

True Empathy

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part XII

Commentary on the Section "The Agreement to Join" (T-28.III) (Conclusion)

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 1) God builds the bridge, but only in the space left clean and vacant by the miracle.

The "bridge that God builds," which the Course defines elsewhere as God's last step (T-7.I), refers to when we are totally awakened from the dream and realize that we never left home. But God can do this only if we first have made this space vacant, which means we have to look at the emptiness of the little gap. The ego fills it up by making it real, filling it with thoughts of sin, guilt, fear, attack, vengeance, defense, sickness, pain, and death, etc. Of course, once the ego has filled it up, it tells us: "Don't ever look here. Let's transfer all the contents, all the thoughts in this little gap, out into the world, and we will deal with it there." The miracle restores us to that place of observation in the mind, where the decision maker is. From here we can turn to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus, look at the little gap and say, "By the way, you were right, there's nothing there. I made the whole thing up." So the miracle returns us to the mind, which is all the Course is trying to teach us to do. That is why it is called A Course in Miracles, not a course in love or a course in Heaven. Our part is to get back to that place in the mind where we can rejoin the Love of God that we believe we separated from. From there we look within at the little gap—what elsewhere the Course refers to as "shrouded vaults" (T-31.V.6:5) or "darkened tombs" (T-28.V.7:5) in our minds. We look within, see nothing is there, and we are finished. And then "God takes the last step Himself" (T-19.IV.3:8).

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 2) The seeds of sickness and the shame of guilt He cannot bridge, for He can not destroy the alien will that He created not.

As long as we misuse the power of our minds to believe that this little gap contains all of our shame and guilt and fear, there is nothing He can do about it. The Course talks about God like this, but in reality, of course, He doesn't do anything. An earlier section that deals specifically with the last step says that God does not take steps. "Taking steps" is only a metaphor. It means that, as long as the mind has chosen to identify with the ego, there is no way the Love of God will be accepted. It is not that the Love of God is not present. We simply have turned our backs on it. And so the love simply waits until we turn back towards it. "The seeds of sickness and the shame of guilt" act according to their original purpose as a defense against the Love of God—like a veil that we put over the light of love that shines in our minds. The light is still there, but a thick shade covers it, and we do not see it.

Many of you probably have heard me tell the story of Helen who was very angry at Jesus one afternoon, and was accusing him of not helping her. She was furious that he had promised that he would help her—her experience was that he had not helped her, and she was feeling very upset. She was going on and on

with me about how angry she was at him, and I finally said to her, "Why don't you ask him? Why don't you ask Jesus why he hasn't helped you more?" So she did. The answer that she heard was certainly not what she expected, nor was her response what she expected. Jesus said to her, "I cannot help you more because you are so ashamed of me." And then she just burst into tears.

It is the same idea here. Our shame, which really is just an expression of our guilt, keeps his love away from us. Not that the love is not there, but our guilt keeps his love and his presence away from our awareness. We need a path, or a process that helps us to remove the guilt, which is what the Course furnishes us through forgiveness.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 3) Let its effects be gone [the effects of our guilt and our fear] and clutch them not with eager hands, to keep them for yourself.

That is what we do. Elsewhere the Course explains how we hold on to our guilt. The first obstacle to peace includes the attraction of guilt [T-19.IV-A.i]. The *Psychotherapy* pamphlet talks about how we hug our guilt (P-2.VI.1:3). Guilt is the ego's most cherished thought, because guilt keeps the thought of separation alive. Guilt comes from sin, and if sin is real it means that we have separated ourselves from God. We clutch our guilt, our sickness, and our pain, because they keep the Love of God away from us. And that is the ego's purpose.

(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 4) The miracle will brush them all aside, and thus make room for Him Who wills to come and bridge His Son's returning to Himself.

That, again, is God's last step. The purpose of the Course, the purpose of the miracle, is to prepare for the "coming of God." Basically, the miracle removes all the interferences to the awareness of love's presence within ourselves.

(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 1) Count, then, the silver miracles and golden dreams of happiness as all the treasures you would keep within the storehouse of the world.

The miracle and the dreams of happiness are still an illusion. They are still part of the separated mind. But they are the happy dreams that undo the nightmare dreams. When the happy dreams of the miracle and forgiveness replace all the nightmare dreams, then both dreams disappear. And then the little gap is gone. All that is left is the Love of God that was already there.

The Course speaks about forgiveness as a "happy fiction" (C-3.2:1)—the last illusion. It is an illusion because it forgives what never was. The miracle corrects what never happened. Jesus is asking us, within the split mind, to let the silver miracles and the golden dreams of happiness take the place of all of the ego's gifts.

In a wonderful passage in *The Gifts of God* (p. 118), Jesus asks us to give to him all the gifts of fear that the world has held, and, in exchange he will give us his gifts, the gifts of love, which will help us recognize that nothing this world has offered us was ever what we wanted. The passage is as follows:

The door is open [here the metaphor is a storehouse, like a room within our mind where all these gifts are], not to thieves [a reference to some biblical passages], but to your starving brothers, who mistook for gold the shining of a pebble, and who stored a heap of snow that shone like silver. They have nothing left behind the open door.

Our starving brothers are really part of ourselves. And what is really a shining pebble we have mistaken for gold—the ego's gifts are pebbles that are absolutely worthless. But the ego shines them up with such a polish and such a gleam that we yearn for them. And then we get them, and they are worth absolutely nothing. Similarly, in the earlier section on the two pictures (T-17.IV), the Course talks about the ego's picture of death, which the ego takes and puts in a beautifully ornamented frame that seems to glitter with all kinds of jewels, including diamonds and rubies, that seem so important to us. Only when we get close to the ego's gift and look at it for what it is—look at the special relationship for what it is—do we realize that the diamonds are tears and the rubies are drops of blood. And it is not gold shining, but just worthless pieces of stone. But that is exactly what we do. We settle for all the worthless things the world offers us—the pleasures that last for just a short period of time. In exchange we throw away the real pleasure that comes from really knowing the Love of God. What is necessary is not that we know the Love of God, but that we at least recognize what we have chosen in its place, and say, "This is really not what I want anymore."

Our starving brothers are those people, including ourselves, who starve for the Love of God, but who believe that they will never get it. What they stored in the storehouse has been snow that just melts and disappears. It seemed to be so wonderful and pretty, but in reality it disappeared as quickly as they got it. And so nothing is left.

That basically is the lot of everyone in this world. We suffer and struggle; we try to make sense of our lives, but in the end we die. Remember the famous statement, you can't take it with you? All the treasures and the sense of accomplishment and pride are vain attempts to keep ourselves young and attractive and beautiful and handsome. They all disappear, because in the end we are going to die, and there will be nothing left. The whole thing is absolutely futile. But the ego never lets us look at that as we are going along. So the meaning of the passage is that all the gifts that we have amassed are really nothing.

(Paragraph 7 - Sentences 4-5) What is the world except a little gap perceived to tear eternity apart, and break it into days and months and years? And what are you who live within the world except the picture of the Son of God in broken pieces, each concealed within a separate and uncertain bit of clay? [That is the body.]

The world is nothing except the projection of this little gap, this tiny, mad idea. The gap was made into a huge cosmos, in which there is a world of separation and of time, a world of days and months and years. The world is nothing more than a projection of that thought. And we who believe that we live in this world are nothing except a Son of God who has been broken up and destroyed. And we believe our identity—what God created—is this broken-up, destroyed piece of clay. Elsewhere the Course refers to the body as a parody (T-24.VII. 1:10) or a travesty (T-24.VII.10:8) of the Self that God created.

(Paragraph 8 - Sentence 1) Be not afraid, my child, but let your world be gently lit by miracles.

The first part of this line of course is from the Bible, and it is repeated often in the Bible, as well as in the Course. Jesus is constantly telling us not to be afraid, because the ego's whole thought system is built upon fear. I am afraid of love, I am afraid of God, I am afraid of Who I am as Christ. And so he is telling us not to be afraid. Rather than continually try to heap all the pseudo-treasures in the mind, what we want are the silver miracles.

(Paragraph 8 - Sentence 2) And where the gap was seen to stand between you and your brother, join him there.

Where I had seen you as separate from me, making a barrier of your sickness or my sickness, or my sick thoughts of anger, I can now join with you. Joining with you means simply accepting the oneness that is already there.

(Paragraph 8 - Sentence 3) And so sickness will now be seen without a cause.

The cause of sickness was my being separate. If I am no longer separate from you and I no longer experience myself as separate from the Holy Spirit, then the cause of sickness is gone. I realize that sickness is an effect whose cause has disappeared, which means the effect must disappear too.

(Paragraph 8 - Sentences 4-6) The dream of healing in forgiveness lies, and gently shows you that you never sinned. The miracle would leave no proof of guilt to bring you witness to what never was. And in your storehouse it [the miracle] will make a place of welcome for your Father and your Self.

The purpose of the ego's choice of sickness is to give us proof of "what never was," telling us that it does exist. What never was is the little gap or the thought of being separate, which sickness witnesses to. The miracle shows us that all this is simply a silly thought.

The miracle undoes all of the ego garbage that is in the mind, leaving the mind clean. What is left to take its place is the Love of God.

(Paragraph 8 - Sentences 7-8) The door is open, that all those may come who would no longer starve, and would enjoy the feast of plenty set before them there. And they will meet with your invited Guests the miracle has asked to come to you.

The "feast of plenty" of course is the feast of miracles, or the experience of the Love of God in this world.

By choosing not to make sickness real, and not to let my inner peace and the Love of God be affected by your choices and your pain, I am reminding myself that the light of Christ shines in me, and therefore I see the light of Christ shining in you. That is why "Guests" is capitalized—it refers to the Christ in each of us, as well as to God. Identifying with and joining with the love of Jesus in my mind enables me to see that same love in everyone. As I am tempted to make your sickness and attack real, whether it is your attack on yourself or on me, I can realize that it is your call for help that mirrors my call for help. So the miracle sets aside all ego thoughts and makes it possible for me to accept who I really am.

(Paragraph 9 - Sentence 1) This is a feast unlike indeed to those the dreaming of the world has shown.

"The Attraction of Guilt" sub-section of "The Obstacles to Peace" [T-19.IV-A.i] talks about a feast in a wholly different way. It talks about the angry and hungry wild dogs of fear in our minds that the ego sends out to feast upon all the sin that it can see in the world. That is what the ego in us feasts on: sickness, pain, sin, and judgment. We can't wait to sink our fangs into somebody who has made a mistake. Even if you have not made a mistake, I still *believe* you made a mistake, because I want to see the sin in you rather than in me.

But there is another feast described in that sub-section: the feast of communion, where Jesus says he is—waiting for us as he has always promised. That feast becomes accessible to us when we let go of our investment in proving that he is wrong and we are right.

(Paragraph 9 - Sentences 2-3) For here, the more that anyone receives, the more is left for all the rest to share. The Guests have brought unlimited supply with Them.

In the world, the more you have the less I have. In reality, the more love I can accept in you, the more love there is in me.

Within each of our brothers and sisters is the Christ—the Guest, along with God. By seeing the light of Christ shining in you, I am reminded that the same light of Christ shines in me.

(Paragraph 9 - Sentence 4) And no one is deprived or can deprive.

The ego's dream begins with the thought of scarcity—there's something lacking in me—which automatically leads to a thought of deprivation. It is lacking in me because somebody has deprived me of it. Right at the beginning, the only other character on the stage was God. So it was God Who deprived me. I then stole it back from Him and I accused myself of depriving Him—that is what sin is. Another way of understanding the ego's dream is that it is a dream of deprivation. Who is going to deprive whom first? Who is going to kill whom first? That thought then gets transferred down into this world.

(Paragraph 9 - Sentences 5-6) Here is a feast the Father lays before His Son, and shares it equally with him. And in Their sharing there could be no gap in which abundance falters and grows thin.

In other words, no one loses here. Despite whatever the body's eyes make real—people being homeless, not having enough to eat, losing their health, etc.—the abundance of Christ still rests within every single person. We are quick to jump on the ego's bandwagon and make sickness, poverty, and deprivation real, because we want to see scarcity as real and outside us. If you are sick, impoverished, and homeless, that proves that God has found out who stole from Him. It wasn't me. It was *you*. You are in such pain and are having so much trouble because God is punishing you. That basically was the teaching of John Calvin. Calvin taught that you know that you are a member of God's elect if you are prosperous, happy, and healthy. You know that God has damned you and is punishing you because you are not prosperous and instead are poor, miserable, and sick. My investment obviously is to have everybody else suffer so that everything will be fine with me. That is what proves that God has caught the sinner, and it is not me!

I will read that passage again:

(Paragraph 9 - Sentences 6-8) And in Their sharing there could be no gap in which abundance falters and grows thin. Here can the lean years enter not [This is taken from the famous biblical account of a dream that Joseph interpreted about the seven lean years: the lean years and the prosperous years that the Pharaoh had], for time waits not upon this feast, which has no end. For Love has set its table in the space that seemed to keep your Guests apart from you.

Once we join in the holy instant, time has no effect on us. Once we go back to that place in our minds where Jesus is, and we join with him and no longer feel that we are alone, nothing that the world does can have any effect on us. "It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity" (T-27.VIII.6:5). It is a joke to think that time or anything within the world of time can have any effect on the love I feel

for Jesus and the love he feels for me. If the world of time can have no effect on that love, it can have no effect on the love I feel for everyone else. Within this little gap, Love [the Holy Spirit] has set its table. And the miracle brings the mind back to that gap, reminding us that we can now look within this darkened tomb and not see all the sin and hatred, and the filth and ugliness of the ego. Rather, we can look within and see the Love of God which has always been waiting for us.