

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

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Part IV

Rule 1

(T-30.I.2:1-2) (1) The outlook [which is the outlook of the set that Jesus has been talking about that we should adopt when we awaken every morning] **starts with this: *Today I will make no decisions by myself.***

Clearly what this means is that we don't make decisions with our *ego*, because that would be to make decisions with our selves. Rather this is a plea that we make the decisions with *Jesus*. Interestingly, at the end of this section he seems to say the opposite. He says there that "you *cannot* make decisions by yourself" (T-30.I.14:3). He does this kind of thing all the way through the Course—saying one thing in one place and then the seeming opposite in another place. It is opposite in *form*, but not opposite in *content*—he is just making a different point. Here the point is: don't make a decision with your ego, which is tantamount to making it by yourself. Rather, make it with *me*. The point he is making at the end of this section is that you *can't* make a decision by yourself, meaning: the Son of God must choose either the ego or the Holy Spirit. So the content is consistent even if the form often is not.

This obviously is a major theme in the Course, and is repeated all the way through: we are not to make decisions by ourselves. One of those references in the text—about not choosing by yourself—which I want to look at with you, is the following:

Whenever you choose to make decisions for yourself [which again means to make it with your ego instead of with Jesus or the Holy Spirit] you are thinking destructively, and the decision will be wrong (T-14.III.9:1).

The reason it is "destructive thinking" is that thinking by yourself and excluding the Holy Spirit symbolizes the original exclusion of God. When you exclude God, you are seeking to destroy Him, because by excluding God you are saying: "I am separate from God." If one of the definitions of God is that He is perfect Oneness and perfect unity, then to say that you are separate from Him is to deny God Who He is, and the ego interprets that as killing God. When you say you are on your own, you are saying: "I am my own creator," which is then denying God His role as the Creator. If you deny God His role and His Identity, He ceases to be God.

This then is one more way of realizing how the ego's thought system is literally based on the murder of God. That is *destructive* thinking. Anything you do from that base will logically have the same elements of destruction, attack, and murder. Whenever you try to displace someone else, use someone else to

meet your own needs, or see yourself as separate from someone else and justified in being separate, whenever you manifest any aspect of the authority problem—as everyone does all the time—you reflect the original authority problem and conflict with God. Thus, whenever you separate from the Voice of the Holy Spirit, or from Jesus, you are also separating from everyone else. If Jesus represents the Christ, if he represents the oneness of the creation of God, and you separate from him, you are obviously also separating from Christ. This means you are attacking *your* true Identity as Christ, and are attacking everyone else as well.

It will hurt you [the decision will hurt you] because of the concept of decision that led to it (T-14.III.9:2).

That is the crucial phrase I want to emphasize: "the concept of decision that led to it." What will truly hurt you when you decide by yourself is not the specific decision. What will hurt you is the *thought* that underlies it. When you decide by yourself you are saying: "I know better than Jesus; I know better than the Holy Spirit; I know better than God." That is the concept that will hurt you, because that will remind you of your original "sin," your original attack on God—and for that you will feel very guilty. And because guilt always demands punishment, you will believe you deserve to be punished. That is where fear comes from. This is the source of all pain. All suffering comes from the idea that I can do it on my own. Remember the lines from Frank Sinatra's famous song: "I did it my way." That is the ego's song. So when you make a decision by yourself, it is not that God will punish you, it is that you will *believe* God will punish you. And if you don't consciously think of God, as most people do not, then there will be some symbol of God's punishment: The bad weather will punish you. The stock market will punish you. This person you are living with will punish you. Your children will punish you. Your boss will punish you. It doesn't matter. You will believe that you deserve to be punished because of what you believe you did first. Again, what will really hurt you is not the decision you make on the level of form. What will hurt you is the concept of the decision that led to your choosing whatever you chose.

One of the important things to remember when you work with the Course (and this will always help keep you out of trouble with the Course so that you don't distort what it says) is that this is not a course in form. This is not a course in effect. This is not a course in anything that has to do with the world of behavior. This is a course in *content*, in *cause*. It is a course only in changing your mind. Even more to the point, and directly relevant to this workshop, this is a course in helping you change your teacher or your adviser: moving from the ego as your guide, to the Holy Spirit or Jesus as your guide. What will hurt you is not what is outside you, not what you believe will hurt you. What will hurt you is your thought system that tells you that you *can* be on your own, that you *should* be on your own, that it is a fact you *are* on your own. That thought itself, which is the concept of decision, will reinforce your sense of separation and sin, which automatically will lead to your experience of guilt, and that in turn will always demand you be punished. There is no way out of this. That is why the concept of choice in this course is so critically important. We really have to recognize what we are choosing and with *whom* we are choosing it, so that we can then make another choice.

This first rule for decision, "Today I will make no decisions by myself," should not be taken as an imperative. Jesus is telling us rather that this is the guideline we should use if we really want to be happy. It will be clear as we continue with this section, as it is clear throughout the whole Course, that he is not expecting his students to do what he says. If he expected them to do so, he would have stopped with the first line of the Course. He fully expects us *not* to pay attention. So don't feel guilty

when you don't pay attention. All that you want to do as quickly as you can is be *aware* that you are not paying attention, because you don't *want* to pay attention, because you are afraid of letting go of your ego. But don't feel guilty because you do not pay attention.

(T-30.I.2:3) This means that you are choosing not to be the judge of what to do.

The big illusion that we all labor under in this world is that we know what is best: that we understand what is going on, that we understand what is called for in a situation, and that we know what to do about it. This is why over and over again Jesus pokes gentle fun at everyone and says: "There is no way that you can judge, because you don't know all the details involved in a situation. You don't know what the meaning is." Above all, what he is really saying to us is:

You can't possibly know, because you think you are here in the world. You think there are things going on here in the world, and you think there are problems to be solved here in the world. The reality is that the only problem is back in your mind, that you chose the ego instead of me. But as long as you believe you are in the world, and you are relating and interacting with other bodies who also think that they are in this world, then how could you possibly understand what is called for in a situation?

That is why there is a lesson early in the workbook that says: "I do not perceive my own best interests" (W-pl.24). And it is not even that we *do* not perceive them. We *can* not perceive them, because we don't understand. We really think we are here. We really think there are problems to be solved here, and that we are the ones who can be the judge of that. So this is reinforcing the idea of how in our right minds we want to understand that we don't want to make a decision by ourselves.

(T-30.I.2:3-4) This means that you are choosing not to be the judge of what to do. But it must also mean that you will not judge the situations where you will be called upon to make response.

Now let me add the word "situations" to the chart, because it will be coming up again in the reading. We find ourselves in all kinds of situations that call for a response. Jesus is not saying that within this dream there are not situations that call for a response. He is saying: "You will believe there are; and you will have to make a response. But try not to make the response on your own." So he is not saying that there are not things that you have to do in this world that require judgment: there obviously are. He is saying: "Try not to make the judgments on your own."

(T-30.I.2:5) For if you judge them [the situations that confront you in your life], you have set the rules for how *you* should react to them [italics added].

By the time we have reached our thirties, forties, fifties—what the world calls maturity—we have established a set of rules and guidelines based on our past experiences, that we hope will guide us in reacting to the world and relating to other people. We always fall back on these. Many of them would be agreed with by most people in the world; and because most people would agree with them, we think that validates them. We don't recognize, however, that everyone in this world is insane. So you should never take what the world says as a guideline for what you should do. Remember, the world is insane because it believes it is *here*. People are born and actually think they come into this world; and then they have to learn what this world has to teach them. This is what we call education or socialization. We don't remember—because that is the purpose of the veil—that we literally made up this world to hide the truth. The truth rests in the Holy Spirit in our right minds. It must be chosen by the decision maker—

that is what the ego is afraid of. So the ego blocks all of that out and makes up the world as a smokescreen. The world then reflects not the right mind and the Holy Spirit, the world reflects the sin, guilt, and fear of the ego and the wrong mind. The world reflects the specialness, hatred, conflict, and the battleground that is the ego thought system. Forgiveness is necessary, then, as the correction for what the ego has dreamt first. The world is the ego's dream. Looking at the world without judgment is the undoing of the dream.

So there is no way we can understand what is in our best interests, let alone anyone else's best interests. And yet that is the way the world operates. Sometimes this takes the form of the world judging something as evil: such as certain people oppressing and imposing their will on other people—whether this is done individually in acts of rape or murder, or done collectively in dictatorships and the oppressing of one country by another. There are the other forms that are just as lethal, in fact more lethal, because they appear to be something else. These are the various forms in which people appear to be helping others. They judge what is wrong with the world and then set out to fix it, because *they know*. They are just as insane as the people who hate and kill and oppress, because they think they know what is right. "Right" for them means somebody else pays a price. Killing and oppressing is clearly insane in the world's thinking, but being "helpful" because you think you know what is best for people is just as insane. Jesus is not saying that you shouldn't do things in your personal world or in the world at large. He is only saying: "Don't presume to know what you should do. Ask me first." What asking him really boils down to is getting your ego out of the way. The way you go about asking him what you should do on a behavioral level is to first look with him at what your ego is trying to do. Look at the investment that your ego has in your specialness. When you can look at that with his gentle love beside you, your specialness would begin to disappear. As it begins to disappear, you will more and more be able to hear his voice. So the focus is not on hearing his voice: the focus is on undoing the *interference* to hearing his voice.