

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

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Part VI

Rule 2

(T-30.I.4:1) (2) Throughout the day, at any time you think of it and have a quiet moment for reflection, tell yourself again the kind of day you want; the feelings you would have, the things you want to happen to you, and the things you would experience...

Now the reason he says "tell yourself again" is that obviously you have already forgotten. I'm not making this up, right? The words are right here! He is trying to help us begin the training program. You can see how this passage foreshadows the workbook: the mind training that will help you realize that the reason you are miserable during the course of any particular day is that you have made that your goal. If you are miserable you must have *chosen* to be miserable.

Let me backtrack a little to what we discussed in our last session. If indeed the whole world is an illusion and was made to attack God as the Course says (W-pll.3.2:1), and to be a distraction and a smokescreen to hide what is really happening in our minds, then literally there is nothing outside us. I quoted earlier the important Course principle, "ideas leave not their source." The idea of a separated world has not left its source in our minds. This means effect and cause are not split off; effect and cause are united—just as in Heaven, God is the first Cause, and Christ—His Son—is the Effect. "Ideas leave not their source." This same principle also operates within the dream. The effect, the world, is totally unified with the cause, the idea in the mind—which literally means there is no world outside our minds. The tremendous importance of this is that if there is nothing outside us, then anything we think, perceive, or feel could have come only from within our minds. This is another way of realizing why you *must* understand the Course's metaphysics if you are going to practice this course. This is not some abstract intellectual concept that you play around with. This is the heart and soul of what *A Course in Miracles* teaches. You cannot understand forgiveness, let alone the practice of it, let alone what it means to hear the Holy Spirit, unless you really understand what the underlying metaphysics is. There is literally no world outside our minds.

That is why I can't blame you for anything that I feel. If I am miserable, anxious, guilty, sick, or depressed, and there is nothing outside me, then where did these thoughts and feelings come from? They can only have come from within me, because there is nothing and no one else—which means I put them there. I am making myself sick and depressed—it is not a virus that is giving me a fever, it is not your raucous shrieking that is giving me a headache, it is not the food I ate last night that is giving me an upset stomach. This is extremely important.

Now if I have made myself miserable—if I have given myself these thoughts—there must be a reason. The Course tells us what that reason is: I make myself sick so I don't experience the Love and the peace of God. Sickness is a cover for guilt. I forget that the guilt is in my mind, project it out, and voilà my body is sick. Then the scientists in the world explain to me how and why I became sick. The world is very good and very shrewd at telling us why we are not well—on *any* level. Whether it is a traditional physician, a New Age physician, or any other variety of physician, they are all very good at saying why we are not well. Whether it is our karma, the way our mothers carried us in the womb, the way we were given birth to, the environment we grew up in, whatever it is, there is always an explanation for our being sick, emotionally or physically. And all of these explanations will be wrong, because all of them begin with the premise that there is a world out there that impinges upon us. When you understand that there is no world out there, you won't get caught in that mistake.

Thinking the Holy Spirit does things for you in the world, and makes things better for you in the world is the same mistake. How can He make things better for you in a world that doesn't exist? He makes things better for you in your mind—simply by being in your mind. That is why you need a miracle that takes you away from the world back into your mind where His Love is. That Love is the answer to all problems.

Where we are now with this second rule is realizing at some point during the day that this day is not working out all that well for me, but with the understanding that if it is not working out that well for me, it is because I have not wanted it to work out well for me. This leads us now to the important concept that we have set the goal and are not aware that we have set it. Therefore we are not aware that what is happening to us during the day—what we are feeling and experiencing throughout the day—is a direct effect of the goal that we have set. We forget that we set the goal, and so we think that things happen to us beyond our control.

I would like to elaborate on some of these ideas by reading with you the section in Chapter 17 of the text called "Setting the Goal."

Setting the Goal (T-17.VI)

(T-17.VI.1:1-2) The practical application of the Holy Spirit's purpose is extremely simple [Jesus uses these words in many other places—obviously the Course's and the Holy Spirit's purposes are identical] **but it is unequivocal. In fact, in order to be simple it *must* be unequivocal.**

Jesus keeps saying this is a very simple course. And here we see why it is simple: it's unequivocal. There are not two different ways of interpreting this course. There are not two different voices you can listen to that are equally valid. There is *one* Voice. There is *one* message in this course, not *different* messages. He made it a point to explain to Helen that there are not different interpretations of the material he was giving to her. The Course is what it is. It says what it says. It doesn't say different things to different people. That is what the first law of chaos says: that truth is relative (T-23.II.2). Those of you who know your Plato would recognize in this the argument of the Sophists that Socrates was always confronted with: that truth is relative, not absolute. Socrates kept saying that truth is absolute. Truth is what it is—you can't say it is different things to different people. Well, that is what people try to do with the Course, too. They say it can mean different things to different people, and that there are different,

equally valid interpretations. Again, this is a striking example of the first law of chaos which states that there is a hierarchy of illusions and that truth is relative. The Course is simple because it is unequivocal: it says what it says. It doesn't state one thing and then qualify it with, "*but* you could possibly state something else."

(T-17.VI.1:3) The simple is merely what is easily understood, and for this it is apparent that it must be clear.

Jesus is talking here specifically about the Holy Spirit's purpose, but it is very easy to generalize this to his course as a whole. *He* thinks his course is very clear and easily understood. The reason practically nobody agrees with him is not that it is *not* clear and easily understood, it is that it is *too* clear, and *too* easily understood. You don't want to understand what it is saying. Once your fear and your guilt have subsided sufficiently, you will understand what it says and you will be astounded that you never knew that before. The words used here are not difficult. The *concepts* are extraordinarily difficult because they represent the exact opposite of the world's concepts. In that sense the Course is difficult, but not because what it *says* is difficult. It is difficult because we don't want to recognize what it says. It is a very simple, clear course and it means exactly what it says.

Jesus is saying the same thing about the Holy Spirit's purpose. To the Holy Spirit, *everything* in this world has the same purpose—all the situations that seem to exist and that seem to confront us every day. The purpose *He* gives them is to have us realize—through the practice of forgiveness—that we are not here, which means that we forgive what is not out there. We forgive our brother for what he has *not* done. This does not mean that on a behavioral level he hasn't done something. It means that he is not even there on a behavioral level. It means that everything we think we see outside is a projection of what is inside. That is why this is so simple. The ego made up this world to attack, to kill, and to keep us separate. The Holy Spirit takes the *same* world and uses it as a mirror, so that through the mechanism of the miracle we can look in that mirror and recognize that what is reflected back to us is nothing other than the thought system in our minds. That is the Holy Spirit's single purpose for the world. We are now trained through our study and practice of the Course to observe that what *seems* to be outside is a direct reflection or a shadow of what is inside. I therefore now know what is inside my mind. Even better, I now know I have a mind! If I really understand there is nothing and no one out there, and that all I see is a shadow of what is within me, it must mean that there is something *within* me. That is the beginning of the end of the ego. That is the purpose of the miracle: to make us aware that we have a mind, which means we become mindful, instead of mindless. That is the value of the world. Our purpose is not to do things out there in the world, to join with other people, or to save other people. Our purpose is to realize that there *are* no other people—that what seems to be outside is really inside. When you can really heal your mind, the love in your mind will express itself within the dream that other people believe you and they are in. You may then find yourself very active in the world and doing very loving things in the world. But they will be *truly* loving, because they will not be based on taking sides. They will not be based on victims and victimizers, nor on fragmenting the Sonship still further. They will be based on the love which comes from a vision that sees everyone as one.

Once again, what Jesus is saying in these passages does not mean that you don't do things in the world. It means, rather, that what you do in the world is irrelevant. What is relevant is what you do in your mind. Then that love will come through you automatically, and you may find yourself doing and saying many loving things in the world, but you will have no investment in them. You will know that the reality

is this place of love in your mind that you have now joined with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Again, that is what makes this course so simple, and that is what makes the Holy Spirit's purpose so simple. Everything in the world becomes a classroom; and if we let Jesus be our teacher, he will show us that what we perceive outside is a mirror of what is *inside*, which means I now realize there is an inside, a mind. The next step from there is to realize a mind has a choice, and then from there I automatically make other loving choices.

(T-17.VI.1:4-5) The setting of the Holy Spirit's goal is general. Now He will work with you to make it specific, for application *is* specific [the phrase "for application *is* specific" is not in the first edition].

By "general" Jesus means abstract—in other words, it is universal, it is in our minds, it is not specific. "Application" means that we do something on a behavioral level: apply it to our everyday lives; use these circumstances and relationships of our lives as a laboratory. This means moving from the general principle of the Atonement, which says that the separation never happened and there is nothing and no one outside us, to the application in specific situations. You—the person I'm living with, or the person that I am working with—are not outside me. You and I are not separate. We have to practice in specific situations, in the circumstances of our personal lives. We must apply the abstract or general principle to specific situations. That is what the whole Course is about. That is what the whole curriculum is about.

(T-17.VI.1:6) There are certain very specific guidelines [the seven rules for decision] **He provides for any situation, but remember that you do not yet realize their universal application.**

Statements like this make it clear once again that Jesus conceives of this as a process. "You do not yet realize" obviously implies that there is growth we haven't gone through yet, steps we haven't taken yet. We still think there are specific things we have to do in this world, specific relationships we have to forgive; and therefore, because we *think* in terms of specifics, he will give us specific guidelines. We will eventually realize that they are all part of the *one* lesson, and we will then generalize. But we are not there yet.

(T-17.VI.1:7) Therefore, it is essential at this point to use them [the guidelines] **in each situation separately, until you can more safely look beyond each situation, in an understanding far broader than you now possess.**

This passage occurs roughly in the middle of the text—so he is saying we still have a long way to go. Then we get to Chapter 30 and he says the same thing. Then we get to the end of the workbook and he says: "This course is a beginning, not an end" (W-ep.1:1). This is a long-term study that we are undergoing, and we should be mistrustful of ourselves or other students who say that they have already done everything in this course and proclaim how easy and how wonderful it is: "I turn everything over to the Holy Spirit and all my problems are taken care of, all my questions are answered." They have missed the whole point of this, and have not looked carefully at these passages. Their eyes skip over them because their ego tells their brain not to look at these passages—they are too upsetting—and then the brain sends this message to their eyes. That is why we can get to the end of a paragraph and forget every word that we read; or we may think we have read sections like these dozens of times, and then we hear them and say, "My God, I never saw that before." This section, as well as the "Rules for Decision" is very clearly written—the sentences are not complicated. You almost always know what the pronouns refer to, whereas in many other places you have to guess. The writing here is simple and clear, but because you don't want to see it, you won't see it.

What this passage is saying is that until we are ready to generalize these principles to everything, we first have to practice specifically. The same instructions are found in the workbook. In fact, in the Introduction to Review VI, he says that if you really did one lesson, you would have done them all. But until you generalize, you have to practice each lesson separately:

Each [lesson] contains the whole curriculum if understood, practiced, accepted, and applied to all the seeming happenings throughout the day. One is enough. But from that one, there must be no exceptions made. And so we need to use them all and let them blend as one, as each contributes to the whole we learn (W-pl.rVI.2:2-5).

That is why there are 365 lessons, not one lesson. Each lesson is exactly the same as every other lesson if it is really understood. They all contain the same teaching message. But because we are so terrified of this universality, what we do instead is fragment. We apply a teaching in one situation and decide we are not ready to apply it to another. Or we forgive *this* person, but not *that* person. Or we ask Jesus for help in *this* situation, but say we can handle *that* one on our own. What we have to realize is that they are all the same, and until we realize they are all the same we must practice with each one separately.