**"I Will Forgive, but Never Forget"**

Excerpts from the Academy class held at the
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*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

**Part I**

This topic, "I Will Forgive, but Never Forget," is a way of talking about what *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet refers to as "forgiveness-to-destroy" (S-2.II). The section in Chapter 30 called "The Justification for Forgiveness" is one of the few places in the Course where this concept of *forgiveness-to-destroy* is talked about—Lesson 126 is another—although the term itself is used only in the pamphlet.

The phrase "I will forgive, but never forget" is a well-known one and is used by many groups and people. It is typically what the world thinks of as forgiveness: Yes, you have done something terrible, unconscionable, and sinful, and I do forgive you, but I will not forget. One of the rationalizations for that position is that if I forget and if the world forgets what you did, then we can end up in the same boat again. That, for example, is what many Jewish groups and Jewish people say about the holocaust. "We will forgive, but we will not forget, because if we forget, it will happen again." *A Course in Miracles* is quite clear about why that does not work. People do not realize—because most people are not psychologically sophisticated—that when they adopt such a position they have made the sin real. If you make error real and call it sinful, the *only* reason for your doing that is that you believe it is real in you. That is what is important to understand. If you accuse someone of sin, whether you are doing it on a global scale or a personal scale, and then you adopt the position, "I will forgive, but I will never forget," you are accusing them of a sin because you do not want to see that sin in yourself.

Lesson 134, "Let me perceive forgiveness as it is," says that if you are tempted to accuse anyone of anything, stop first and ask yourself, "Would I accuse myself of doing this?" (W-pI.134.9:3). This does not necessarily mean that you are accusing yourself of the same *form* of the sin, but certainly of the same *content*. Therefore, when you make someone else's error real by calling it sinful, and you accuse and judge them for it, then you are secretly holding on to your own, not knowing that you are doing so. That is the problem.

While Jesus does not believe in sin in the Course, what would be a "sin" is remaining unaware of something inside. That is the worst possible thing. In a sense, that is being unaware of the guilt that allowed us to make the world, and it is that unawareness that sustains the world and the entire physical universe. Once you are aware of it, you will change your mind and the guilt will be gone. Then in your awareness, experience, and perception, the world will be gone, too, along with all the problems that appear to be so flagrant here.

Thus, the psychological problem with "I will forgive, but never forget" is that what I am really never forgetting is not *your*sin; what I am never forgetting is *my* sin. And if I am not aware of it, then whatever is buried in my unconscious, whatever awful things I am accusing myself of will inevitably get projected. Once they are projected and I am unaware of the source, I will believe that my attacks are justified, because, again, I am unaware of where they are coming from. We are all very good at justifying our attacks.

When one group, person, race, nation, or religious group takes the position "I will forgive, but never forget," it is ensuring that the same thing it is accusing another of will continue to happen and happen and happen. Further, there will be a *need* to see it continue to happen and happen and happen, because the need to perceive the sin in another and not in oneself will continue. That is what is wrong with the position of forgiveness-to-destroy, of which "I will forgive, but never forget" is one expression—"I will forgive the sinner, but not the sin" is another.

In *The Song of Prayer*, Jesus enumerates four different forms that forgiveness-to-destroy takes (S-2.II). The first form is "I will forgive, but never forget." He does not use that expression, but that is when you forgive someone for a sin that you have already made real, and by so doing, automatically put yourself in a superior position: "I am a wonderful, sincere, faithful Christian; therefore, I forgive you for what you have done, but you *have* done it." There is no way you can take that position without looking down on the person you are so-called forgiving. To say "I will forgive, but never forget" is really just an expression of that first form of forgiveness-to-destroy. The problem, once again, with the whole dynamic of forgiveness-to-destroy, and then specifically with "I will forgive, but never forget," is that you are not aware of your own complicity, not necessarily your behavioral complicity in the sense that you are responsible for what other people are doing, but your complicity in making the sin so real and judging against it.

It would literally be impossible to judge anyone for anything, no matter how heinous the crime, how egregious the sin, or how godawful the act, if you were experiencing the Love of God within you. You just could not do it. Love does not judge, condemn, make comparisons, or see sin. Therefore, if you see sin, if you accuse anyone of anything on any level, it must be because in the instant you are making that misperception, you have pushed love away in your mind. Whenever we push love away, as we all did right at the beginning when as one Son we pushed God's Love away, we must feel guilty. *Must.* There is no way we could avoid that, because we accuse ourselves of the sin of betraying, neglecting, abandoning, attacking, and rejecting love. From that "sin," the guilt we will feel will be so enormous, as guilt always is, that the only way we could survive is to get rid of it through projection. That is when we send out what "The Attraction of Guilt" in Chapter 19 describes as "the hungry dogs of fear" prowling around on a "savage search for sin" (T-19.IV-A.12:7) ready to pounce on anything that even hints of sin and guilt in another.

We all are going about savagely searching for sin in someone—anyone. When other people cooperate by doing things that are clearly, in the eyes of the world, sinful, evil, and wicked, it is a no-brainer for us. It is very easy to attack and accuse, and we find lots of other people to support us. We forget that people we accuse of sin, no matter what they have done in the world, are suffering from the same malady and illness that we all suffer from: the insane belief we have separated ourselves from God. Everyone suffers from that. Some people deal with the guilt over that in socially acceptable ways; other people deal with it in socially unacceptable ways; still others deal with it in most socially unacceptable ways—by committing mass murders or genocide.

Many of you know that wonderful speech from *The Merchant of Venice* where Shylock, the old Jew who is a moneylender and is not portrayed very nicely in the play, talks about all the persecution he has felt. In effect he says, "Doth not a Jew bleed? If you prick him, does he not bleed like everyone else?" Well, does not a Nazi bleed? Does not a "terrorist" bleed? Do not the people who sit in the White House bleed? Does not everyone bleed? Everyone suffers and everyone is in pain. That is the true perception of the Holy Spirit, the vision of Christ that sees everyone here as the same.

Perception is clouded and distorted when we begin with a self-perception of our own sinfulness. Once we believe, as the workbook says, that we "are the home of evil, darkness and sin" (W-pI.93.1:1), there is no recourse available to us other than to project that, in a most maladaptive attempt on the ego's part to get rid of the problem. This is an incredibly successful dynamic that has worked since the beginning of time. Indeed, it *is* the beginning of time, as well as of the world. Very, very effective, except it does not really work! It is very effective *because* it does not work. The ego does not want it to work because if we were really able to get rid of sin by projecting it onto someone else and seeing it in that person, there would be none left in us to project. The problem is that *ideas leave not their source*: sin leaves not its source in the mind, which means we have to keep projecting. As long as sin and guilt (which we can use interchangeably) remain within us, we will project them. There is no way we can avoid that.

The world has Freud to thank as the first to clearly enunciate and brilliantly describe that dynamic. People built on it after him, but he was the first to systematically describe how it works, which is that whatever is unconscious will somehow, by hook or by crook, find its way out, but you will not know it. You project your guilt, magically hoping to get rid of it, but it stays, which means you have to keep projecting. Not only that, the whole thing gets reinforced because on some level you know that your accusations of another are false, no matter what the person did. You are attacking not because the person actually did what you are accusing him or her of doing, but because you believe *you* did what you are accusing that person of doing.

It is an endless cycle that is the history of the world and will continue to be the history of the world until an individual in the world (because it only takes one) is able to shine the light of truth on that unconscious guilt. When you shine the light on the darkness, which is what it means to bring the darkness to the light, the darkness is gone, and if there is no guilt, there is no projection. If there is no projection, there is no hate, judgment, attack, murder, international murder, or genocide. There is nothing. But if you have the insane idea that you can forgive and not forget, and you believe that is a good thing, then you are ensuring that it will continue to happen.

That is always what happens when there is a victimized and oppressed people. It is the history of the world. If they are religious, they may try to forgive, but they do not forget what was done to them. Then, when in time they get power, we all know what they will do. The history of the world is like a seesaw; we go up and down and up and down. The French Revolution is probably one of the most blatant, flagrant, and bloody examples of that. You rebel and revolt for seemingly justified causes, and then you get the power and do exactly what was done to you. You end up with Napoleon declaring himself emperor, as he did in the aftermath of the French Revolution, and then the same stuff happens all over again. It just keeps recycling and recycling. Watch out for anyone who says, "I will forgive, but never forget." That is even worse than simply saying, "I will never forget," because at least when someone says, "I will never forget" you do not have the illusion of forgiveness. It is when you add the "I will forgive" piece to it that you then adopt a holier-than-thou attitude: I am being a very good Christian, Jew, Muslim, atheist, whatever, and I am forgiving because that is a good thing to do, but I am still holding on to it.

It is important to understand why it does not work so that you will be motivated to do what does work, which is to forgive without the "never forgetting" part; i.e., you truly forget. Another reason that "I will forgive, but never forget" does not work is that you are saying, "You did something terrible in the past, and I will never let it go." You are obviously making the past real, by definition. Well, what is the past? If we step aside from our current topic and look briefly at time, it becomes very clear why this does not work.

**Part II**

The world of linear time—past, present, and future—is one of the frameworks of our physical universe, and it is certainly one of the frameworks of our experience here. We all have a past, we all experience ourselves in the present, and we all anticipate a future, both as individuals and as members of races, various groups, and species. But linear time is a projection of what we usually refer to as the ego's unholy trinity, which is a constellation of the thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear in the mind that preceded the physical universe. They are the foundations of what A Course in Miracles refers to as the wrong mind: the part of the split mind that is the home of the ego, which is the home of the thought system of separation. Sin says we have separated from God, and that what we did was an awful thing. We are overwhelmed with guilt, not only for what we believe we have done, but for what we believe we have become: sinful, separated persons at God's expense. Then the guilt becomes so intolerable that we have no recourse but to believe we deserve to be punished, the inevitable result of the belief in guilt or sin: I have done something terrible; I am something terrible; therefore, I deserve to be punished, and now I am afraid of the punishment. When we project that out, sin becomes the past, guilt becomes the present, and fear becomes the future; I have sinned in the past; I experience this enormous self-hatred in what I think of as the present; and I am terrified of the future, which inevitably will bring the punishment that I so justly deserve. Sin, guilt, and fear projected out make for the past, present, and future.

Coming back to "I will forgive, but never forget" . . . By making the past real, I am making the meaning of the past real: namely, sin. As Jesus points out over and over again in A Course in Miracles, as well as in The Song of Prayer, how can you forgive a sin that you have made real? To do so, you first have to make it real and then somehow magically pretend it is not there, which is the meaning of "I will forgive, but never forget." This is why that statement would fall under the rubric of forgiveness-to-destroy. It is perhaps a not-so-subtle way for the egos in all of us to hold on to the thought system that gave rise to our own existence, a thought system of sin, guilt, and fear that is protected by projection. I see the sin, evil, and wickedness in you; I do not see it in myself. The ego tells us that is how we will be home free; that is how we achieve our innocence. In truth, of course, it is exactly the opposite, and there is no way out unless we are willing to step back and look at our accusations of others. No matter how justified they appear, no matter how many thousands, millions, or billions of people agree with us, until we step back and see beyond the projection and the justification for it, realizing this is a projection of what is inside, there is no hope of any meaningful change in ourselves, and certainly not in the world.

While most students of the Course can accept, understand, and agree with all this in principle—it is hard not to agree with it when it is presented this way—they find it almost impossible to do because there is such a fear that we say masquerades as a stubborn refusal, but underlying it is the fear of looking at our own sin. In "The Fear to Look Within" in the text, Jesus says the ego tells us "not to look inward, for if you do your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind" (T-21.IV.2:3). Do not look within your mind, because if you do you will see your sinfulness, you will experience your guilt, and your fear of God's retaliation will be justified because God will strike you blind, which is a nicer way of saying God will annihilate you—He will destroy you and cast you into oblivion. So we do not look within.

At the beginning, there is only a within; there is only a mind. In fact, there is always only a mind, but the ego convinces us that psychosis is the way to go, so we seemingly project what is within. I say "seemingly" because in reality, guilt does not leave; we seemingly project it and that gives rise to a world. Then we make up a body with a sensory apparatus that perceives a world, but the whole thing is literally made up, which is why it is psychosis. We see a world and experience a body that are not there. In our insanity, we are so sure we are right, because our bodies and our brains tell us we are. The smartest brains in the world tell us how we got here, what the world consists of, how it came into existence, and how it will cease to exist one day. And they are all wrong because they do not look within. There is a reason we do not look within: our eyes will light on sin and God will strike us blind!

Projection always comes to the rescue, and then we attack outside what we secretly believe is inside. That is what is meant by the line in the workbook that says, "The [unforgiving] thought protects projection" (W-pII.1.2:3). Our unforgiving thoughts, judgments, angers, annoyances, and grievances protect the fact that we have projected our own grievances against ourselves, our own sense of sin, and our own guilt onto other people, but we do not know we have done it. That is the problem. I cannot emphasize that enough. It is our unawareness of what the Course refers to at the end of the text as our "secret sins and hidden hates" (T-31.VIII.9:2). Secret and hidden. We are unaware of them, and as long as we remain unaware there is no way they can be corrected and undone. If they are not corrected and undone, they will fester in the unconscious and inevitably get projected, which is why, once again, there is no legitimate hope for any meaningful change in the world. The hope lies in changing the mind, not in changing the world (see T-21.in.1:7).

Once you understand the concept of forgiveness-to-destroy and why "I will forgive, but never forget" does not work, you need to be aware of why you do not live it and practice it. That is the key thing to focus on. We come back to our old friend resistance. The bottom line is we are resistant to the truth and are terrified of it because the truth will make us free. None of us wants to be free because the ego tells us that to be free means we will cease to exist, since the only true freedom is to be back in Heaven where we never left. This is what the Course refers to near the end of the text as "Freedom of Will" (T-30.II). We are the extensions of the Will of God, which is forever free because there is no conflict, nothing enchaining or imprisoning it.

To the ego, freedom means to be free from the Oneness of God. That is why everyone makes such a big deal in our world about being free. People talk about external freedom, which is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is the wrong emphasis if you want to be really free. To be really free means that what people do to your body does not make any difference because you are free within your mind. You may not be free to change external circumstances or situations, but you will grow to understand that the external situations are not responsible for your happiness or unhappiness, or for your imprisonment or freedom. It is our decision for the ego that imprisons us, and it is our decision for the Holy Spirit that frees us. Nothing else makes any difference, and nothing else matters.

Thus, when you fight for your external freedom, as groups have done throughout history, it is so tempting to do it with the ego, and you know you are doing it with the ego if you believe in separation, justified attack, justified revolts, or if you believe your happiness can be bought at the expense of someone else: the bad guys have to die so we can live. This is why no revolution ever really works—it is based on the principle of one or the other. You oppressed me, now I am going to overthrow and oppress you. Then I get power, and since I am still part of the same thought system that I believe I overthrew, I do the same thing. Nothing ever changes because we just keep recycling the same thing over and over again, since that is who we think we are.

There is a reason we recycle the same thing over and over again. We do not think we are creatures of love in this world; we think we are creatures of guilt. Creatures of love do not come into this world; they stay home with love. It is the people who feel they have abandoned and rejected love, who have run away from love, fleeing from a made-up god they believe is coming after them, who come into this world. They run into a world they have made, believing love is here, when in reality what is here is the guilt that accompanied them when they ran away from love in the first place. What preserves the guilt is projection. Once again, the unforgiving thought protects projection (W-pII.1.2:3). Guilt is preserved by our projecting onto others and judging them, finding fault with them and perceiving ourselves unfairly treated. That is who we believe we are. It is in our DNA, and because it is, we will steadfastly resist anything that would undo or change that DNA. There is that little voice inside that tells us that if we let go of our judgment and anger, if we see all people as the same and let go of our guilt, we will just go poof and vanish, disappearing into oblivion, which, of course, is not the way the process works. At the end of the process, we do disappear into the Heart of God, but before that, what disappears is our guilt, anguish, depression, anxiety, fear, and discomfort. We do not lose our sense of self until the very end when it is no longer meaningful to us.

It is very helpful to be aware of the resistance in all of us to accepting the fact that forgiveness-to-destroy does not work. If we acknowledge that forgiveness-through-separation cannot work, but that true forgiveness—nothing happened and there is nothing to forgive—does work, then the ego warns us that that means the end of who we are. That is the fear. If you do not see your resistance to learning and practicing true forgiveness, then you will never learn and practice it. You will think that you are doing so, but all that you will really be doing is practicing forgiveness-to-destroy.

One last point: Near the end of the second chapter on forgiveness in The Song of Prayer, Jesus tells us not to set forgiveness "in an earthly frame" (S-2.III.7:3). Do not set forgiveness in an earthly frame because that is forgiveness-to-destroy. What does he mean by "an earthly frame"? The body is the earthly frame. Therefore, do not see forgiveness as a process that occurs between you and someone else. Forgiveness is a process that occurs in your mind. Ultimately it is the expression of your forgiveness of yourself for having chosen the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. That is true forgiveness, which means you will not apply forgiveness in a way that reinforces and therefore breeds further separation. To say "I will forgive, but never forget" is clearly a dualistic statement. There is an "I" forgiving you, but it is also a statement, as we have seen, that reinforces the belief in sin.

**Part III**

**Q:** Where does the feeling of vulnerability fit into this model?

**A:** It fits in perfectly. The body was made to be vulnerable. The whole idea of being vulnerable is that there is something out there that can hurt us physically or psychologically, which fits in perfectly with the ego system. The ego wants us to feel vulnerable because that is what ensures the belief that someone out there can hurt us, and above all, that denies the fact that the right mind is truly invulnerable. When we are in our right minds, nothing can hurt us because we know we are not our bodies, and even though our bodies can be hurt and attacked, we would know that that has nothing to do with us. Thus, the idea that we are vulnerable, which really means that we are psychological or physical bodies, is a denial of the true invulnerability of the mind, which fits in very nicely with the ego system.

**Q:** What intentions could I set to release the feeling of vulnerability? I do not believe yet that I am not a body, so I really believe that someone can harm me. How do I make the reverse of that real?

**A:** You release it by realizing that being vulnerable does not bring you peace, and that recognizing your invulnerability as a mind will bring you peace. You would look at the situation from a point of strength rather than weakness (see T-31.VIII.2). If you do not yet believe that you are not a body and that therefore you can be harmed, just continue to be honest about that and say to yourself: "The reason I am afraid, anxious, angry, or upset is that I feel that I am vulnerable, but even though I am not ready to accept the fact that I am invulnerable, I am now aware that that is the truth. At least I now know that that is the problem. The problem is not what this terrible person is about to do to me or has done to me. The problem is that I am afraid of getting back to my mind where true invulnerability is." At least then you are being honest. That is a very helpful step forward.

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**Q:** This is about setting forgiveness in an earthly frame . . . I take it that this is the forgiveness we are used to because it is synonymous with forgiveness-to-destroy. Given that, I probably would never even ask the question which I have asked so many times: How does one forget when forgiveness has ensued? That probably implies that I hardly know what forgiveness means.

**A:**Probably that is true. You have a lot of company. This is why *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet was taken down and why there is so much in the Course about our misunderstanding of forgiveness. We think of it in the context of a body, and we cannot help that because we think we are bodies. So obviously anything that we think of is going to be colored by our experience of ourselves as bodies. That is why there is that very important line that says, "You cannot even think of God without a body, or in some form you think you recognize" (T-18.VIII.1:7). Since we are bodies, there is no way we can think of God as not having a body too. It may be different from ours, but we definitely think of God as a person. So, because we are bodies, He has to be a body and a person.

Since we think of ourselves and other people as bodies, then we would naturally think forgiveness is a process that occurs between bodies. We think love is something that occurs between bodies. We think attack is something that occurs between bodies. And that misses the whole point, which is that attack and specialness in any of its forms occurs in the mind, not the body. That is where forgiveness is operating. In fact, everything operates in the mind, because there is no body and no world.

What is helpful, again, is to be honest with ourselves and to be aware that we are reading the Course through our own lenses, thinking Jesus is talking to us as bodies and that he is telling my body to forgive someone else's body. That is what the words say, of course, but we are missing the whole point and the whole meaning of the words if we think that way. The words are there because we think we are bodies. The purpose of them, importantly, is to lead us to an experience that is beyond the body. The purpose of A Course in Miracles is to lead us from the mindless (the body) to the mindful. So Jesus uses words that pertain to the body because that is where we think we are, the condition we think we are in (T-25.I.7:4), but he uses those words to lead us beyond the body. "Words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). Thus, the words are symbols that represent concepts that are symbols that denote the reality.

Our true self (not our true Self) is a mind, not a body. That is the reality, and that is the truth. We therefore need a concept of our self, which is "I am an individual." Then we need a concept or a symbol that represents that concept, which is "I am a body." The body, then, symbolizes the concept of the self as an individual, which in turn is a symbol of who we really are. Thus, my self within the dream is not a body. My self within the dream is a dreamer or a decision maker. So the words are symbols of symbols. The word body is a symbol of the symbol of my self-concept as a separated entity, which itself is a symbol of a self that is a decision maker in the mind. We just get further and further away from that identity. The words meet us where we think we are, for the purpose of leading us back to where we truly are: in the decision-making part of our mind, which is the only thing there is.

Once we separated from God, the only true statement that could be made about us—our only real self-concept within the dream—is that we are decision makers. We have the power to choose. When we choose the ego, we abdicate our self-concept as a decision maker and become an ego, "the home of evil, darkness and sin" (W-pI.93.1:1). We project that and then become a body, also "the home of evil, darkness and sin," except we think it is another person's body that is "the home of the evil, darkness and sin," not ours. We are now far, far away from where we began, which is as a decision maker making the wrong choice.

Again, "Rest a while in this; do not attempt to judge forgiveness, nor to set it in an earthly frame" (S-2.III.7:3). What precedes this statement in *The Song of Prayer* is a discussion that basically says the Holy Spirit knows what forgiveness is, and that we should allow Him to teach us. What happens, of course, is that we teach Him instead. So rather than read the Course with an open mind and let Jesus tell us what he is teaching us, we read it with a closed mind that now thinks it is a body. In effect, we tell Jesus what he is telling us. And we are all wrong! *The Song of Prayer* was taken down one year after A Course in Miracles was published to correct what was already going wrong in the minds of Course students. Unfortunately, it does not appear to have done a very good job of correcting people, in part because people do not read it. And if they do, they read it the same way they read the Course. So a clear line like this—do not put forgiveness in an earthly frame—is not understood. There is a parallel line in "The Two Pictures" in the text where Jesus says we have tried to put the right picture in the wrong frame (T-17.IV.13:1). In this context, we would say the right picture is forgiveness and the wrong frame is the body. We put the right picture in the wrong frame, the earthly frame. That is why forgiveness here becomes impossible. We do not do it, because we are always holding on to what people have done, and what they have done is always in the past. In the present, we experience the hurt. The future then becomes: we will forgive them, but we will never forget, which means we are silently judging them, not to mention ourselves. Thus, we have taken the process of forgiveness and put it in the earthly frame of linear time, which means we have put it in the wrong mind's frame of sin, guilt, and fear. At that point, there is no forgiveness and no hope.

The idea is to see A Course in Miracles as a journey from mind-lessness to mind-fulness, a journey that will take us back to the mind. That is where forgiveness has to be practiced. That is where the problem is. The decision for the ego is the problem, not what you have done to me or I have done to you. That is simply a projection of what our minds have done. So you want to use your experience in a relationship here as the vehicle for getting back to the mind by seeing what you do here as a projection of the mind.

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**Q:** Our fear of forgiveness is that it will lead us to the Love of God, which would, of course, then spell our annihilation as a self, the disappearance of our self into the Love of God. Is that right? The other side of that is that if we do not forgive, we have the fear of God's punishment. So we put ourselves in a nice little no-win situation.

**A:**Yes, from the ego's point of view, that is exactly what it does. Its purpose is to have that no-win situation. Realize when you feel damned-if-you-do and damned-if-you-don't, you have chosen the ego, which means there must be another way of looking at it that transcends what is terrible on the left and just as terrible on the right. The answer to that is that you do not disappear into God. As I mentioned earlier, that happens at the very end of the process, at the very top of the ladder. Then you disappear, the ladder disappears, everything disappears. As you make your way up the ladder, however, the ego things that are so painful disappear: anxiety, guilt, fear, depression, anger, and so on. You still retain a sense of self. It is only at the very end that you realize that that very self, too, is an illusion, and then you are at the point where you can say, I don't want this, I don't need this anymore. Then it disappears. Recall the line, "Fear not that you will be abruptly lifted up and hurled into reality" (T-16.VI.8:1), meaning you are just going to go poof. It does not happen that way.

The ego uses the fear of the future as a way of reinforcing itself. Remember, any time you get involved with time, you know that is the ego: I did something terrible in the past, I feel so awful now; God knows what will happen in the future; there is not going to be enough time for me to learn this course—I am going to have to die, come back again, and start the workbook all over again. Whenever you get involved with time, you know that is the ego. It is a blanket rule of thumb that whenever you are concerned about the past, worried or anxious about the future, that is the ego. At that point, don't even argue with yourself because no matter what you say, you are going to lose. What will help you get beyond that is realizing that this whole thing is your ego. Any anxiety about the future and any self-recrimination about the past are part of the ego's strategy to keep you rooted in time, and if you are rooted in time, then your separated self is real.

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**Q:** After about 20 years of working with this course, I realize that I am practically always looking with the ego.

**A:**The difference between looking with the ego and looking with Jesus or the Holy Spirit is that when you look with the ego, you feel even worse. You feel guilty and then you feel fearful, etc. When you look with Jesus, you learn to smile. What looking with him really means is that you recognize what it is you are giving up by holding on to the special hates or the special loves. That is the key element—realizing that holding on to your grievances or holding on to your attraction to nice things is costing you the peace of God. There is nothing wrong with liking nice things, but if you use them as a substitute for the Love of God, after a while they no longer work for you. Again, we have to realize that holding on to specialness in either of its forms is costing us the peace of God, and that we do not want to pay that price anymore. Or, perhaps more honestly, we should say we still want to pay that price. The ego, though, will never let us look at itself and see the cost. When you look with the Holy Spirit, you look at the ego and you realize the cost. That is the difference between the two ways of looking.

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**Q:** I am so drawn to the Course because it rings true to me; but on the other hand it does not square with how the world thinks.

**A:**A while ago, I gave a workshop called "When 2 + 2 = 5." The point of that workshop was to say that the world we live in is a world of 2 + 2 = 4, which is logical, except it does not work. The world A Course in Miracles comes from, and which is what makes it what it is, is a 2 + 2 = 5 world, which makes no sense here. But when you read the Course, something rings true. That is why people stay with it, as I always like to say, even if they do not understand it. Something rings true and attracts them, and that is because it comes from a 2 + 2 = 5 world. When you are in the presence of something that rings true, very often it does not make sense in the world's view. But something rings true because in a sense, whatever it is cuts through everything the world knows. It comes from another place, and it reaches another place in you, what the Course calls the right mind. Basically what it says is that living in a 2 + 2 = 5 world brings you peace because it brings you a peace that is not contingent upon anything happening here. You could be peaceful regardless of what happens. Living in a 2 + 2 = 4 world where things seem to fit and make sense does not lead to peace because the world itself does not make sense.

**Q:** I certainly have experienced that forgiveness of my children and other family members does not work, that I have failed in the real world and as an ego in forgiveness. Is it necessary to have that experience in the process of moving forward to real forgiveness and be aware that obviously something is wrong with where you are coming from as an ego? In other words, is that the bottom rung of the ladder, and to move on to the next rung, you realize something must change? There must be a better way.

**A:**I think the whole Course is predicated on that premise. In effect, that is how the Course began, as you know. Helen and Bill agreed there must be another way because what they were doing was not working. And I think everyone has that experience, whether they verbalize it consciously or not. They have tried lots of things and they do not work. There is that wonderful section right near the end of the text called "The Real Alternative" (T-31.IV), which talks about how we all try different things in the world, hoping against hope that this time it will work, until finally we recognize nothing here works, and that the only true alternative is to go within because that is where there is a meaningful choice in the mind, between the Holy Spirit and the ego. That is the meaningful choice, and that is the real alternative. The world offers thousands and thousands of alternatives, and none of them works. That awareness is what gets you on the right ladder. It gets you off the ego's ladder, which it seems to want you to climb, but you are always on the same rung. You know, you work and work to climb up the ladder, and you end up still on the bottom because the world's ladder, the ego's ladder, does not take you anywhere. So it is in recognizing that that whole ladder is wrong, that you get on the right ladder. Then you just kind of scoot up.

**Part IV**

**Q:** You said that somebody could hurt the body. Would it not be with my permission then?

**A:**On the level of the mind, sure, because it is your dream. But on the level of our experience in this world, not necessarily. For example, you could be driving on the freeway when the brakes on the car behind you fail and it crashes into your car. I am saying it is part of your dream, but on the level of our experience here, it would not be that way. I am trying to help people avoid feeling guilty because they think they made things happen to them. Now their mind certainly did, because this is a dream; and not only is it a dream, but it is a dream that has already happened, so they are reviewing it.

**Q:** The randomness of somebody running into me feels worse than the thought that there's something in my consciousness that's not cleaned up yet.

**A:**Again, on the one level, yes, absolutely, it is your dream, and within that dream you have chosen to re-experience that event. But you do not want the self you experience yourself to be to feel guilty—as though your unhealed thoughts or your guilt attracted this to happen. A lot of New Age people talk like that. It is really a confusion of levels. You as a person had nothing to do with it. The person you experience as yourself driving in your car had nothing to do with the other person rear-ending you. In terms of the mind of which you as a person are a dream figure, it is entirely different. That mind chose the color of your eyes, your gender, your hair, your family, the car that you are driving, and so on. On a practical level, though, that is not helpful. In most people that would just be a source of added guilt. People watch a news program about an earthquake or a bomb falling someplace and they feel they are a part of that—it is their dream and they are responsible. That is a confusion of levels.

On a practical level, you want to stay where you are, which is your experience of yourself. When the car rams you—now that it is a fact in your dream that a car has rammed you—what is important is with whom will you interpret that event: the ego or the Holy Spirit? That is much more important, and that is much more practically helpful. If you practice the lessons on that level, then in the end, it will be clearer to you that yes, this is something your mind has chosen. So now you have another chance to look at a situation like that, but you can look at it differently. Rather than see yourself as a victim, you can now see this as a classroom in which you can learn that while your body can be hurt, you cannot be hurt, and that you are not your body. It does not matter whether you have a clear trip home on the freeway, or you are in bumper-to-bumper traffic, or you have an accident. You can be at peace regardless. But once the event occurs, what is helpful is not why or how it happened, or who chose that it happen, but with whom you look at what happened. That is what is helpful. Otherwise, you skip over steps and end up as a metaphysical idiot, where you are being metaphysically correct, but are shooting yourself in the foot and obscuring the waters. Instead, you can keep it all very simple and realize, okay, this happened; now do I look at it with Jesus or do I look at it with the ego? One will bring you peace and the other will not bring you peace.

Thus, to be metaphysically correct, you would say, "Yes, this is my dream. And yes, on a level I am not aware of, I chose this. But on a level that I am aware of right now, I have a choice: through whose eyes will I look at this?" It is always good to refer back to the tiny, mad idea because it is helpful as a model. Once the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God seemed to happen, to agonize over how it happened and why misses the whole point and will not get you anywhere. Once the tiny, mad idea appears, it is much more important to say, "Do I look at it through the eyes of the ego, which means I take it seriously, or do I look at it through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, which means I remember to laugh?" If that is what we choose, then the tiny, mad idea disappears. If we agonize over it—why and how it happened—we are just making it more and more real, which means we are taking it seriously, which means we have already listened to the ego.

To say it once more, it is much more helpful to accept the classroom as it appears to us, without worrying or wondering why it is happening. That really is a dead end, and will get you nowhere. All that will help is the thought that now that it happened, do I make it a source of anger, anguish, and conflict? Or do I see it as just another way of learning that I could be at peace regardless of what happens in the world? That is much better. On a practical level it will work. It will really make you peaceful, at which point you will not care why it happened.

It is enough to say that the very fact that we are in this world is a mistake. Therefore practically everything we do here is a mistake, so why compound the mistake by agonizing over it or trying to analyze it? That is a wonderful example of what *The Song of Prayer* pamphlet also says: Do not make the error real (S-2.I.3:4). Again, it is much more helpful to say, "Yes, this is a mistake, and now how am I going to look at it?" Remember, again, the problem was not the tiny, mad idea. The mistake was remembering not to laugh at it (T-27.VIII.6:2). That is such an important line, which is why I quote it in almost every workshop. The problem was not the tiny, mad idea. The problem was not that you got rammed from behind on the freeway. The problem is, do I take it seriously or do I remember to laugh at it? That is the only issue on the table.

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**Q:** I am thinking that it's better not to have thoughts in my mind that someone is going to hit me from the back or that someone is going to break into my house and steal things. I simply don't choose this kind of thing so this doesn't happen to me. I'm choosing the right thing in my mind; I'm choosing the right thoughts for things to happen the way I think is better for me.

**A:**The problem then is that you think it is important that right things happen. Then you want to choose the right thoughts so right things happen. There aren't any things!

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**Q:** The way I've been thinking is that if something wrong happens, I say, oh well, I chose the wrong thought. That's it.

**A:**But that's the same mistake. Just say something wrong happened, but maybe it was right. And what difference does it make? I could be peaceful. You see, whenever you take anything in the world seriously, you are gluing yourself to the body and the world. The shift in emphasis from what happened to with whom you look at what happened is the shift from the body to the mind, from the mindless to the mindful. The ways of looking originate in your mind, with the ego or the Holy Spirit.

Lesson 294, "My body is a wholly neutral thing," speaks to this in a very helpful way. Interestingly, at first glance this lesson seems to be saying the exact opposite of what the rest of the Course says. The Course says the world was made "as an attack on God" and that the body was made to be a limitation on love (W-pII.3.2:1; T-18.VIII.1). These are heavily ego-laden thoughts. The body is a parody of God's creation, a travesty of our Identity as Christ. These thoughts reflect the purpose of the world and the body. However, once we are here in a body; once we are driving on the freeway and there is an accident, the body, the accident, the situation, and the relationship are neutral, awaiting our choice for the ego or the Holy Spirit. Thus, it doesn't matter anymore why it happened.

So worrying and trying to analyze why it happened gets us rooted in the past all over again. Remember, the whole idea is to stay in the present, the holy instant, not to be in the world of linear time, which is to be in the heart of the ego thought system. To wonder why we caused this is a statement about the past. What is important is that we are choosing right now to be either with the ego or the Holy Spirit. That is meaningful. At that point, the traffic accident, the cancer that the doctor just told you that you have, the war that is being waged in the Middle East become neutral. The relationship you are in is neutral. It does not matter why it was made or how it arose; what matters is what you do with it right now.

Each of these circumstances now is neutral, awaiting your choice as to whether you will look at it through the eyes of the ego, which means taking it seriously, giving it power and reality, or you will look at it through the eyes of the Holy Spirit and then laugh, in the sense of seeing that it is silly to think this has any power over your peace. In other words, you could be in an accident and still be peaceful. Your body may be hurt, your car may be hurt, the other person may be hurt, but you could still be at peace by remembering to laugh at the tiny, mad idea that is expressed now in this form.

Here is what this lesson says:

**(W-pII.294.1:1-5) I am a Son of God. And can I be another thing as well? Did God create the mortal and corruptible? What use has God's beloved Son for what must die? And yet a neutral thing does not see death, for thoughts of fear are not invested there, nor is a mockery of love bestowed upon it.**

Even though the body is a mockery of love—it was made to be a mockery of love—once we are here, we do not have to add to that. We now can see it as a classroom, in which it serves a holy purpose. It was made to serve an unholy purpose, to be a mockery of love and of the Son of God, but now that we are in it, it does not have to be like that anymore. It can now be a classroom in which we learn we are not a body, and that the thought of separation, which is the original mockery of love, no longer is operational in our mind because we can now see our body as the same as every other body. We all have the same purpose. That is the difference.

**(W-pII.294.1:6-10) Its neutrality protects it while it has a use. And afterwards, without a purpose, it is laid aside. It is not sick nor old nor hurt. It is but functionless, unneeded and cast off. Let me not see it more than this today; of service for a while and fit to serve, to keep its usefulness while it can serve, and then to be replaced for greater good.**Even though it was made to attack God and His Son, it can now serve a different purpose. It is now nothing. "It is not sick nor old nor hurt." It has no function. Once you have given it the function of being a classroom and you learn the lessons, you do not need it anymore. Again, to agonize about why the body was made, why you were born into this world and into this family—why this, why that?—serves only the ego's purpose. The ego loves that. Remember the line in the text, "The ego analyzes; the Holy Spirit accepts" (T-11.V.13:1). Accept that this is what the situation is now and that it is a classroom. From whom will you learn: the ego or the Holy Spirit? This will simplify your life greatly. It will make you a nice person again!
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**Q: So thought is useless.**

**A:**Exactly right. To turn Descartes' famous statement upside down, "I think, therefore I am not." Then there is a line near the end of the text that says, "Salvation can be seen as nothing more than the escape from concepts. It does not concern itself with content of the mind, but with the simple statement that it thinks" (T-31.V.14:3-4). Thinking is the problem. That is one way of talking about the original separation thought. The Son of God had a thought that he thought was his own. Instead of being part of God's Thought, which is non-thought, he had a thought. Then he worshipped the thought and took it seriously, which is what worshipping means; and then he built a whole world around that thought and just kept thinking and thinking.

The whole purpose of thinking about this course is to learn to not think about it. Let it think through you. That is why the analysis of the ego or the analysis of the situation just does not work and is so counterproductive. Analysis gets you rooted in the situation; you take it seriously. You do not analyze something unless you think it is serious. When you smile at something, you are saying it has no power. It's nothing. The problem, thus, is thinking.

That gets back to forgiving and forgetting without thinking about the past because it does not exist. And all thinking has to do with the past. If you think about what you think about and what you are doing when you are thinking, you realize it is all about the past, your past learning that you now apply to something here. And it is all a defense, designed to lead you absolutely nowhere, under the illusion that you are getting somewhere. Remember, this is not a course aimed at your brain. That is really interesting and a kind of paradox about this course, because it is written on a relatively high intellectual level so that your brain has to work if you are going to read this. But when you really begin to understand it, you realize it is trying to lead you past your brain to your mind where there are no thoughts except the ego thought and the Holy Spirit's Thought, which are really not thoughts as we usually think of thoughts.

**Part V**
**Questions**

**Q:** At the end of our classes when you close with a reading and then several minutes of silence, I notice that when it first happens, it's very peaceful. Then the thought comes in and there's a build-up: Okay, what am I going to do next? Am I going to go home? Am I going to go to lunch? And I can hear papers rustling beside me; there begins to be a buzz going on because that peace is almost too threatening.

**A:**I think that's helpful. Everyone experiences that. People are terrified of being still and being thought-less, in the good sense of that word. The fear is that if we are thought-less, then the Thought of God will come. We therefore substitute our thoughts, which is what we all did at the beginning. Then we start thinking, thinking about where we are going to go to eat and with whom, or what this workshop meant and what this Course means, and so on. The whole idea of this course is to lead you beyond thought, and it uses thinking as a way of doing that, because we think we can think, and we think we have brains that are important. Recall the wonderful line I quote every so often, "You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is" (T-18.IV.7:5). Well, understanding is thinking.

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**Q:** Isn't that the same thing as Buddhist meditation, where you sit and just quiet your mind? You quiet your mind to go beyond thinking, and at that point, you can reach enlightenment.

**A:**A Course in Miracles adds to that by helping us understand why we don't do that, and how resistant we are to that. The workbook lessons—the early ones especially—can be thought of as similar to Buddhist mind-training exercises, in the sense of watching your thoughts. What the Course helps us see is that there is a reason thoughts come to us when we are trying to be quiet. They don't just appear; they are purposive.

All thinking serves the same purpose, which is to distract us from the truth. Remember that line about concepts: the problem is not what you think; the problem is that you are thinking (T-31.V.14:3-4). Even more to the point, the problem is that we chose thinking because we are afraid of non-thought. Analyzing our thoughts, their symbolism, how they interact, and what they mean might be fun to do and may be a nice intellectual exercise, but it will not get us home. Again, the problem is not what we think, but the fact that we are thinking, which then means the problem is why we chose to think. The answer is we chose to think in order to keep the ego alive and well, and keep the Holy Spirit's thought-less Thought out of awareness. That is what the Atonement is: a thought-less Thought. Thinking keeps that Thought out of awareness.

Looking with the Holy Spirit suspends judgment. There is the line that says, "Forgiveness … is still, and quietly does nothing. … It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-pII.1.4:1-3). Asking the Holy Spirit means that you do nothing but look at your ego, wait patiently for your fear to dissipate, and not judge, which then means there is no guilt. You do not use dirty words like sin. That is what the Course means by "the little willingness" (T-18.IV). In that section in Chapter 18, Jesus is pleading with us not to do more than he asks us to do, which is just to look and wait and not judge. We want to do all kinds of other things.
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Let me go over what we have been talking about because I think it is extremely important and goes to the heart of what leads a lot of students of this course off on a detour. In one sense, the Course itself is responsible for this, as it is easily misunderstood in some places. While there is a lot of talk about the ego in the Course—much more than one finds in any other spirituality I know of—the purpose of talking about the ego in the way Jesus does in the Course is to have us learn not to take it seriously. The trap we fall into is that once we become aware of our ego and the egos in others, we kind of seize on it, because our guilt is so enormous, and then we try to analyze it. We need to remember that the purpose of the Course's talking about the ego is to get us beyond the ego, not to see it everywhere.

Remember also, the problem was not the tiny, mad idea and it was not the ego. The problem was and is how one looks at the tiny, mad idea, how one looks at the ego. When we study the ego and look at it in ourselves, we are almost always thrown back into the past. That is a clue that there is something wrong. The idea is to stay in the present moment as much as we can. There is a great deal in this course about living in the now, staying in the present moment, which is where we can choose the ego or the Holy Spirit as our teacher, where we can choose between the unholy instant and the holy instant. So we accept as a given whatever is on our plate because that is what's there. The question then is, what do I do about it now? Then see how tempting it is to try to analyze it or understand it, which ends up being a very subtle form of judgment. That only mires us further in it, instead of getting us unstuck from it.

More than anything else, the ego loves to be paid attention to. It loves to be studied, analyzed, explained, and understood, because that gives it a reality it does not have. The issue is getting back to the part of our mind that can choose which teacher to follow: one has us look at the ego and make it real, and the other has us look at the ego and smile. Remember, "my body is a wholly neutral thing" (W-pII.294)—my ego also is a wholly neutral thing. What is not neutral is how it was conceived, but once we are here as egos—and we all are—it becomes neutral. We use the ego either as a prison from which we will never escape (we try to imprison others by projecting our own guilt onto them) or as a classroom. But the idea is not to fight against the ego. Analyzing it is a way of fighting against it, trying to get hold of it. It does not matter how you got here; what matters is what you do once you are here. It does not matter why you had an accident on the freeway; what matters is how you handle it once it has happened. It does not matter why you have cancer; what matters is how you look at it right now. It does not matter why there was an earthquake that devastated villages; what matters is how you look at it—whether you are sitting in front of your TV screen seeing it on the news or you are actually in the midst of it. To analyze it and say it was your bad thoughts or someone else's bad thoughts that made it happen, or God is punishing the people who are suffering, because they're living in a sinful country or something; all of that gives it a reality and a power it does not have. The only question is: This is what has happened. Now how do I look at it?—as a classroom or as a prison? That's it!
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**Q:** Say you're in a situation where you have to make a critical decision. You have suspended your judgment, you are listening for the Holy Spirit. Now nothing comes. You have no inspiration or feeling to go one way or the other.

**A:**Then what I would do in a situation like that is begin with the premise that there is an answer—all conflict has an answer; all problems have an answer. So I would go on the assumption that the answer is within, and all I have to do is let it out. If nothing is coming out, it's because I'm not ready to hear the answer. That's the end of it. Don't go in with a derrick. Don't try to get it out. Just say the answer is there because every problem has an answer, and if it is my dream and the problem I set up, there is an answer for it, but obviously I am not ready to hear it or accept it, and that's okay. That way you are being honest about what is going on, but you are not pressuring yourself. Just say you are not ready. If there is a deadline and you need an answer on the level of form, then just do the best you can. But if an answer is not forthcoming, don't be upset. Accept the fact that you are not ready to hear it, and that's okay. Remember, "Forgiveness … is still, and quietly does nothing. … It merely looks, and waits, and [most importantly] judges not." So don't judge yourself if you don't get an answer, however the answer would come. The Holy Spirit speaks in any form that we can accept. But if nothing comes, it's only because we are too afraid of the answer, which means we are not ready yet, and that's okay.

When Jesus says this is an easy course and it is simple, he is referring to just that—that we are not asked to do a lot. In this case, less is more, because when we want to do more, we are messing it up. The Holy Spirit doesn't do anything. We are the ones who do things, and so we want to make things happen. Then we want to "unmake" things that have happened. We want to do things. Bodies do things. And bodies do things listening to the mind telling them what to do. This does not mean you should not do things in the world. It just means that what you do in the world will automatically flow from what is in your mind.

**"I Will Forgive, but Never Forget"**

Excerpts from the Academy class held at the
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*
Temecula CA

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

**Part VI**
**Conclusion**

Lesson 134 gets to the point of how we look at situations. Paragraph 6:

**(W-pI.134.6) It is sin's unreality that makes forgiveness natural and wholly sane, a deep relief to those who offer it; a quiet blessing where it is received. It**[forgiveness]**does not countenance illusions, but collects them lightly, with a little laugh, and gently lays them at the feet of truth. And there they disappear entirely.**

Forgiveness "does not countenance illusions"—it does not recognize illusions—"but collects them lightly, with a little laugh and gently lays them at the feet of truth." (That is nice alliteration: "lightly, with a little laugh.") This means forgiveness does not take illusions seriously. It is the idea of bringing illusions to the truth. When you look with Jesus at whatever occurs, whether it is a traffic accident, cancer, an earthquake, or a war, you look at it "lightly, with a little laugh" by bringing it to the truth. When you look at anything in this world—which is always some expression of darkness—next to this glorious light of who you are, the darkness, the situation, just pales into nothingness and disappears.

**(W-pI-134.7) Forgiveness is the only thing that stands for truth in the illusions of the world. It sees their nothingness, and looks straight through the thousand forms in which they may appear. It looks on lies, but it is not deceived. It does not heed the self-accusing shrieks of sinners mad with guilt. It looks on them with quiet eyes, and merely says to them, "My brother, what you think is not the truth."**

That is the attitude we are asked to have toward anything that goes on in our personal world or the world at large. Forgiveness does not give reality to or take seriously "the self-accusing shrieks of sinners mad with guilt." (There you have alliteration again: "self-accusing shrieks of sinners.") "It looks on them with quiet eyes" and simply says "what you think is not the truth"—not necessarily in words, but by your defenselessness, your peace, and your recognition that none of this means anything because none of it is true. This teaches other people not to take the illusion seriously either.

Thus, if you are in an accident and everyone is all hot and bothered and you are peaceful, you would be demonstrating this. This does not mean you would not do all the things you are supposed to do when an accident occurs. It just means you would do it all peacefully. You would not pay attention to the accusing "shrieks of sinners," whether they accuse themselves or you. You would become like the eye of the hurricane. You would be calm and peaceful in the midst of the swirling mass of energy, anger, fear, anxiety, pain, and hurt.

Again, we look at everything in the world "lightly, with a little laugh." We recognize an illusion is an illusion and has no power over the truth.
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**Q:** So then every decision on the level of form is just rendering unto Caesar—doing what needs to be done?

**A:**Yes. You render unto Caesar what is Caesar's. You do what the world says, but you know you are not subject to Caesar's laws. What that does is make every situation exactly the same. That's the key point. It makes every situation exactly the same. I have always said that if people really understood the first principle of miracles, they would not need the rest of the book, and they would not need a workbook. If we really understood right at the beginning why *there is no order of difficulty in miracles* (T-1.1:1), we would understand everything because that is what the Course is about. In a sense, the whole of *A Course in Miracles* is a variation of that basic theme. *There is* *no order of difficulty in miracles*because every problem is the same, because everything here is an illusion. The form is different, but the content is the same. An illusion is an illusion is an illusion. Therefore, all illusions, regardless of their form or seeming magnitude, are resolved in the same way: you bring them to the truth with a little laugh. That is why *there is no order of difficulty in miracles*. Every problem is the same; therefore every correction is the same. It is not the seeming magnitude of the form. It is not the form at all!

So too as I have been stressing, *what* we are thinking is not the problem; it is the fact that *we are thinking*. It is the fact that we are in this world taking it seriously that is the problem, not what goes on in the world. To say it another way, it is not the specifics of the world that are the problem. It is the fact that we believe in the world. The problem is not what our thoughts are. It is the simple fact that we believe we think. That is the problem. It is never the specifics. We are never upset for the reason we think (W-pI.5). We think we are upset for all kinds of specific reasons. The real reason we are upset is that we choose to be upset, because we take the *tiny, mad idea* seriously.

All Jesus does throughout this course is tap us on the shoulder and say, "My brother, what you think is not the truth." In Chapter 23 in the text he says, "And God thinks otherwise" (T-23.I.2:7). And so when we come to him with our stories, our anxieties, and our concerns, he says, "That is not what is bothering you. That is not the problem. What you are thinking is not the truth." Implicit in that is what he told Helen (see T-2.VI.4; VII.1): "Don't ask me to fix the problem here. There is no problem here. The problem is that you think there's a problem. The problem is not *what* you think, but that you think you *can* think. The problem is not that you are here. You are *not* here. The problem is that you think you are here. The problem is not that you are separated from God. The problem is that you think you are separated from God." That is a big, big distinction and it is very important.

This is why forgiveness is not about forgiving people for what they have done. Metaphysically, they have literally not done anything. On this level, they have not done anything because they have not taken your peace away from you. They may have taken pieces of your body away from you, but they have not taken *you*; they have not taken *peace* away from you. So there is nothing to forgive. Nothing was done to you. Now this is a very difficult principle to live one hundred percent of the time, but you can at least realize that when you are unhappy, it is because you have chosen not to live under that principle. It is not a sin, but at least now you know what the problem is.

That explains why it is much easier for us to go to Jesus or the Holy Spirit with a problem and demand that they fix the problem than it is to go to Them for help without predetermining what the help would be. Again, Jesus would tell us, "My brother, what you think is not the truth. Don't ask me to help you with this problem, A, B, C, X, Y, or Z. Ask me to help you look at the fact that you *want* there to be a problem, because, in truth, you know there is no problem. This is the same as saying you want there to be a separated self, because on some level you know there is no separated self."

To briefly summarize our discussion: When we go to Jesus with a problem, we are really asking him to convince us that there is a problem, and therefore that we are real as individuals. It is as if we are begging him to make it real with us. And since he does not do that, what we do is fire him and hire another Jesus who does pay attention to our problems. Then we think that's the Jesus who wrote this book and who gives us answers. We do that because we do not like the answer the real Jesus of the Course gives, which is that there is no answer to give because there is no question and no problem. As I said earlier, there always is an answer to a specific problem, and that is because the answer is always the same, and that answer will take form in whatever way we can accept it.