.

This is one of the few places in the Course that speaks not of "a little willingness" but of "abundant willingness." We become instruments of hope and teachers of God by remaining fully present to the darkness of the world around us—all the magic running wild and rampant in the world—but we do not take it seriously. If I do not take the magic out there seriously, it must be because, on another level, I am no longer taking it so seriously within myself. This is the beginning of the process of looking at the "tiny, mad idea" and seeing a glimmer of light in it. And the glimmer of light is that this is silly. It is a light of laughter instead of the darkness of saying, "This is a serious sin." So by learning not to take *your* "sins" so seriously, I am really learning the same lesson within myself. I can say, "This is not a terrible sin. It's just a silly mistake. I listened to the wrong voice. And just as I listened to the wrong voice, the power of my mind can now choose to listen to the right Voice."

But it is a lesson that I do not learn overnight. And I do not want to learn it just because this section says it. It is a lesson that requires a great deal of patience—I must learn to be patient with my fear—and abundant willingness to learn continually and to practice repeatedly.

(8:5) Given that, the lesson's manifest simplicity stands out like an intense white light against a black horizon, for such it is.

When I am in the midst of some form of darkness—whether it is a loved one who is very sick, a seeming catastrophe at work or within my family, or some crisis or disaster in the world at large—that is the "black horizon" of the ego's thought system. If I do not take it seriously—or I at least begin the process of questioning the validity of my justification for taking it seriously—then the light begins to shine. And as I do this more and more, the light becomes clearer and increasingly intense.

I do not have to do anything. We are not talking about behavior—we are talking about a choice that occurs within the mind. And then my clenched fist—that locked vault in my mind—begins to open and light begins to stream in. What I believed was darkness now becomes increasingly light. And as it becomes increasingly light within my mind, that light extends out and I look out and see light. Even if I

am looking out at thirteen million people being killed in concentration camps, I will still see light. The light is not out there in the world or in the specific situation. It is within my mind.

(8:6) If anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact, it is never justified.

I am not really angry at the fact that thirteen million people were killed. I am angry at the interpretation I give this fact, namely, that it is evil and sinful and I identify with the victims. So my anger is not justified because I am the one who gave it that interpretation. I am not angry at what you have done. I am angry at my perception of what you have done. My anger is not really at you, but rather at the way I am looking at you.

(8:7-9) Once this is even dimly grasped, the way is open. Now it is possible to take the next step. The interpretation can be changed at last.

Jesus says, "Once this is even dimly grasped"—in other words, we do not have to do it one hundred percent. We do not have to do it perfectly. This is something that we grow into. But once we at least begin opening up the door by saying, "Well, maybe my ego just possibly is wrong," that starts the process. And the whole purpose of the Course is to convince us that our ego is wrong.

A wonderful line in the text says, "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" (T-29.VII.1:9). Everyone in this world wants to be right. And we all have thousands upon thousands, even millions, of witnesses who prove that our perception of the world is right. But we are not aware that wanting to be right is a choice against being happy. Going against the Holy Spirit will never make us happy, but that is its purpose. So once we can begin the process of questioning the validity of our interpretations, we are allowing ourselves to be led home. There is absolutely no fact in the world which justifies anger, no fact at all. The Course says at one point, "God is not symbolic; He is Fact" (T-3.I.8:2). Everything else is made up.

So "the interpretation can be changed at last." Finally a light is streaming into the tunnel. I cannot change the facts of the world. I cannot change the fact that my whole family was killed. I cannot change the fact that terrible things are happening. I cannot change the fact that thirteen million people were killed in the Holocaust. I cannot change any of these facts, but I can change how I look at them. The Course says, "Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7). Freedom and joy come from that choice.

(8:10) Magic thoughts need not lead to condemnation, for they do not really have the power to give rise to guilt.

Magic thoughts are not sinful. Sin gives rise to guilt and sin is condemned. I am angry because I have sinned and I have condemned myself. That is why I feel guilty. Or else I accuse you of sinning and condemn you for it. But magic thoughts are simply a silly, feeble attempt on the ego's part to sustain itself by keeping the Love, the power, the might, and the joy of God away from me. That is all they are. So how then could a magic thought have any effect on God? When I begin really to look at it, it is no longer sinful. It is silly. And if it is merely silly, then it certainly cannot be condemned, and does not warrant any guilt.

(8:11) And so they can be overlooked, and thus forgotten in the truest sense.

Not forgotten as the ego forgets, which is to deny, to make real first and then to forget. Rather magic thoughts can be "forgotten in the truest sense" because they do not exist. This is not the ego's forgetting by burying it in my memory. The magic thought simply dissolves, disappearing into its own nothingness.

(9:1) Madness but seems terrible.

"Madness" would be the whole insanity of the ego thought system. And it does seem terrible. It seems terrible to believe that we could shatter the unity of Heaven and the Love of God and Christ. And what goes on in this world seems terrible.

(9:2) In truth it has no power to make anything.

The madness of the ego thought system has no power to make up a self that could oppose God, let alone make up a world that could oppose God.

(9:3) Like the magic which becomes its servant, it neither attacks nor protects.

The ego has told us that we have attacked God. And then the ego tells us that it will protect us. And, as we have seen, the world then becomes a major fortress. But it cannot really because it does not exist. The whole thing is just all make-believe.

(9:4) To see it and to recognize its thought system is to look on nothing.

Remember, the ego tells us, "You must not look on this thought system because it will destroy you." So we lock it up in a darkened tomb, or shrouded vault, in our minds. But if we ever really look at it, we realize literally nothing is there. It is all made up. The emperor has no clothes on.

(9:5-6) Can nothing give rise to anger? Hardly so.

Similarly, we can ask, "Can nothing give rise to guilt? Can nothing give rise to a world? Can nothing give rise to death? Can nothing give rise to suffering?" Obviously we believe it can because that is the world that we have made real. If we really think about what this is saying—what the whole Course is saying—this obviously is a very radical reinterpretation of absolutely everything that we believe, without exception.

A line in the Course says, "To learn this course requires willingness to question every value that you hold" (T-24.in.2:1). Every value! Every single thought! Now we do not do this overnight. But just to think about this teaching—that there is no exception—gives a sense of the immensity and the profound depth of the thought system of *A Course in Miracles*. If the ego is really nothing, then every single thing that has come since then is also nothing. And that means it makes no sense for us to be upset over something that does not exist.

But it is a step-by-step process—slow, gradual and gentle—that leads us to a growing understanding and acceptance of that truth. And so to be a teacher of God is to say, "Yes, this is what I really want to learn and to have taught through me," and then to trust in the process, as the Love of the Holy Spirit or Jesus walks with us, step by step, until this truth becomes a simple fact for us.

(9:7) Remember, then, teacher of God, that anger recognizes a reality that is not there; yet is the anger certain witness that you do believe in it as fact.

We have said that we cannot get angry at a fact, but we can now take that one step further. The fact is that nothing is there. We get angry at an interpretation that says that something is there that is sinful, incurring guilt, and deserving of punishment. If I am angry, I obviously am angry over something, which means I have denied the nothingness that is in front of me. I believe that the something is a fact. And the ultimate fact is sin. I have separated from God, attacked Him and He is going to attack me in return. That is a fact. So as was said earlier in this section, I accept it as a fact and then I forget it.

(9:8) Now is escape impossible...

Once I have made separation real and sin a fact, where do I go? I am now a product of that sin. The only way to cope, then, is to use magic somehow to deny this awful fact, and make the best of what is already a perfectly dreadful situation. That is why this world is hopeless and dreary and miserable. *There is no hope within this system.* The only hope comes from outside the system, from the Holy Spirit's light. Again,

(9:8) Now is escape impossible, until you see you have responded to your own interpretation, which you have projected on an outside world.

That is the hope: I have made it all up. And that is why it is so essential, as we work with the Course, that we not set aside the metaphysical teachings on the world as an illusion that is not really here. Without that understanding, our learning will indeed be limited; it will be limited by our belief that there is a world here that has to be fixed.

The world does not have to be fixed because *there is no world.* We do not strive to make the imperfect perfect. We strive to look at the imperfect and realize it does not exist. And then we say, "Yes, the imperfect world, the imperfect situation, came from an imperfect thought, but the imperfect thought is simply silly. It is not sinful. It is just a mistaken thought. I made the mistake of listening to guidance from the wrong voice. That is all I did. I can just as easily turn the other way and listen to the Holy Spirit's Voice. And then everything else will disappear."

(9:9-11) Let this grim sword be taken from you now. There is no death. This sword does not exist.

This sword, the ego's weapon, is the ego thought system—that is the madness.

(9:12) The fear of God is causeless.

The "fear of God" is caused by sin, but there is no sin. If there is no sin, there is no cause that could be having effects. The effect of sin is the fear of God and death. But if there is no sin—if the whole thing is made up—then it is not a cause. And so sin can have no effects, which means there is no death and no fear.

(9:13) But His Love is Cause of everything beyond all fear [creation and Heaven], and thus forever real and always true.