

"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)

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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part III

I. Rules for Decision

(T-30.I.1:4-5) It is not wise to let yourself become preoccupied with every step you take. The proper set, adopted consciously each time you wake, will put you well ahead.

What Jesus is saying is: don't obsess about this; don't analyze every single thought that you have every single minute of the day. A good rule to remember when you work with the Course and apply it to your own life is common sense, and it is not common sense to analyze every move that you make. If you analyzed what happens when you tie a shoelace in the morning, you would never get the shoelace tied. If you analyze what goes on as you walk down a flight of stairs, I assure you that you will not reach the bottom step on your feet, because walking down a flight of stairs is physiologically very, very complicated. Brushing your teeth is very complicated. So he is not saying that you have to analyze each thing that you do. What you want to do is become increasingly aware when you are angry, when you are upset, when you are anxious, when you are guilty. And over a period of time you will learn to distinguish between what really is an important lesson for you and what is not an important lesson for you. That is what he is saying. What you find in this section, incidentally, is some very clear practical advice about what to do and what not to do. This is an example of that.

The "proper set" is to really realize the choice you have—that again is the function of the miracle. Jesus is saying that as soon as you can when you wake up, remember what you are here for. You are not here to make a lot of money, or to raise your children, or to be happy, or to save the world through your holy work, your profession, etc. You are here to learn that you made the wrong choice, and now can make another choice. That is the "set" that he is talking about. That is the function of the miracle: to restore to your mind, which is the cause, its function of being the causative agent of everything you believe and experience. That, again, is the mind-training aspect of the Course. You are being trained to remember as soon as possible when you awake, and then all throughout the day, why you are here and what your lesson is.

The Course talks a great deal about function. Everyone has specific behavioral functions in the world, and there is nothing wrong with that. But without your really finding your true function, your external function will fall into the hands of the ego. Your true function is to forgive. This is what Jesus means whenever he uses the term "function" in the Course. He is not talking at all about behavior. He is talking about the function that we all share, which is to realize, again, that we bet on the wrong horse, that we made a mistake. We chose the ego's lies instead of the Holy Spirit's truth. Our function is to realize this each time we are tempted to make some aspect of our world real, or to justify our experience of victimization. Being a victim is the name of the ego's game—that is what keeps the ego thought system

in place. So whenever you are tempted to perceive yourself as a victim, remember your function, which is learning that "I am not the victim of the world I see," and that "I am never upset for the reason I think," which are two early workbook lessons. Again, this is the "set" that he is talking about, which we should try to think of consciously.

What is very helpful when you try to do this, is to see how quickly you forget. You may make a firm resolve right here tonight in this workshop, and when you get back to your room say: "I am really going to try to remember this when I wake up in the morning." Just see how quickly you forget. You may go through five minutes, an hour, five hours, and then suddenly say: "Oh my God, I forgot what I was going to do." That is not because you are a bad person; it is because you are a terrified person. This is because your ego knows that if you begin to do this, you will be moving away from your identification with your body and the world and go back to your mind. This in turn means that at some point you will realize what you have chosen, the tremendous cost of what you have chosen, that you have been a damn fool, and that now you are going to make another choice. That is the thing the ego wants to prevent. To the extent to which you identify with the ego's self, you will identify with the ego's strategy, and so you will become afraid of the power of your mind. The ego says: "If you get back in touch with the power of your mind, you will get back in touch with the part that stole from God, murdered God, and usurped His function. You will get back in touch with this awesome, awesome truth about yourself: that you killed God, destroyed Christ, and over their slain bodies built your own self."

Nobody wants to get in touch with that. That is why everybody is terrified of their mind. And that is why, for example, many New Age disciplines that encourage you to get in touch with the power of your mind are really going to end up hurting you. Your mind is powerful indeed; but if you don't let go of your guilt, you will inevitably misuse that power all over again. This is not a Course that wants you to get in touch with the power of your mind to move glasses over tables, to attract wealth or a beautiful person to yourself, to change a cancer cell into a benign cell, or any of those things. This Course wants you to get in touch with the power of your mind that has chosen guilt so you can now make another choice. That is the power of the mind that Jesus is talking about. It is not the power of your mind to effect change in the world or in yourself. Those kinds of approaches may work very well; but don't confuse them with *A Course in Miracles*. None of them will undo guilt. In that sense they are no different from taking an aspirin or other medication. It doesn't mean that they may not work in alleviating a symptom, but they will not work in alleviating guilt.

(T-30.I.1:6-7) And if you find resistance strong and dedication weak, you are not ready. *Do not fight yourself.*

We should probably spend three whole days on these two sentences. The reason for these sentences and the reason the second sentence is all in italics, is that Jesus is teaching us that we shouldn't pretend that we are ready for something when we are not ready for it. That is arrogance, not humility. It is much more spiritually advanced to be able to say: "I know what I am doing, and damn it, I don't want to stop. I know that I want my specialness. I know I want to be different. I know I want to blame other people. I know I want what I want when I want it, and that's okay!"

"Do not fight yourself." If you fight against your ego, you obviously believe your ego is real. That is what is meant by the biblical line "resist not evil," which is a wonderful line in terms of the Course. When you resist evil, when you resist the ego, you have made it real. Obviously, if you resist something, you must believe it is there. If you believe the ego or your specialness is there, then you have done exactly what

your ego wants. That is what makes this course so different as a spirituality, certainly in terms of the Western world. It says nothing about trying to change your ego, or to fight your ego, or to shout your ego. It simply says: look at your ego and smile at it, because it is nothing. When you fight against it in yourself, you are making it real. So when you forget your daily workbook lesson, or forget how very simple these basic rules are, don't be surprised. Don't be angry. Don't be depressed. Don't be guilty. Simply say: "Ah! That's my ego in action. Obviously I am still afraid of the Love and the peace of God." Then you are being absolutely honest. And you will have gained a thousand years simply by doing that, because you are learning the process of stepping back and looking at your ego and not judging it, not fighting against it, not resisting it, not trying to change it—simply looking at it and saying: "This is my ego, I don't want to let it go, and that is not a sin."

As you practice this every moment of every day, you are learning to undo the original mistake, which was looking at the tiny, mad idea and making a big deal about it. That is why this is so important. That is why this section is so important, if you read it correctly and carefully. What it will do is train you, in the world and in the sphere of experience you believe you are in, to relive that original moment when you, as part of that one Son, looked at both choices and chose against the Holy Spirit. You looked at your ego and you took it very, very seriously. You made the ego thought serious instead of silly. A couple of lines after the line about the "tiny, mad idea at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh," Jesus says: "It is a joke [that is literally what he says] to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which *means* there is no time" (T-27.VIII.6:5). It is a joke to think that this tiny, mad idea has the power to interfere with eternity. What you want to do is cultivate, as a constant discipline, looking at your ego and not taking it seriously. If you fight against yourself, you are making it real. If you realize that your resistance to choosing Jesus is strong, and your dedication to him and his course is weak, then simply acknowledge that and say: "I am still too afraid of the Love of God, but that is all right." It is those words, "that is all right," that are the most important words of all, because you are no longer judging your ego as terrible, sinful, evil or wicked. You are looking at your ego and saying: "This is what I am choosing, but it has no effect on Jesus' love for me, and it has no effect on the Holy Spirit's Love for me."

It has no effect at all! It will only have an effect if you *give* it an effect within your dream, because within your dream you can do anything you want. Jesus says earlier in the text that "Dreams are perceptual temper tantrums, in which you literally scream, 'I want it thus!'" (T-18.II.4:1). Like a little child jumping up and down and screaming: "This is what I want, Mommy. Give it to me!" That is what dreams are all about—sleeping dreams and waking dreams. So what you want to be able to do is look at what you are doing and say: "That is what I am actively choosing, but it is all right. It is not anything terrible. I'm simply doing what I want, because I'm afraid of what lies beyond it: the end of my specialness. And I am perfectly willing at this time to choose insanity, because I don't want to let go of my specialness—but it's all right." That will be the way of reflecting the original choice we all did not make, but can now make again: to look at the tiny, mad idea—the idea of being separate from God—and say: "This is nothing. This is a silly dream. It is a joke." We look at that thought, as the Course says, with gentle laughter. Whatever that thought is within yourself, don't justify it, don't rationalize it, don't feel guilty about it, don't judge it. Simply look at it for what it is, but smile at it. That is what this is really about.

At least, then, you are being honest and open with yourself and therefore with Jesus. *That* is what will save you thousands of years. The goal is not to be without your specialness, your guilt, your attack thoughts, or your sickness. The goal is to be aware that you have chosen them, and that you *can* make another choice when you are ready to. Nobody is standing with a gun pointed at your head demanding

that you do this today. If you think Jesus is doing this, then you are reading the wrong book with the wrong author. That is not what he does. He never did that to Helen. He doesn't do it with anyone. He simply gently reminds you. Right at the end of the text he says: "In every difficulty, all distress, and each perplexity Christ calls to you and gently says, 'My brother, choose again'" (T-31.VIII.3:2).

He doesn't make the choice for you. He simply says:

You are upset because you are choosing against the peace of God, and that is all right. I will stand lovingly beside you and continually remind you until you are ready. You are the only one who has the right to decide your own readiness: I will not do that for you, because in the end it doesn't matter. I will not violate the power of your mind to choose.

Again, that is what is in back of these statements. They are extremely important. If you really understand and learn them, your experience of Jesus will be much more loving, much more gentle; and therefore *you* will be much more loving and gentle with yourself. And all the people around you will be very grateful, because you will inevitably be more loving and gentle with them. You will have experienced the love and the gentleness of Heaven, and that love and gentleness will become more and more a part of you, which you would inevitably share with everyone else. So don't fight against your specialness. It is all right to say you are not ready to let it go. At least you are aware of what the issue is.

(T-30.I.1:8-9) But think about the kind of day you want, and tell yourself there is a way in which this very day can happen just like that. Then try again to have the day you want.

Jesus is simply saying: "Remind yourself that you have a choice." When he says you can have the day that you want, he is not talking about a day in which you win the lottery, or in which a relationship suddenly works out, or you get the promotion or the job you want. The day that you want is either a day of peace, or a day of conflict; a day of forgiveness, or a day of guilt. These are the only possibilities that anyone ever has.

This Course is so simple because there are but two emotions: fear and love. There are but two choices: guilt or forgiveness, attack or peace, the ego or the Holy Spirit, crucifixion or resurrection, and so on. These are all different symbols for the same idea. So the day that you want is either a day in which you will really know the peace of God, or a day in which you will have anxiety. When you hold on to your grievances against someone, you are saying: "I want a day in which I will have anxiety, in which I will have conflict, in which I will have turmoil. And that is all right. I *say* I want a day of peace, but obviously I don't." How do you know you don't want peace? Because you are holding on to grievances! You're holding on to anxiety about a meeting you have today. You're holding on to pain, so that you don't feel well. That is telling you that you don't want peace. So to hit yourself over the head with *A Course in Miracles* and tell yourself you *do* want peace is not helpful. What *is* helpful is to realize that *any* kind of discomfort—emotional or physical—comes from a choice to be with your ego instead of with Jesus, which is a choice to be in conflict instead of in peace, and that is all right.

Quite often I am asked how I would categorize experiences such as thrills and exhilaration. Are they, too, of the ego? I start by asking, "Are you sure you want me to answer that?" because I'm not so sure they really want to hear the answer: Yes, exhilaration, excitement, drama, ecstasy, and so forth, are all part of the ego. If you think about what is thrilling, or exhilarating, exciting, ecstatic, or even passionate,

you'll always find it is something *external*. Something stimulates you, turns you on, or gets you feeling wonderful—but it is always something outside you. That is why it is of the ego. If you believe the body can give you pleasure, the Course says, you will also believe it can give you pain (T-19.IV-A.17:11). This is not because God is punishing you, but because if you find your pleasure, peace, or your happiness outside you, what are you doing? You are substituting for God all over again, which is a re-enactment of the original moment when you separated from God and in effect said: "I want something more than everything. Heaven is not enough, I want something more."

That is where the guilt is born, and that is where all the pain will come from. And so whenever you seek for pleasure outside yourself and make it real for yourself, you will feel guilt and therefore pain. This does not mean that as a good *Course in Miracles* student you can't enjoy things in the world. But when you take the world seriously and have something in the world become salvation for you—the be-all and end-all of your existence—you will pay a price. But to repeat, it doesn't mean you can't enjoy the physical things or the emotional psychological things in your world. Just realize that there is a part of you that is choosing that over the peace of God. If you can be aware of that, you won't feel guilty. And if you are not guilty, you won't be paying a price.

Once again, just to end this now: When you realize that your resistance is strong, and your dedication is weak, you are simply saying: "I am not ready." But you also want to say to yourself: "I *know* that my specialness will not give me the day that I really want. It will give me the day that my *ego* wants, but not the day that I *really* want, which means I still have a split mind. And that doesn't make me evil, bad or sinful, but it *does* mean I won't find real happiness today. And I won't find it because I don't *want* to find it. And that is all right."