

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

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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part XII

Rule 4 (cont.), and Rules 5 to 7

Let's now turn to the last paragraph of Chapter 5, which is a wonderful elaboration of this fourth rule for decision: "At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now." I can't emphasize enough how important it is that you allow yourself to feel your pain, to feel your ego's thought system in whatever way it comes to you. If you do not allow yourself to feel it, which again is what the bliss ninnies attempt to do (in other words, cover it over and everything is wonderful), then there will be no motivation to learn and practice this course. If you really believe you are happy and at peace, then what do you need a course for? The purpose of this course is to give you a way of undoing your pain. If you don't believe you have any pain, then you don't need this. So again, one of the first ideas in working with this course is to understand that one of Jesus' central purposes is to have you recognize that you *do not* recognize how much in pain you are.

(T-5.VII.6:1-2) Decision cannot be difficult. This is obvious, if you realize that you must already have decided not to be wholly joyous if that is how you feel.

This whole thing rests on the idea that you are allowing yourself to be aware that you are not feeling joyous or happy—that you are feeling anxious, guilty, lonely, sad, depressed, fearful, etc. If you don't let yourself feel that, then nothing else is possible. Another premise is the idea that if you are not feeling joyous, *you* are the one who has chosen that, as we had discussed before. If there is no world outside your mind, then there is nothing that can have any effect on you. If you are unhappy, *you* are the only one who has made you unhappy.

Resistance to this is enormous, because—going back to that original instant—the ego said that if you look at your guilt, which is over *your* responsibility for separating yourself from God and from Christ, and then literally destroying Heaven and making up a world opposite to it—if you look at your guilt and accept responsibility for what you did, right in back of that is the wrathful vengeful God Who will destroy you. That is where the terror comes from. That is what works in the back of everyone's mind. This whole world becomes a massive layer of *stuff*, just to keep the pain of that thought away from us. And the whole thing is made up because the whole thought system of sin and guilt is made up. But you won't know it is made up until you look at it—that is why this is such an important theme.

So again, the first step in the undoing, which is the undoing of the decision and of the effect of the decision (which is to feel terrible), is to recognize that you actively decided wrongly but can as actively

decide otherwise. The keyword here is *actively*. Jesus is telling you very clearly that you have actively chosen this. This is a deliberate choice: You do *not* want to be with Jesus. You do *not* want to be with the Love of God. You want to be with yourself. You want to be with your specialness. So this is an active choice. Then he makes the point even more clear:

(T-5.VII.6:4) Be very firm with yourself in this [in realizing that you have actively chosen the ego] and keep yourself fully aware that the undoing process, which does not come from you, is nevertheless within you because God placed it there.

In other words, as egos we are not the ones who can undo the ego—that is the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So what we are really talking about is the decision maker, the part of our minds that chooses, that turned away from Jesus and turned towards the ego; therefore, it is that same part of our minds that now must choose against the ego and turn back towards Jesus. Our job is to do that. Once we join with him, which again means we look without judgment at our or anyone else's ego, then we have completed our part in the Atonement.

This next line states that clearly.

(T-5.VII.6:5) Your part is merely to return your thinking to the point at which the error was made, and give it over to the Atonement in peace.

This is a wonderfully clear statement of your part. This is what the little willingness is: to "return your thinking." Earlier I discussed the idea of "mind wandering," where Jesus had said to Helen that she was much too tolerant of her mind wandering (T-2.VI.4). Your mind wanders when your thoughts of the ego wander out of your mind into the world, and now you think that they are in the world. So he is saying to return your thinking and your attention from where it had wandered to—the world—back to the mind to that choice point at which the error was made. That is the decision maker. That is the whole problem. There is no problem in the world, there is no problem in your ego mind—there is a problem in *your* mind, in the decision maker that has *chosen* to believe in the ego mind, and that then chose to leave the mind and make up a world. So that is your only part: to "return your thinking to the point at which the error was made, and give it over to the Atonement in peace." At that point, then, you legitimately turn it over to the Holy Spirit—you legitimately offer your fear and guilt to the Holy Spirit, because now you have actually *seen* it. You have seen the fact that you chose it, made it real, and now can reverse the decision, which then means giving it over to the Holy Spirit. "Giving it over" means that you now look at it with His Love beside you, and without judgment.

Basically what we have up to now is a wonderful description of what forgiveness is as a process. So that when we speak of forgiveness as a process, we can see that the first step in the undoing is to recognize that we actively decided wrongly, but can as actively decide otherwise. Then our part is merely to return our thinking to the point at which the error was made and give it over to the Atonement in peace. This is really what the forgiveness process is.

Let's turn now to the workbook, Lesson 23. Those of you who may have read my earlier books and heard me speak several years ago know that I used to talk about the "three steps of forgiveness." I got that from the passage at the end of Chapter 5 which I just read, and from paragraph five in Lesson 23.

Editor's Note: *This commentary on Lesson 23 has not been included in these excerpts.*

Reviewing the process of forgiveness as specifically expressed in this final paragraph of Chapter 5, therefore, the process begins with the idea: I'm not feeling right, something is wrong, I'm not at peace. I now realize that it is not that I am not at peace because something external has happened or has not happened; I am not at peace because I *chose* not to be at peace. And at some point I will be able to choose *to* be at peace. So, in other words, I realize that the cause of my problem is in my mind, not outside it. I am the one who put the problem in my mind, I am the only one who can remove it, and the way I remove it is by joining with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. And in joining with them in looking at my ego, I have undone the cause of the problem and the suffering. So at this point, now, Jesus gives us some help with this process.

(T-5.VII.6:6) Say this to yourself as sincerely as you can, remembering that the Holy Spirit will respond fully to your slightest invitation.

Now why would Jesus say "as sincerely as you can"? Because he knows no one is sincere. He is not judging you, he is not attacking you, he is not mocking you or poking fun at you. He is trying to relieve you of your guilt by letting you know that he knows that you are lying. So there is no guilt in this. This is a way of learning to look at the "tiny, mad idea" of wanting to be separate from God and saying: "This is no big deal." So you don't have to feel that you have to fool him.

"The Holy Spirit will respond fully to your slightest invitation" is a metaphoric way of describing the fact that the Holy Spirit is fully present. You have just slammed the door in His face. Then you just open the door and He is there. You do not have to send Him an invitation and wait for Him to respond. He doesn't respond in an active way. His very Presence is the response. He is there. His light is shining—and you have covered it over. What forgiveness does is remove the coverings. And then His Love, which was always there, is there for you to remember.

Now Jesus gives us a sequence of statements. You don't necessarily have to repeat the statements literally, but you do want to get to the content underlying the form in each of the statements.

I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.

I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.

The third statement is a positive statement of what we want:

I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.

Over and over again in the Course Jesus is appealing to the purely selfish motives in everyone. That is the hook here. He is saying: "Do you really want to be happy and peaceful? If you do, do what I say. Don't do it because I say so and because this is the holy word of God. Do it so that you will feel better." Again, he is appealing to the basest motives in everyone: that we want to feel good. He is also telling us that we don't know what will make us feel good, but he does, so we should ask him to teach us. We think what will make us feel good is getting what we want. That will never make us feel good!

Temporarily it might, because it will remind us that we feel good because we killed God. In one of the important sections on special relationships in Chapter 16, Jesus asks us to consider: "If you perceived the special relationship as a triumph over God, would you want it?" (T-16.V.10:1). If you really understood that by getting what you want from somebody else—getting your needs met—you were reliving that original instant when you triumphed over God and felt so good because you finally got out from under His Love and were now on your own—if you realized that is what you are doing, would you still keep choosing it?

Well, the obvious answer is that we keep choosing it because we don't know that is what we are doing. That is what he is teaching us: that we really want to feel better, really better, with the real peace of God that is not dependent on anything external. That is why we want to make another choice.

I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.

"The wrong consequences" are the thoughts of pain and suffering in our minds. This is not talking about the Holy Spirit waving a magic wand that will undo all the mistakes in the world. It is quite obvious from Jesus' own life that he (Jesus) did not do that—and if that was his mission, he failed miserably. He did not make the world a better place externally. He reminded the world that the thing to do with the world and the desert is to leave. People didn't like that answer very much and they first killed him so he couldn't teach anything else. Then they re-wrote what he taught, so everyone would believe that he said that we were to make the world a better place. This was the exact opposite of what he taught! That is what people are trying to do with this course as well, except it is more difficult, because we at least now know what he said. Nobody knows for certain what he said 2,000 years ago.

So the Holy Spirit doesn't take away the consequences outside, because there are no consequences outside. There are reflections and shadows outside which come from the consequences *inside*. What happens when you feel guilt? You feel terrible. You feel anxious, terrified, and sick. When you choose the Holy Spirit instead of the ego, you are joining with the Love of God that you had separated from, which undoes the "sin" of being separate from God. That undoes the guilt and all the terrible consequences of guilt. So it is not that the Holy Spirit in an active way takes away all the bad thoughts and feelings you have. *You* took them away, because you are the one who put them there. But you took them away by joining with Him. That is why joining with Him or with Jesus is so central in the Course. That is why asking Them for help is so central to the Course. Asking for help is saying: "I don't know, but you know."

Finally:

I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.

I don't decide for God, because the God that I will decide for is my ego-God: that is the God of specialness. That is the God of religion, of formal religion. I rather let the Holy Spirit choose God for me. And basically all that that means is that by joining with the Holy Spirit, I now accept *His* understanding of God, which is that God is perfect Love. When I join with my ego, *my* understanding of God is that He is a God of specialness, Who believes in separation, sin, vengeance, form, ritual, etc., etc.

So by joining with the Holy Spirit what we are really doing is *undoing* our insane beliefs about what God is.

Let's turn back now to the "Rules for Decision"—Chapter 30 in the text—Rule 5.

(T-30.I.9:1-2) (5) Having decided that you do not like the way you feel, what could be easier than to continue with: *And so I hope I have been wrong.*

This is very difficult. We have been through this path already. We are aware now, having gone through all these other steps. Again, we are not talking about literal steps, but rather a general description of the process of wanting peace and then being afraid of it, of wanting to take Jesus' hand and then wanting to drop it and take the ego's hand back. So at some point we want to understand that we are wrong: *I* thought what I was doing was right, but it is not making me feel good. That is the crucial step: making a causal connection between not feeling good (the effect) and the cause (*I* decided wrongly)—which means *I* made a mistake. And this means that *I* don't know what is best for me. Now what is so important about the statement "*And so I hope I have been wrong*" is if *I* am right and *I* am still feeling miserable, then there is no way out. If *I* am aware that *I* am feeling disquieted, anxious, guilty, unhappy, and in pain, and yet *I* have been right in everything *I* have done, then there is literally no hope. The hope comes in thinking: well, maybe *I* was *wrong*. Now notice the statement doesn't even say: "*and so I know I have been wrong.*" It says: "*I hope I have been wrong.*" If *I* am wrong, then there is a right answer, because right and wrong are opposites. If *I* am wrong, then there must be a right answer somewhere. That is the beginning, once again, of turning towards Jesus. Maybe he knows better than *I* do.

The premise here is that *I* am not feeling happy, and that the cause of my not feeling happy is that *I* made a wrong choice.

If that is the case (if *I* am now able to admit that), this works against the sense of opposition, because now *I* will no longer perceive Jesus as my enemy. Now *I* am praying he is still my friend and that he is not angry at me—I no longer see myself in opposition to him. If *I* always have to be right, then he is going to have to be wrong, because my fear is, obviously, that he knows better than *I* do. So *I* always have to insist that *I* am right, which means *I* have placed myself once again in that original, ontological moment when we believed as one Son that we were right and God was wrong. God's "being right" is His saying that "there is nothing else but Me—that My reality, which is also your reality, is perfect non-dualism. It is perfect Oneness. There is nothing else." If *I* want to exist as a separated being, that means God is wrong and *I* am right. That is what we relive over and over again. This is the authority problem. *I* want to be right, which means God must be wrong. This means *I* always believe *I* am in competition with God. And this means *I* am in competition with Jesus. And this must mean *I* am in competition with his course, because his course is telling me over and over again *I* am wrong, and he is right. *I* will resent that bitterly until *I* can make the determination for myself that it is my insisting that *I* have been right that has led to my feeling so terrible. And this means that *I* am now hoping that *he* was really right and *I* was wrong.

Jesus now is perceived as your friend, as someone who can help you, because you are in a miserable mess and you can't help yourself anymore. You already know nothing out there is going to work, and now you realize that you don't work either. And so you are hoping there is someone else who does have the right answer. So basically Jesus is not pleading that we be his friend so his ego would feel good—he doesn't have an ego. He is pleading because he is saying: "If you really want help, *I* can help you. But *I* can't help you unless you join with me."

(T-30.I.9:3) This works against the sense of opposition, and reminds you that help is not being thrust upon you but is something that you want and that you need, because you do not like the way you feel.

Until you reach this point, you may believe in a Jesus, you may even believe in *A Course in Miracles*, but there will be a part of you that feels it is being thrust upon you against your will. There will be a part of you that will stubbornly insist that you are right. And you will stubbornly try to push him away. And if you are too fearful of this part of you, it will go underground and you will do all this in very subtle ways. One of the most subtle ways, as we have seen, is to try to change what this course says and make it mean something it does not mean. That is one of the subtle ways. The *unsubtle* way is just telling him to go to hell, or you just slamming the book down and saying: "This doesn't work, and I want something else."

So again, the idea of hoping that you have been wrong, which directly implies that Jesus is right, "works against the sense of opposition and reminds you that help is not being thrust upon you, but is something that you want." See, over and over again Jesus is appealing to the power of our minds to choose what we want. But he first has to remind us that we do not know what we want, so he has to teach us what we want, and that we indeed want it and need it. All too often in religious circles, and certainly this was true in Christianity, people felt that they had no choice. They *had* to do what the Jesus of the Bible, or the Jesus of the Churches said. And they didn't do it because they *wanted* to do it. They had no choice, because if they didn't do it, they would be punished. Here Jesus is saying: "Do what I am telling you to do, not because it is sinful if you don't, but because you won't be happy—not because *I* say so, or the Bible says so, or the Churches say so, but because *you* will say so once you understand that if you really want peace you must do it *my* way, simply because I know better than you. And I am right and you are wrong."

Most of the time—in fact all of the time—the ego in you will resist that with a real vehemence: "I don't want to be told you are right and I am wrong." That is the authority problem. That is what takes a long time. You have to work toward this, and realize that you are better off being wrong. That is a very hard pill for anyone's ego to swallow. See, what we hate God for is that He is right. And what He is right about is that we don't exist—that life only exists in Heaven. Anything outside Heaven, anything in a state of duality doesn't exist—that is what we hate Him for. His very Presence, His very Being is saying: you don't count, and you don't exist, which means your specialness is out the window.

What we hate Jesus for is that he reflects that message, in words and language we can understand. He basically says: "You can protest and yell and scream as much as you want, but in the end I am very sorry to tell you: you are wrong and I am right." Just imagine yourself in the presence of someone who talks to you that way! You want to kill him! That is why people killed him then, and that is why they are trying to kill him now. It is extremely important that you take this very literally and understand how terrified and angry this makes you—that here is this person who says to you: "You are wrong and I am right." These words are true, and they mean exactly what they say. You can't interpret them; you can't change them—they mean what they say. And your ego will rise up with a fury.

It is very important that you understand that that is what he is talking about here. The turning point comes when you realize that you are the cause of your own unhappiness, and that your arrogance is the cause of everything that has gone wrong in your life. Then you will begin to develop that gratitude that says: "Thank God I was wrong. Thank God there is someone still within me who loves me, who does not

condemn me, who will show me my mistakes." That is why Jesus refers to himself as an older brother. An older brother is someone who guides his younger brothers and sisters. Humility comes in being able to say: "I was wrong. Thank God I was wrong. About everything! Not just about a specific issue in the world. I was wrong about everything!" It is at this point, then, that you realize that you *want* this help—you *need* this help, because you are so unhappy. Above all, you can see that this is a course in developing humility. And gratitude goes hand in hand with humility. That is why love is the way we walk in gratitude, as the workbook lesson says.

(T-30.I.9:4) This tiny opening [which simply is: "I hope that I was wrong." You don't even have to say affirmatively "I was wrong"—just "I hope I was wrong"] **will be enough to let you go ahead with just a few more steps you need to let yourself be helped.**

So Jesus is not even talking about accepting help at this point—remember, we are talking about a process. He is talking about at least hoping that maybe I was wrong and that there *is* help. If you take that step, then inevitably you will take all the other steps.

(T-30.I.10) Now you have reached the turning point, because it has occurred to you that you will gain if what you have decided is not so. Until this point is reached, you will believe your happiness depends on being right. [Everyone in this world believes that: that is why people come to this world.] **But this much reason have you now attained; you would be better off if you were wrong.**

The turning point again is realizing you were wrong. Just think within yourself how difficult this is—how difficult it is to say this to somebody who is a superior of yours, or an authority in your life—let alone someone like Jesus who comes along and says: "My very existence in your life is showing you that you are wrong." Just watch how stubbornly and ferociously you resist that. Nobody wants to be told that they are wrong, because, as we have already discussed in the workshop, to be told that you are wrong about anything specific is a direct reflection of the original fear: I was wrong about everything. I was wrong about God, wrong about Heaven, wrong about myself. And therefore I am wrong about everything I see in the world.

This is a real turning point.

Let's turn to Chapter 29, section VII, "Seek Not Outside Yourself." Here is where the line comes which is referred to in what we just read: "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" "Seek not outside yourself" is an important theme in the Course. Earlier Jesus speaks of the ego's fundamental maxim: "Seek and *do not* find." What the ego does after making up the problem of guilt is say, as we have seen, "Don't look at it; let's put the guilt outside us." So the problem is now seen in the world, and hence we need to find a solution to the problem of the world. That is what literally made up this world. Remember, this world is a huge distraction or a smokescreen to keep the *real* problem from ever being resolved. The real problem is that we chose to identify with our guilt and with our ego. Therefore, the only solution that can be found is to go back to that choice point and then make another choice. The ego's fear of that, as we have seen, is so great that what it does is deny the mind entirely and place its contents of sin, guilt, and fear outside in the world. It is outside you in your own body, in your own psyche, which is not the mind. The Freudian psyche is some derivative of the brain. It has nothing to do with the mind. So when psychologists talk about the psyche or the unconscious, their conceptualization would always end up, if you press them enough, with some aspect of the brain. Freud himself, near the end of his life, said that at some point, people will discover that all of the dynamics he talked about can be explained

electrochemically. He never stopped being a physician first—everything he saw was in terms of the body. And so the psyche he talked about is still of the body. So whether you say you have a problem in your psyche or in your body, or that there is a problem in the world, you are still seeking outside yourself for a solution to a *problem* that is outside yourself.

That, again, is why this course is so radically, radically different. The only problem, to state it still once more, rests in our minds. This whole world, covered by this veil—this veil of denial which causes us to forget the guilt in our mind—this whole world is made as a defense against that. So the ego is saying: "Indeed, you have a lot of problems, but they are all outside your mind—in your body, mentally or physically, or in the world. And therefore, let us go about trying to find the solution to all of those problems." So the ego's maxim is "seek and do not find." That statement, of course, is taken from the famous passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says "seek and you shall find." That scriptural verse is the most frequently quoted one in the Course. Over and over and over again you will see references to seeking and finding—whether it is from the Holy Spirit's point of view, where you seek the problem in your mind and then you find the problem in your mind, or the ego's point of view which is always to seek outside yourself for a solution. According to the ego, the problem is outside yourself, and if you look outside yourself in the world, you will find a solution.

So the theme of the section is Jesus saying: "Seek not outside yourself." The problem is not outside yourself, and therefore the solution is not outside yourself. The ego continually attempts to seek a solution to a problem, but it will never find it. It doesn't tell you that you will never find the solution. When you don't find the solution, the ego says it is because you haven't tried hard enough, or you are not smart enough. Or it says to wait a hundred years and then a cure to this illness you have will be found. It is always that at some later point you will find it. What the ego never tells you is that the whole system, which is the world, is set up so that you will never find a solution, because the solution to the problem is in the mind. And the ego will never let us remember the mind. Therefore, what Jesus is exhorting us here in this section is to "seek not outside yourself" for the solution to your problems.

Editor's Note: *A line-by-line commentary followed on the first three paragraphs of "Seek Not Outside Yourself" from Chapter 29 in the text. This commentary has not been included in these excerpts.*

Let's turn back now to the "Rules for Decision." We are at the end of the fifth rule, which is that we hope that we have been wrong. We looked at "Seek Not Outside Yourself" to really elaborate and make clear why it is that we are wrong, and just how wrong we are. So it is not just being wrong about a specific thing; it is being wrong about the very substance of our existence. So the last line before Rule 6 is:

(T-30.I.10:3) But this much reason have you now attained; you would be better off if you were wrong [because that is the way that we will be happy].

And now we are going to move to Rule 6.

(T-30.I.11:1-4) (6) This tiny grain of wisdom will suffice to take you further. You are not coerced, but merely hope to get a thing you want. And you can say in perfect honesty: *I want another way to look at this.*

"This tiny grain of wisdom" is the idea that you would be better off if you were wrong. So you still have not fully accepted that you are wrong and Jesus is right. But you now recognize—with hope—that you really would be better off if you were wrong. You are not convinced yet that you are wrong, but at least you are open to the suggestion that you are wrong and he is right. Remember, we take very small steps.

Sentence 2 is the same idea as the one we saw in the preceding rule. Nobody is forcing this on you. This is something you want. This is why this takes so much time: because you have to be convinced that you are not losing anything. That is the real fear: I am really afraid that if I do what Jesus says and I give up my specialness and all the things that I value in the world, there will be nothing left. There still is that thought in my mind that the ego just may be right, and God can't be trusted. That is what takes so long, and that is why it is so important that your experience of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, and your experience of the Course be of a very, very gentle teaching. Nobody is forcing you to do anything, at any time. All that Jesus is doing is making a suggestion that you consider what he is teaching you, and that you would be better off with him than with your ego.

There are two lines in the text, something like four hundred pages apart, when put together read: "Resign now as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught" (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). And basically what he is saying is: "Look honestly at what your ego has taught you and realize that it hasn't done very well with you. You are *not* happy. You get a few crumbs every once in a while, but the happiness doesn't last. And you spend all of your time trying to deny how unhappy you really are. So why don't you give me a shot?" That is what he is asking for here. That is why he urges you to take very small steps, fully aware that you are going to be terrified with each step you take. So all you have to do is just think about what he is teaching you here (which obviously makes very good sense), and then think about what *you* have taught yourself, and have let the world teach you. Then realize that that makes no sense at all.

Editor's Note: *The rest of the commentary on Rule 6 has not been included in these excerpts. We resume with Rule 7.*

(T-30.I.12) (7) This final step is but acknowledgment of lack of opposition to be helped. It is a statement of an open mind, not certain yet, but willing to be shown: *Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?* Thus you now can ask a question that makes sense, and so the answer will make sense as well. Nor will you fight against it [the answer], for you see that it is you who will be helped by it.

Another way of understanding all of this is that, recalling that original ontological moment, the ego made us believe that the Holy Spirit was an enemy. This is extremely important to understand, because this is what set into motion a whole series of thoughts within ourselves. And the end product of that process is the formation of formal religions. The ego makes the Holy Spirit the enemy, because He is seen as representing God, Who has made sin real. Where would formal religion be without sin? This God, Who obviously is the ego's God of specialness, has made sin real, and then threatens us with punishment if we don't do what He wants. So that God is now perceived as an enemy, and we are in opposition to Him. That is the whole idea of a battleground. That really is what the ego thought system

is and what the wrong mind is: a battleground where we are pitted against God—where God is hell-bent on destroying us because of our sin against Him. All this obviously is made up, but this is the ego's fairy tale to help us *not* pay attention to the Holy Spirit, and to have us become afraid of remaining within the mind, which is now a battlefield. It's like a mine field, where the ego says: "Watch where you walk, because if you take one wrong step, you will be blown up."

So what has been established is that God, truth, love, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, salvation, forgiveness—all these words really are synonyms here—are seen as the enemy and in opposition to us. If you read "The Laws of Chaos" again in Chapter 23, you will recognize what those five laws are all about: the insanity of believing we are in opposition to God, and God (the insane God that we have made up) is in opposition to us. And there is no hope. That same idea is carried through in the teacher's manual, in the section "How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts?" which is a very powerful and succinct description of this insanity. And it, too, says there is no hope. That is where the phrase: "Kill or be killed" is found. There is no hope. The only hope there is, is to forget—that is the ego's use of denial. This whole idea is so fraught with terror (that at any moment God is going to swoop down and destroy us), that the only way we can deal with it is to just forget the whole thing, and run away from our mind and make up a world in which we hide—and hope against hope against hope that we will never ever think of this again.

The only problem is that the thought seeps through all the time. It seeps through in religions. You find it in the Bible. You find it in all kinds of things—even in systems which are not religious in form. You find it in the *Chicken Little* fairy tale—that the sky is going to come crashing down. So the thought always seeps through. And as it does, we always try to kind of push it away or rationalize it away, but not make it real for ourselves. So this is what Jesus is up against with this course, which is why he is fully aware that nobody is going to pay any attention to this—certainly not right away. There is an inherent distrust of him, because he represents God's truth and God's Love. And the ego has taught us not to trust God's truth—it will destroy you. We are the direct product, the shadow of that thought system. If the body is the embodiment of the ego, and the ego is the thought system that proclaims that we have sinned against God, God will destroy us as punishment for our sin, as we are the embodiment of that thought system. Then, within the very fiber of our being is this thought that we can't trust God, we can't trust the Holy Spirit, we can't trust Jesus. If you read both the New Testament and the Old Testament, it becomes very obvious why you should not trust God. You make one false move and you are finished!

The New Testament is just as brutal as the Old Testament. Christians used to pride themselves that theirs was a civilized Bible and was all about love, and the Old Testament was all about judgment and law and everything else. And they are not aware that it is a continuation of the same book. Whether you read the Bible as a Jew or as a Christian, you will tremble in your boots. You know that if you make one false move, it is all over for you. Now why was the book written that way? And why does that book have such a hold on Western consciousness? Because it tells the truth from the ego's point of view. And we are creatures of the ego, so we recognize it. Like is always attracted to like: this speaks to us. That is what Jesus is up against with this course. And that is why it is so easy to misinterpret this and change it around and distort it. It says the exact opposite, not only of what you believe, but of what you believe you are. This is why he keeps talking about the idea that you believe that he is in opposition to you. So at some point you must begin to understand that there is something very, very wrong with your thinking. And so what you find in this section is a very simple, yet clear description of that process of going back and forth—which really means to examine what you really believe—which means you really have to get to the heart of what your thought system is, and how you really think you know what is best.

Rule 7 "*Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?*" is somewhat tentative, right? It is not a bold affirmation of what you want, but at least it is saying: "I can't lose anything because I know that I am already a loser. I can't lose any more than I have already lost."

So, at least you now have recognized that the ego is not right, because the ego says: "If you ask, you are going to lose a great deal; you are going to lose your life. If you ask for the Holy Spirit's help, or for Jesus' help, you are going to lose." What this rule is really expressing is the breaking of the allegiance to the ego. In this original instant when we chose the ego, what we basically did was pledge an eternal oath that we would never ever forsake the ego. The ego became our friend, and we "put all of our eggs in its basket," vowing never to trust the Holy Spirit or Jesus again. What this passage is now saying as part of this process is that perhaps it is the ego we can't trust. So since our trust in the ego hasn't brought us anything worthwhile at all, what can we lose by asking the other side? It at least opens up the possibility.

These, then, are the seven rules. The process doesn't stop, but this is as far as Jesus goes here. And you don't have to go any further, because the door is open. Remember again that what the miracle does is basically leave that door open. It brings you back to your mind and reminds you that you do have a choice. It doesn't make the choice *for* you, but it says that you *do* have a choice. That is exactly the position we are in now, after this seventh rule. We are at least now saying we have a choice. We haven't made that right choice, but at least we know that we haven't. And that is as far as this course will take you because that is as far as it *has* to take you. Once you get that far, the rest is inevitable.