

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

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Part VIII Rule 2 (cont.)

(T-17.VI.3:1) Without a clear-cut, positive goal, set at the outset, the situation just seems to happen, and makes no sense until it has already happened.

Think of any particular thing in your life which is important—a relationship with a person, a meeting you have to attend, a decision you have to make, etc.—and realize how you are setting it up in your mind so that what happens really makes a difference. It will really make a difference if this person does or does not pay attention to me. It will really make a difference if this person approves or does not approve of me. It will really make a difference if my boss approves of my work and gives me a promotion. All these things make a difference—that is what this is talking about. Nothing will make any sense until this occurs, because the ego doesn't know what it wants. It is just clear about what it doesn't want. There is nothing positive about the ego.

What Jesus is telling us, therefore, is to be clear about the positive goal that we want. In this context he is talking about truth as the goal. You can substitute peace, forgiveness, etc. as the goal as well. If that is what you want as your goal, then you will realize that no matter what happens, the meaning is already there. The meaning doesn't have to wait until the event occurs, because you have already given the meaning to the event *before* it occurs. Therefore, it doesn't matter what happens in this meeting that I am going to sit in on, because my goal has been set. Whether the meeting ends up the way that I want it to, or the way that I don't want it to, I can still see the meeting as an opportunity to practice and learn forgiveness—to learn that nothing external matters. If I am going on a date with this person and I really care about this person, it won't make a difference whether this person likes me or not, because I realize I have a greater goal in mind than the satisfaction of my specialness. The greater goal is that I will learn forgiveness, which means undoing all the interferences I have put between myself and the Love of God. *That* is what I want. And when you are clear that that is what you want, it doesn't matter what goes on externally.

This doesn't mean that you don't do things in the world and pay attention to them. But your peace of mind, the Love of God within you, is not contingent upon what happens with you externally. Applying the principles of the Course to your life in this way makes your life in this world so much simpler and easier, because what happens externally no longer makes a difference. Now, you may have to act as if it *does* make a difference in the world; but somewhere inside you there is that gentle smile that says: "It doesn't matter how this vote in Congress goes, it doesn't matter how this vote of my board of directors goes, it doesn't matter what happens within my family—it doesn't matter because I know that the love

of Jesus is with me regardless of the outcome. And nothing and no one can take that away from me." But that will be your experience only if that is what you want. That is why it is so important to get back to this choice point in your mind, the decision maker—because *that* is where the action is. In other words, you learn not to give your power away to someone else. All power in Heaven and earth rests within *you*, which is Jesus' reinterpretation in the Course of the scriptural passage. It is not just that *he* has all power in Heaven and earth, *we* have all power in Heaven and earth, which means we have all power to choose Heaven, or to choose earth or the ego. That is the Course's reinterpretation of the scriptural passage.

(T-17.VI.3:2) Then you look back at it [the situation that happened], and try to piece together what it must have meant.

We ask in some way: "Was this good for me, was it not good for me?" I grew up in a Jewish home, as most of you know, and the way most Jews think of things (and actually it is no different with any other group), but Jews will always say: "Is this good for the Jews?" That was something that was always heard in my house: "Was this good for the Jews?" The President made a decision: "Was this good for the Jews?" That's an example of what we are talking about. You look back at what happened, and you piece together what it must have meant. And your understanding of what it must have meant will always be in the context of: "Is this good for me, or the group that I identify with?"

(T-17.VI.3:3) And you will be wrong.

You have no idea about the meaning because you will always look at the situation through the eyes of your specialness, which already is a distortion. This is because specialness states that there are special people and special interest groups within the Sonship, and I am a member of one of these groups. Therefore, what is good for this group, what is good for me, *is* good—and I don't care about all the other people. Consequently, I must be wrong, because I am not coming from a unified perception that perceives everyone as the same. If it is good for me, it *must* be good for *every* member of the Sonship. If it is good for any part of the Sonship, it must be good for me and for everyone else. It can't be good for one group and not another group. It is obvious as you think about your own personal life, let alone what goes on in the world, that this is the exact opposite of the way the world thinks—the exact opposite. The world's thinking is always based on we-they, my group versus another group. And all that I care about is that *my* group is taken care of, *my* family is taken care of. I may not particularly wish ill on anybody else, but I don't particularly care about them either. All I care about is myself. Therefore I *must* be wrong, because Jesus looks from the perspective of the unified Christ and the unified Sonship—that it must benefit all, otherwise it benefits none. It is all or nothing.

(T-17.VI.3:4) Not only is your judgment in the past, but you have no idea what should happen.

Because, again, what we think should happen is only what will benefit a certain part of the Sonship. And even more than that, we have the arrogance of believing that we really know what is in our best interests. Our best interests will always be what we think satisfies our specialness. And all that that will do is further reinforce the very guilt that got us in the world in the first place.

(T-17.VI.3:5) No goal was set with which to bring the means in line.

What he is speaking about here is the real goal, or the positive goal. We did not bring the goal of peace or the goal of truth in our mind, which then would mean I would see everything that happens in my day

as a means to help me reach that goal. Everything is a classroom, everything is a learning opportunity. It doesn't matter what the form of the classroom is. All that matters is that I perceive it as a classroom with Jesus as my teacher. And if I do that, I will always learn his lesson, regardless of the form, regardless of the specific outcome. On the other hand, the ego *does* have a goal with which it brings all the means in line—but it is a false goal. The ego's goal is to reinforce specialness and isolation and separation, and so everything will be seen in that light. If your goal thus is to re-establish that you are a victim, then you will go through your day looking for people to upset you, to insult you, to reject you, to victimize you. Then this will happen or seem to happen (often it doesn't even happen in the world—you just make believe it happens), and then you will experience exactly what you wanted to come of the situation. You wanted somebody to upset you and reject you and betray you and abandon you, and sure enough they did.

So in that sense, too, the means was brought into alignment with the end: you wanted to feel victimized and unfairly treated. Then you perceived everything in your world that day as serving that purpose, and therefore everything *did* serve the purpose of making you feel that way. Thus when Jesus says: "No goal was set with which to bring the means in line," he really means no *true* goal.

(T-17.VI.3:6) And now the only judgment left to make is whether or not the ego likes it [is it good for my group?]; is it acceptable, or does it call for vengeance?

This is how we always think. Something happens and then my ego interprets it: Do I like this, is it good for me? If it is, then everything is wonderful. That is special love. If it is not, then it calls for attack, or counter-attack, or vengeance. That is special hate.

(T-17.VI.3:7) The absence of a criterion for outcome, set in advance, makes understanding doubtful and evaluation impossible.

This is Jesus' way of saying there is no way you can understand *anything* in this world. There is no way at all, because you will try to understand it through the eyes or mind-set of an illusory thought—the illusory thought of being separated, the illusory thought that what is good for me is not good for anybody else, but I don't care. Remember: the ego built its whole existence right at the beginning on the judgment: "What is good for me is not good for God, but I don't care; He doesn't exist anymore anyway, because He has been knocked off." That is the basic paradigm that underlies the way in which we perceive our lives and all our relationships in this world.

(T-17.VI.4:1) The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to *make* it happen.

This is the kind of thinking that you want to cultivate as you work with the Course. It is a totally different way of experiencing yourself and the world. The idea linking this with the "Rules for Decision" is that as quickly as possible, when you wake in the morning, you should try to really think about what you want to come of this day. If you catch yourself saying, "I want to get what I want when I want it," don't resist it, and don't fight against yourself. Just be aware that you are going to get what you want, and it won't make you very happy. Specialness will never work—it will never make you truly happy. It might make you happy in the short run. But if you believe you got what you wanted, you will believe you got it because you stole it: you manipulated and seduced other people in order to get what you wanted. Furthermore, because you stole it, you will believe it is not really yours, which means on some level you

will believe the person you stole it from has every right to steal it back from you. This means there will be real fear that what you got you will not be able to keep.

For example: I really desperately wanted your affection and your attention and your concern and your love and I got it. But I know I didn't get it fairly—I stole it from you, which means I'm not going to get to keep it. Now I always have to be on the look-out lest you take it back. I would be thinking, therefore, that maybe you like me now, but the next hour you won't like me. I always have to be watchful and vigilant to keep what I stole, and to keep you from stealing it back from me. That is hardly a very peaceful way of living. Yet that is how everybody lives in this world. On the most general level we know of as an individual, the life we think we have, we secretly know we stole from God. That is why we are always so terrified that our little flame will be extinguished. We are always trying to keep ourselves alive a little bit longer, a little bit better. But in the end we know God is going to come crashing through and take back what we took from Him, because everybody dies. Thus we live in a state of mortal terror from the time we are old enough to be aware of it—that if we are not careful we could be killed.

We could be killed in a car crash, by a germ, by bad nutrition, by having a bad heart, by eating certain foods, etc., etc. Or we could be psychologically devastated by an angry look from our parents or any authority figure. Tremendous fear permeates our entire lives because we know the life that we think we possess is not ours—we stole it. And the One from Whom we stole it at some point is going to steal it back. If you can understand that, then you will understand the little fears, the little anxieties, and the little terrors that we live with day in and day out, because they are all part of this larger fear. Therefore what you want to do is be really clear that that is the goal that you have set for yourself: to preserve your life as you know it. And you want to be clear that it is a fight and a battle you will never ever win. Be really clear during your day that you are getting what you want. Then you will have to decide at some point: what I am getting, what I wanted, is not really making me happy. This signals the beginning of the end of the ego—the recognition that what you are basing your whole life on is not really giving you the happiness and peace that you thought you were going to get. At some point you will say: "There must be another way of doing this." That is the beginning of the effect of the miracle: that there is another way, there is another choice I can make.