**Integrating Form and Content**

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**Part I**

The integration of form and content is an extremely important theme in *A Course in Miracles*. It focuses on the necessity of applying what we learn through living the Course's principles. One of my favorite passages is Jesus saying to us: "Teach not that I died in vain. Teach rather that I did not die by demonstrating that I live in you" (T-11.VI.7:3-4). The way we demonstrate that his love lives in us, which is the content, is by reflecting that love in our everyday life. That is the integration of form and content.  
  
As you may know, one of the most significant principles in *A Course in Miracles* is *ideas leave not their source*. Jesus refers to this principle over and over, sometimes indirectly but many times very directly and explicitly (see, for example, T-26.VII.4:7). Understanding its meaning is crucial to understanding what this course is about as well as to living it. If *ideas leave not their source*, anything that is in the mind, the source of everything, remains in the mind, which is Jesus' argument for why there is no world and why the entire physical universe, the vast cosmos, is nothing more than a projection of the thought of separation in the mind of God's Son (W-pI.132.4-6; W-pII.3). Since *ideas leave not their source*, the cosmos is a projection that has never left the mind, which means there is no world out there. That is the profound significance of that principle.  
  
This principle can be also be seen as expressing another key principle, the principle of Atonement that says that the separation never happened. If we are an Idea or a Thought in the Mind of God, we have never left our Source, which means there is no separation; and if there is no separation, there is no split mind and no guilt to make its home in the split mind. If there is no guilt, there is no projection because guilt is always projected, and if there is no projection, there is no world. Thus, if *ideas leave not their source* there is no world, no guilt, no split mind—there is nothing but a "Oneness joined as One" (T-25.I.7:1)—God's perfect Son, perfectly at one with His perfect Creator. That is the significance of that idea in the context of the Course's metaphysics.  
  
The nature of the world and the relationship of the world to the mind, and even more specifically, the relationship of our lives as physical, psychological beings to the mind cannot be understood without recognizing that *ideas do not leave their source*. Whatever is in the mind will be projected out, which means that every single thing we do, think, say, and feel takes place only within the mind. Everything that happens here is a reflection of a decision that the mind makes.  
  
I gave a workshop a number of years ago called "The Inner Voice," and one of the points I made was that people make a big deal about hearing an inner voice. Most people think that hearing an inner voice automatically means it is the Holy Spirit because He is the inner Voice. Well, yes, He is an inner Voice, but there is another inner voice. A major point I emphasized in that workshop is that everyone is channeling all the time. What is the big deal about channeling? We cannot help but channel, because every time we have a thought, utter a word, or do something, we are channeling.  
  
The only issue is which voice we are channeling, which voice do we reflect: the ego's voice, which is the voice of separation, specialness, guilt, hate, fear, and judgment, or the Voice of the Holy Spirit or Jesus, which is the Voice of peace, forgiveness, healing, kindness, and shared interests. We are always channeling and we are always integrating form and content. Always. We cannot help but do that because *ideas leave not their source*. Thus, everything that the mind decides comes down ultimately to one of two choices: the ego's thought system or the Holy Spirit's thought system, and what the mind decides is what the body will do and think. Therefore, whatever the body is doing reflects the integration of the content. The question is, which will be the content?  
  
What all this boils down to on a purely practical level—and this course is meant to be practical; over and over again Jesus tells us this is a practical course (e.g., T-8.IX.8:1; T-11.VIII.5:3; M-16.4:1)—is that our focus, day in and day out, is not on what we do, not on what we think about things, certainly not on what other people do, or what we think about what other people are doing or should do. The focus is always on which teacher we are choosing, which voice we are choosing to listen to, which thought system we are identifying with. That is the only focus, which of course is exactly the opposite of how the world teaches us, because that is what we made the world to teach. The world teaches us that the world is important, bodies are important, how we get along with bodies is important, how we support this particular body that we think is our own is important. Therefore we think education, employment, and having families are important. We think relating to people is important, whom we elect to political office is important, what we do with the environment is important, and on and on and on. That is how the world teaches us.  
  
In this sense, everyone is the same regardless of which side of the political fence we are on, regardless of what we believe about the environment, regardless of what we believe about people. These positions are always based upon something external, and as the Course explains to us over and over again, that is why we made the body—so that it would only see the world. The body has come equipped with an elaborate sensory apparatus that perceives the world around us, smells it, hears it, touches it, feels it, sees it. Then we have a brain that takes all this sensory data, all this input and interprets it for us. We all feel this is very, very important. Obviously, if we are going to survive as physical organisms in this world, it is important that we know how the world functions and know how to take care of ourselves, but this will not get us home.  
  
Basically, *A Course in Miracles* is not for the immature—it is not for people who are just setting out in life. There are always exceptions, but typically the Course is for people who, to some degree, already have learned how to maneuver and navigate in the world and who then suddenly recognize the world and their lives are not what they thought. So they do not have to prove anything. They have already realized that everything that they have proven about themselves does not work, in the sense that it does not make them happy and does not bring them peace.  
  
It is obvious if one just listens with even half an ear that everyone lies. Not only do people in public office lie, *everyone*lies because everyone is coming from his or her own agenda, and that agenda is: How can I survive in this world and escape all responsibility for what happens to me? Everyone has the same agenda. We want to survive in this world as individual entities and we want to assume no responsibility for what happens to us. That is why when we made the world right at the beginning we made things like microorganisms—viruses, bacteria, funguses, etc.—because all of that provides proof positive that we do not get sick because of our mind's election. We get sick because we have been invaded. Our body's fortress has been invaded by these tiny virulent organisms who come in and attack us, gnaw away at us, eat up our flesh, snuff out our life.  
  
We also made all the big organisms or the macroorganisms such as people, who always prey on us, betray us, lie to us, deceive us, take advantage of us, cannibalize us, attack us, judge us, and reject us—and we made all this so we could survive in this world and not be held accountable for it. That is why the body was made. The body was made not only to receive sensory input and a brain to interpret it; the body was also made vulnerable to being hurt. The body is incredibly vulnerable as we know, both our physical body and our psychological body. You look at someone funny and that person can be devastated, or you smile and the person feels a step away from Heaven. And, of course, physically we are very vulnerable.  
  
We made the body not only to perceive what is around us, but to perceive hate, treachery, and danger around us and accept no responsibility for it. Moreover, the body was made in such a way that not only does it only look outward, but it cannot look inward. It only looks outward so there is no awareness that there is a mind. Therefore the idea that *ideas leave not their source* is absolute nonsense to us. What source? We don't know we have a source—and I am not even talking about God at this point. Once we believe, as the ego told us, that *ideas* ***do*** *leave their source*, that projection works, that I can project myself from my mind into a body, we all joined in conveniently forgetting that we have a mind. That is what we sometimes refer to as the "veil of forgetfulness." A veil fell across our mind so we forget we have a mind. Well, if I don't have a mind, if all I am is a body—which in the Course means being in a state of mindlessness—then I am here because of something that was done to me. We all know the mythology of birth. There was a sperm and an egg, and before you know it, there I was. Well, that is not what happened. That's the myth.  
  
Because we do not know about a mind, we think that myth is not a myth—it is reality. We can study it in a test tube. We can see a sperm enter an egg and then there is a zygote, and then it multiplies, dividing through mitosis, and then one fine day out comes a baby. Some people think that is a miracle, something holy and sacred. It is a made-up story, and not only is it a made-up story, it is a purposive story to reinforce the fact that we do not have a mind.  
  
The ego not only tells us that *ideas* ***leave*** *their source*, it then obliterates all memory of a source, and so all we are left with is an idea that now is solidified in a body. In other words, we have obliterated the content and we have only the form. We are not aware that we are a walking integration of the ego's content, which is separation, specialness, guilt, hate, judgment, fear, suffering, and death, and that we have taken that thought system, the content, and integrated it in a form called the body and our lives, with no awareness that our minds have done that. We actually think that there is a body, "my body," that interacts with other bodies, and that we are, to quote a line in the Course, "at the mercy of things beyond you, forces you cannot control…" (T-19.IV-D.7:4)—at the mercy of our birth, our genetic inheritance, our environment, our parents' neuroses, the world's neuroses or psychoses, the weather, political decisions, war, and on and on and on.  
  
All this makes perfect sense to everyone here because we all have fallen into this state of sleep. There is a reference to the "sleep of forgetfulness" (T-16.VII.12:4). We are all asleep and have forgotten that we are sleeping, so that we think what we are dreaming is reality, which is what our typical experience is every night. While we are asleep, we think the dream we are dreaming is reality because we have all the "normal" responses to what goes on in the dream, which are all perfectly appropriate for a dream—very inappropriate, though, if nothing is really happening. For instance, you are having a nightmare and are terrified; you start to sweat and thrash around and scream out, and all that makes perfect sense in the context of the dream, but no one is chasing you. You are still in your bed, very safe. It makes sense within the dream. It does not make sense in terms of reality.  
  
Well, that is Jesus' point for everything here. It all makes sense within the dream—our sufferings, pains, angers, special loves, special hates, etc. They all make sense within the dream, but outside the dream—which is where he is and where he is saying we are, too, but we have forgotten we are there—this makes no sense: *ideas leave not their source*.

**Part II  
"The Face of Innocence"**

Once again, we are the walking integration of form and content, without any awareness that that is what we are doing. We think we are surviving, living in a den of iniquity called the world—that is the content. Those of you who know the section near the end of the text called "Self-Concept Versus Self" will remember that the first part of that section is all about how we make a self that is an adjustment or reaction to the world, and that is the self that puts on the "face of innocence" (T-31.V.2:6). The world is cruel and merciless, and in order to survive we do the very best we can, which means that sometimes we have to defend ourselves and attack. But when we do so, we feel the attack is justified because we have been attacked first. Thus, for instance, of course I am an angry little boy; my parents beat me every night. Of course I hate school; the kids humiliate and mock me, and the teachers are very punitive. It's not my fault! That is "the face of innocence."  
  
What we find, then, is that our lives integrate form and content, but we think the world's content. The world's content of hate, insensitivity, and lovelessness is the cause of why I am what I am, why my body—my form—has evolved the way it has. It is not my fault. That is the ego's fundamental purpose. In fact that, in a sense, is the ego's reigning cry that governs its kingdom: It's not my fault!  
  
One of the first questions people ask when anything happens, whether it is an event in the world or something in their personal world, is "Who did this?" "Why did they do it?" And of course underlying all this is "Why was this done to me?" If that is not explicit, it certainly is implicit. We would not care about anyone in this world if we did not somehow see what happens as having an impact on us. We would not care about anyone or anything, someone in our personal world or someone in the world at large unless we identified with that situation. The dynamic of that identification is that we are the victim.  
  
We also love to identify with other victims because that solidifies our position that there is evil outside us. And evil perpetrates evil; evil hurts, maims, punishes, tortures, kills, rejects, abandons, and betrays. That justifies our case. Misery loves company. Insanity loves company. We always want to have people join with us. That is why we love to hear devastating things on the news and why we worship crises, why the news always makes a big deal out of crises whether it is a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, volcano, or it is a war or a serial killer. It becomes front-page news. And we love it because it justifies our perception that this is a world of victims and victimizers in which the innocent are punished.  
  
We identify with all of that, and, again, we do not realize that the content that we are integrating into our form is not outside us. The hatred, cruelty, and the murderousness are not outside. They are inside. Why?—because ideas leave not their source. If I find myself reacting to someone else's ego, it can only be because I am seeing my own ego in that person. Jesus does not react to other people's egos, and the reason he does not is that he does not have one. The reason we react to other people's egos is that we do. That is the difference. It takes a real stretch to believe, which Christians have been doing for over two thousand years—that Jesus judges, hates, sanctions war, that he is the one who drops bombs on people's heads, and that he believes in holy wars. Only someone who has an ego can judge, condemn, persecute, and wage war in the name of an ideal of truth, unity, and love.  
  
Therefore, when we react to other people's murderousness, we are not responsible for their egos, and we are not responsible for what goes on in the world. We are responsible for our reactions to what goes on in the world. And when we have a reaction that is anything other than perfect peace that embraces everyone—any reaction that is not that is not due to what is outside us; it is due to the hate inside us that we have made real.  
  
The recognition that happens as we work with this material is first realizing that everything here is an integration of form and content. The ego, however, would have us believe that we are integrating the outside content, and so the shift Jesus is asking us to make is to recognize that the content we are integrating is our own. The importance of this is that it at least gets us back in the right ballpark. We are in the right place because now we are talking about a mind, not something external to us that we believe affects us. We are talking about what is internal. It is our own content of hate that is making us choose up sides in the world. It is our own guilt over our belief that we separated from love that causes us to see separation in the world around us; a world divided into good and evil, victim and victimizer, oppressor and oppressed. Otherwise we would not see that.  
  
Jesus does not see that. He sees everyone here, everyone who believes he or she is here, only as calling out for help. That is all he sees. Any other distinction is purely arbitrary and all made up. He tells us the only distinction the Holy Spirit sees in the world is someone expressing love or calling for love, and even that distinction ends up being irrelevant because if someone is expressing love, of course your response will be to love, and if someone is calling for love, of course your response will be to love. So what difference does another's behavior make? Even that distinction is not important—it is a correction for the ego's way of looking at things.  
  
In the end, all that is important is not that I try to understand whether you are expressing love or calling for it. Rather, if I am not being loving, kind, and thoughtful, it is only because I am accusing myself of having been unkind to God, and it is the guilt over that that I am always projecting. So my life then is an integration of that unconscious guilt with my everyday life. I integrate it by taking the unconscious guilt, believing I can put it onto someone else, and then accusing that person, whether it is someone in my personal world or someone in the world at large.  
  
The shift that we are asked to make is to realize that the content we want to be integrating is not hate, judgment, guilt, and separation. The content we want to integrate is forgiveness and peace, which gives birth to the vision of seeing everyone as the same. Right at the end of the text, in that glorious final vision, Jesus says, "Yet this a vision is that you must share with everyone you see"—everyone—"for otherwise you will behold it not" (T-31.VIII.8:5). That is the vision. So at any time in our day when we find ourselves not embracing the entire Sonship in the love and peace that we know Jesus represents, we know we have chosen the content of guilt. That is all we have to know. We do not have to change it. We certainly do not have to feel guilty about it, but at least now we can identify the source of the problem. Another person is not our problem. The weather is not our problem. The world is not our problem. Our insane mind is the problem!  
  
Lesson 79 says, "Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved," which means if I do not recognize the problem, it is because I do not want it to be solved. That is very important to understand. If I do not recognize that the problem is my decision-making mind's having made a mistake, having chosen the wrong teacher, it is because I do not want the problem solved. Why don't I want the problem solved? Because I am the problem, and if I solve the problem of me, there is no longer a me. So I do not want the problem solved. I do not want my guilt to go away. I want to protect, preserve, sustain, nourish, and cherish my guilt by pretending it is in you and then attacking you. Since ideas leave not their source, my guilt continually gets strengthened and reinforced the more I seek to deny and project it and attack you, because somewhere inside I know I am attacking you falsely. I know that you are not my problem. You might be your problem, but your ego is not my problem unless I give your ego power to affect me.  
  
The perfect right-minded integration of form and content is where my form becomes defenseless. As the beginning of Lesson 155 says, "I smile more frequently and my forehead is serene." That is the perfect integration of form and content, where everything I do, say, believe, feel, and think is done with that gentle smile, with a peaceful forehead that says nothing in this world can make me happy, nothing in this world can bring me salvation, nothing in this world can hurt me, nothing in this world can damn me. Nothing! This frees me to be perfectly present to every single person and to every single situation. It does not matter whether it is a big problem or a little problem, whether I am with someone I like or someone I don't like, whether I am with someone who likes me or someone who hates me. My response is the same, because my focus has shifted from outside, from what is around me—where we are all extremely paranoid, where we care about what other people are doing and thinking because we think it makes a difference—to what I am choosing in my mind.  
  
If I am not in a state of perfect peace that embraces everyone in that peace, I have chosen the ego. That is all I ever have to know. It is very simple. That is why Jesus tells us this is a very simple course. There are even a few passages where he says it is easy, because that is all you have to do. He tells us in one place, "look at the problem as it is, and not the way that you have set it up" (T-27.VII.2:2). He does not say "fix the problem" or "heal yourself" or "work at this." He simply says, "look at the problem as it is, and not the way that you have set it up." Looking at the problem means recognizing that if I am not at peace it is because I chose the teacher of conflict, and if I am at peace it is because I chose the teacher of peace. When I am aware that I am not at peace because I chose the ego as my teacher I can say, "Obviously I was insane; obviously I was really fearful; obviously I am still insane because I don't want to let it go."  
  
At least now I am speaking the truth. I am not cloaking it with all kinds of projections or self-deceptions. I am saying the problem is that I am still too afraid of love, still too afraid of losing my specialness, still too afraid of living a life in which whatever abuse I have experienced is gone, and has absolutely nothing meaningful to teach me and is totally irrelevant. Whatever physical or psychological problems I have, have nothing to do with the state of peace in my mind, and I am too afraid of recognizing that and identifying with that. At least I am being honest. That is all Jesus asks of us. He asks us to be honest with him and to hide nothing from him (T-4.III.8:2). He does not ask us to be ego-free. He does not ask us to be perfect. He simply asks us to be honest about what our egos are doing.

**Part III  
Questions**

**Q:** What you have been saying sounds similar to the "figure and ground" idea you have talked about elsewhere.  
  
**K:** Yes, that is another way of talking about the same thing. Figure and ground is a perceptual concept, which explains how we live our normal life. We are bombarded by sensory data all the time, and so we sift out what is important and screen out what is not important, otherwise we could not survive. The "ground" is what is going on around us, and the "figure" is what we make front and center in our awareness. An example I have used before makes the point that if I were an interior decorator standing here, all of the people in the audience would be the background. The foreground or the figure would be the colors, the design of the room, the wall hangings, and the furniture, and all that kind of thing. If I am not an interior decorator and I am just speaking to you, then my focus would not be not on the color of the walls or the shape or anything else; it would be on you. The room then becomes the background and the people become the foreground.  
  
Translating that into what I have been talking about, the foreground is always the world, and the mind is distantly in the background, so distant in fact that we are not even aware of it. What Jesus attempts to do for us here in this course is teach us that we want the world to be the background, and our own mind to be the figure, what we focus on. That is the real shift that is asked of us. That is the shift that is the context of the miracle, the heart of the miracle. The book is called A Course in Miracles because the miracle shifts our focus from the world to the mind. The purpose of the world is to have us go from the mind to the world to such an extent that we forget we even have a mind, so we are seemingly stuck in this world with no real hope, because in the end, everyone's body dies. And so everything here is futile. What the miracle does is say, "You are not a body. You are a mind." Setting this in the language of the Course, the miracle says you are not the dream figure, you are the dreamer.  
  
You are not the figure in dream; you are not the body; you are not part of the world, all of which is the dream. You are the dreamer. The miracle says you are the dreamer of the world of dreams. It takes us from the body to the mind. The ego took us from the mind to the body and then let this veil fall across our minds. Then we became unaware of a mind. We became mind-less, not in truth, but in terms of our experience and our awareness. The body in the Course is the equivalent of the state of mindlessness. Again, the ego takes us from the mind to the body and the world, and causes us to forget about the mind. The miracle takes us from the body and the world and says, "Ideas leave not their source" (T-26.VII.4:7); the world you see is "the outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.in.1:5). It takes us from the world and the body back to the mind so it can choose again.  
  
**Q:** You said earlier that our lives here are a direct extension of thoughts in the mind, and I know you are not talking about form, but could it also translate into form?  
  
**K:** Yes, I did mean form. Our lives here as bodies are either extensions or projections of the mind. The idea, once again, is to have our experience here be an integration of the content of shared interests, wherein we see everyone as the same, as opposed to the ego's content, which is separate interests that gives rise to our pursuit of special relationships where people are seen as different from us.  
  
**Q:** Is the hope that the feelings of the love that you are feeling when you choose with the Holy Spirit become the choice you always make?  
  
**K:** That's the idea. It is a choice that we make with increasing frequency over time, and when it stops being a choice, in other words when we are 100 per cent in that love, that is what the Course refers to as the acceptance of the Atonement. We are then in the real world. Until that time, we go back and forth, but over time you will be able to choose that Voice of love more and more frequently. And not only that, when you do not choose it you will be aware of it. What many people begin to experience is that when they choose the ego, it hurts more because they now have a contrast.  
  
Very often, then, people are tempted to blame the Course because they feel that things were okay until they started working with it, and now things are worse. What they are not aware of is that things were always worse but they didn't know it. An example that I always use to make that point is that if you have a tablecloth that is already very soiled, one more spot of grease, wine, or food does not matter, but when the tablecloth is clean and all of a sudden there is a spot on it, that one spot, which beforehand would not have bothered you, now really affects you. So, as you become more and more free of your ego and there is less guilt and more forgiveness motivating you, when you become afraid and go back, it hurts more because you are now more aware of it.  
  
In that sense, which is a very important sense, it is a good thing because it indicates that you are really making progress, that the experience of choosing the ego is much more painful, which means you will be more motivated to let it go. You will realize this is an old pattern that you always fall back on, but it does not make you happy, and that you do not want to walk around angry all the time, feeling unfairly treated, or being depressed. You recognize this is a decision: it is not your genes, your metabolism, or your hormones, and it is not what other people have done. If you are depressed, angry, anxious, fearful, or on edge, it is because of a decision you are making. That does not mean you should not take pills if that will alleviate the anxiety and make you feel better. Just be aware that it is magic and the ultimate healing is for you to become more and more right-minded.  
  
Until we do it perfectly, we will make the choice to come back, but that does not necessarily mean you are going to come back here. It means that your mind still needs healing and whatever is in the mind gets projected, and what gets projected from the mind is what we call physical life. Realize, though, that linear time is an illusion, that everything has already happened, and as the workbook says, we are "reviewing mentally what has gone by" (W-pI.158.4:5). So when you come back, you may come back half a million years ago, or in a distant galaxy or something.  
  
**Q:** Another way to look at that is we have great tolerance for pain and we realize that is not a good thing and as we are released from that we begin to feel better. Then if we feel just a little bit of pain we say, "Oh, I have to do something about that."  
  
**K:** Yes, the typical thing of course that people do when they have a little bit of pain is they pop a pill, have a hot fudge sundae, get drunk, or do something else. The right-minded purpose of pain—this is not its ultimate source—but once pain is here the right-minded purpose is to motivate us to choose again. That is why there is that wonderful passage at the beginning of "The Happy Learner" in Chapter 14 that says the Holy Spirit wants us to understand how miserable we are, because He teaches us through contrast (T-14.II). Earlier, the text says that the Holy Spirit teaches us the difference between joy and pain and imprisonment and freedom because we get them backwards (T-7.X; T-8.II): what we think is joyful and happy-making is really painful because it's specialness, and what we think is painful is really joyful because to the ego pain is letting go of guilt. The idea, then, is to become increasingly aware of the discomfort and know where it is coming from: the mind's decision for the ego. That will motivate you to choose again.  
  
**Q:** You made a comment about being unkind to God. How do I do that?  
  
**K:** That is what we accuse ourselves of. If you think you are here, then you think that you are a body, which means that you think you are separated, which means you believe that you are separated from God, which means you told Him to get lost. You told God His Love was not enough. That is not really kind, is it? You know, the Guy raised you; He gave you everything; He sacrificed everything for you. And you just kind of thumbed your nose and said "Look God, sorry. Maybe You did Your best, but it's far, far short of what I need. So I'm going to find another father."  
  
We keep doing this. It's a form of resistance, or what Freud referred to as "repetition compulsion." The context was different for him, but we are basically impelled to repeat the neurotic patterns which make us unhappy. We are compelled to repeat the separation patterns that make us unhappy. The reason we do it is that even though we are unhappy, there is an "I" that is unhappy. We like that. We might prefer that we be an "I" that is happy, but if our choice is being happy and nonexistent or being unhappy and existent, we will take unhappiness any day, which is what we all say.  
  
What makes it a little more bearable in our perverse insanity is that we will be unhappy, but it will be someone else's fault. There is that kind of perverse pleasure in punishing other people by having already punished ourselves. "You did this to me. You should feel guilty." As the Course says, "'Behold me, brother, at your hand I die'" (T-27.I.4:6).

**Part IV  
Questions (concluded)**

**Q:** I find that I'm spending a lot of time staying with the ego thought system. I'm really not thinking with the Holy Spirit as much as I used to. I'm no longer learning to think with the Holy Spirit; I'm just learning how to be kind while blind. It's sort of getting ready for miracles instead of actually having them. Is this a normal, healthy thing, or is there something I'm missing about how to use this situation in which I seem to be settling for a much lower level of achievement as far as I can tell?  
  
**K:** Let me read something first. It's from the section in the text called "The Happy Dream":  
  
"Put yourself not in charge of this [the process], for you cannot distinguish between advance and retreat. Some of your greatest advances you have judged as failures, and some of your deepest retreats you have evaluated as success" (T-18.V.1:5-6).  
  
That is Jesus' way of telling us we do not know which end is up. What could be happening in you is that your experience of the Holy Spirit, while it was helpful, did not go as deep as it really should, and what you are going through now could very well be a deepening of that experience, but much different from what you thought. I think the fact that you are still able to be aware of the importance of being kind is very spiritual. There is no way you or anyone else could know what are advances and what are retreats because we always judge by criteria that are always external. Even though we think they are internal, they are always external. Thus, it could very well be that your experience now, while it seems to be a relatively dark one as opposed to the light-filled miracles your life was radiating in the past, may be a moving deeper into the ego thought system so that those experiences would really become even purer. It sounds as if you are still a work in progress and that's nice. So keep being blind but kind. I like that.  
  
**Q:** How do you help someone who is feeling suicidal? It's sort of like there is no hope.  
  
**K:** There is a line in the Course that says "Men have died on seeing this…" (T-31.IV.3:4) -- realizing that there is no hope in the world. The title of the section is "The Real Alternative." It is right near the end of the text, and I will read paragraph 3. The point is that every possible alternative that the world holds out to us for hope, salvation, peace, and happiness will end in death.  
  
**(T-31.IV.3) There is no choice where every end is sure. Perhaps you would prefer to try them all, before you really learn they are but one.** [Every road in the world is the same.] **The roads this world can offer seem to be quite large in number, but the time must come when everyone begins to see how like they are to one another.** [And the previous paragraph says all roads lead to death.] **Men have died on seeing this, because they saw no way except the pathways offered by the world. And learning they led nowhere, lost their hope. And yet this was the time they could have learned their greatest lesson. All must reach this point, and go beyond it. It is true indeed there is no choice at all within the world. But this is not the lesson in itself. The lesson has a purpose, and in this you come to understand what it is for.**  
  
I will stop with that, but the rest of the section explains that the value of realizing that the world does not work is that it gets us to say "there must be another way; there must be another world." This, of course, is the mind. If you get through the despair and the hopelessness realizing there is no hope, then all of a sudden a whole new world opens up and you realize there is a mind and there is hope in the mind. That is the only choice. Thus, the "real alternative" is between God and the ego. That is a meaningful choice.  
  
So when you are in the presence of someone who is feeling suicidal, what is important is not what you say, but that you pay attention to what is within you. If you agree with the person and find yourself getting afraid, feeling guilty and responsible for the other person's talking about suicide, then you are basically giving that person the message, "You're absolutely right."  
  
If, however, you can identify with the peace in your mind, you will be peaceful, which means you will be loving when you are in the presence of someone who is despairing. And out of that experience of inner peace you will say and do whatever is helpful, which does not necessarily mean talking a person out of suicide. It does not mean handing a person a razor blade or a gun. It simply means that you communicate with that person on the level of the mind, even though your mouth may be going and you are saying all kinds of things.  
  
There is no right or wrong way of dealing with that, but there is a wrong and right way of thinking about it. And so when you are in the presence of someone who is troubled—so deeply troubled that the person is thinking of suicide—at that point you want to monitor your own mind. If you are not totally at peace then you are the one who needs help. When you can be at peace, then the message you are giving this person is, "Yes, there is no hope in the world, but there is hope in your mind, and I'm now an example." Not that you say this in words, but your defenseless, loving presence says, "I am an example of there being a right mind that you can choose." That gives the person hope. From that right-minded peace you would say whatever would be helpful.  
  
The Course never deals with behavior. I have quoted many times the experience Helen had when she once asked Jesus what she should say to someone who was in need of help. His answer to her, in the form of a message she had written down, was "Don't ask me what you should say. Ask me instead for help to look at this person through the eyes of peace and not judgment." So when you become aware that you are not at peace when you are in the presence of someone who is very upset, very angry, very fearful, or in a lot of physical or emotional pain, then you ask Jesus for help not for what to say or do but that you realize you could make another choice and that your being upset in the presence of someone else who is upset has nothing to do with that person. That is the world's lie—that someone else's ego, or someone else's right mind for that matter, has an effect on me, whether that someone in front of me is a Hitler or a Jesus. It does not make a difference because if ideas leave not their source, then there is no one out there.  
  
So if I am not at peace it can only be because my mind has chosen not to be at peace, and I have projected responsibility for that guilt-ridden decision to tell God to get lost again onto this situation or this person. Consequently, the message I am giving this person is, "You are right. The ego is alive and well, and there is no hope." No matter what I say, even if I say the most loving, comforting, wise words, my presence will say the opposite. Therefore, if I find myself not at peace because someone else is not at peace, that is the cue for me to go within and ask for help of my teacher to look at this differently: "Help me realize that it is not the person outside who is responsible for how I am feeling right now. I am feeling this way because I became afraid of your love." That is what you tell Jesus. Use any other words or symbols you want, but honesty is recognizing that "I am never upset for the reason I think," as Lesson 5 states.  
  
Let me read what Jesus says in the teachers' manual because this is a very nice way of expressing all of this. This is from "How Is Healing Accomplished?" section III, "The Function of the Teacher of God." The context is sickness, but we can extend the idea to anyone who is troubled, to those who believe they are suicidal, those who believe they have been unfairly treated, those who believe they are dying of cancer, those who believe anything that is not putting them in a state of peace.  
  
**(M-5.III.2:1-7) To them God's teachers come, to represent another choice which they had forgotten. The simple presence of a teacher of God is a reminder. His thoughts** [right-minded thoughts] **ask for the right to question what the patient has accepted as true. As God's messengers, His teachers are the symbols of salvation. They ask the patient for forgiveness for God's Son in his own Name. They stand for the Alternative. With God's Word** [the Atonement] **in their minds they come in benediction, not to heal the sick but to remind them of the remedy God has already given them.**  
  
Just as Jesus is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, he asks us to be his manifestation in the world (C-6:1,5). That is the meaning of "They stand for the Alternative."  
  
I may not be in my right mind two minutes from now, but in this moment I am in my right mind. The peace that I have chosen is in you because minds are joined and the Sonship of God is one. We all have the same split mind.  
  
**(M-5.III.2:8-10) It is not their hands that heal. It is not their voice that speaks the Word of God. They merely give what has been given them** [and indeed has been given to everyone].  
  
It is not what you say or do that is important. It is the peace in your mind that heals.  
  
In the text Jesus says sickness is a little form of death (T-27.I.4:8). So whether someone is actively suicidal or just choosing to be angry or sick, it's all the same.  
  
**(M-5.III.2:11) Very gently they call to their brothers to turn away from death . . .**  
  
This is what we say in thoughts, and again, this does not mean we have to say these words or that we have to think these words. It is the content that is important.  
  
**(M-5.III.2:11-12) "Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. Would you choose sickness in place of this?"**  
  
This allows you to be in the presence of anyone, anywhere, anytime, regardless of the form, and give the message that there is a choice. You do not make the choice for the person any more than Jesus makes the choice for us. By your defenselessness you are telling the person that there is a right mind he or she can choose. That is all you do. From that peace with which you are identified at that moment, you will say and do whatever. It is not your hands that heal. It is not your voice, what you say, that speaks the Word of God.  
  
This is a correction for Christians who believe that they heal with their hands, who believe they heal with what people call "healing hands." How could hands heal? How could a lifeless piece of wood do anything? What heals is the right-minded presence that says, "The decision I made you can make." That is healing. It is not your holy words. It is not praying from the Bible or from A Course in Miracles. That does not mean anything. This is not to say you should not quote something if you find it helpful, but that is only a form. It is the content that is important.  
  
**(M-5.III.3:1) Not once do the advanced teachers of God consider the forms of sickness in which their brother believes.**  
  
It does not matter if someone has a hangnail, is dying of cancer, or is threatening to jump off the roof. It does not matter if someone is angry at you and is expressing that physically, let alone verbally. It does not make any difference. Not once do you consider the forms of sickness, the forms of guilt, because when you are in your right mind you realize those forms are projected images of a guilt that is already undone. When you are in your right mind there is no guilt, which means you do not see the guilt in anyone else. You may recognize that the person feels guilty, but you do not see the guilt. You just see a call for love, because all guilt is, is a cover for love. So it does not make any difference what the form is.  
  
The first law of chaos is that there is a hierarchy of illusions, which means some forms are more difficult to heal than others; some people are holier than others; some people have holy hands; others do not; there are significant distinctions in the world among the Sons of God. That is a lie! How could there be meaningful distinctions within illusions? That does not make any sense. Multiply one times zero and 757 times zero, and what do you get? Zero. So write as many numbers as you want; the total still ends up as zero. When you are an advanced teacher of God, which means you spend more and more of your time in your right mind rather than in your wrong mind, you recognize that everything here is silly—not sinful, not evil, not wicked, not serious, just silly.  
  
People believe 757 times zero is more meaningful than one times zero and is a greater number. All you have to do is be right-minded, and if you think something here is serious, that is a sure-fire clue that you have become wrong-minded, and that is your problem. Everything comes back to what is inside us.  
  
What an advanced teacher of God represents is this integration of form and content. The content is love, peace, and the vision of shared interests. The form, the behavior, integrates that. Therefore anything you say will be nonjudgmental because you won't be judging among illusions. You won't be saying some people are nicer than other people, or some people are more deserving of my love, my attention, or my money than other people. You will realize everyone is the same.  
  
**Q:** What I'm struggling with the most now is that while I'm grateful that I'm able to choose peace, there are times the littlest things trip me up, and even in the midst of knowing what's happening intellectually, I can't get free. I can't get back to peace. And then when I get back to peace I wonder, if I could have chosen it all these other times, why was it so hard to choose it this time, or why did it take so long or why was it so difficult? Should I just be patient or is there some…  
  
**K:** Yes. There is a line in the Course that says, "The ego analyzes; the Holy Spirit accepts" (T-11.V.13:1). So don't analyze it, don't worry about it, just be patient. All you have to know is that if you are in your ego you became afraid of love. So what else is new? You knew that anyway. So don't make a big deal about ego attacks. Just say, "If I am not totally at peace I am aware of it, and obviously I am afraid, and that is okay." Take as your guide: I will just be kind while blind (a reference to the first question in this excerpt)