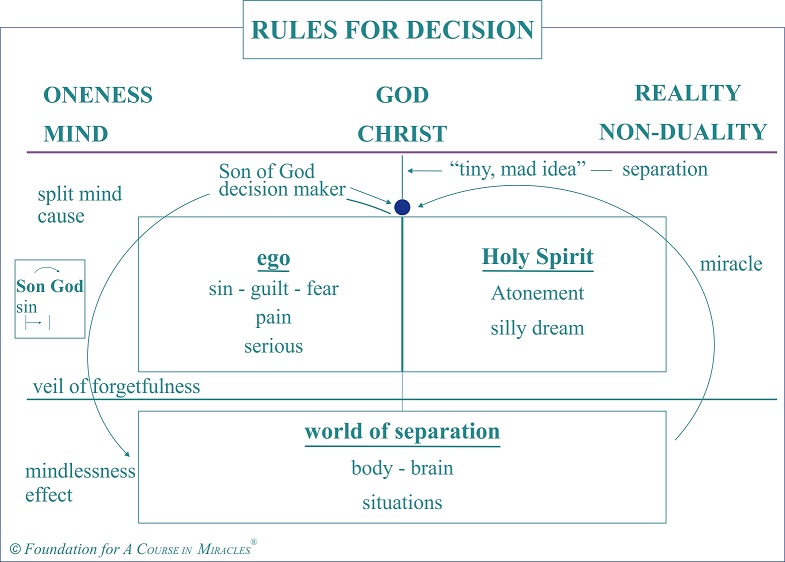
**"Rules for Decision" (T-30.I)**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the  
*Foundation for A Course in Miracles*  
Roscoe NY

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**Part I  
Introduction**

It is obvious from the title of the workshop, "Rules for Decision," that we will be spending most of our time with that particular section from Chapter 30 in the text, and that that section indeed will be the center point of the workshop. We will look at a number of other parts of the Course which bear on the themes of that section as well. As is also obvious from the title, the central theme that we will be addressing is the idea of choosing or deciding. The whole Course, and in particular this section, makes clear that we have only two possible choices open to us at any time: to choose either to have the ego be our teacher or our "adviser"—the term used in this section—or to choose Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Later on I will spend a considerable amount of time talking about Jesus and what it means to choose him as our adviser or teacher rather than the ego. What I would like to do first, however, is to provide some metaphysical background for the whole idea of choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit. A large portion of what we will be talking about during this workshop will not be very metaphysical. This is a very practical and down-to-earth section in terms of what the experience of choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit is like. But as with any discussion of the Course having to do with the specific or practical—how we behave within the dream or in this world—if we first don't understand the overriding metaphysics of the Course, then the practical application will make no sense. So we will begin with that. I will do a rather shortened version of what I usually spend much more time doing.  
  
The following diagram depicts the chart drawn on the board during the workshop, and which is referred to frequently in Kenneth's commentary.



**Heaven**

We begin, as we always do, at the Beginning which is Heaven, and God and Christ are the two beings that dwell in Heaven. The principal characteristic of Heaven is that it is a state of perfect Oneness, which means literally that, as the Course says, there is no place where the Father ends and the Son begins (W-pI.132.12:4). In other words, there is no differentiation in Heaven between God and Christ. There is no separated personality or separated consciousness in One that can observe itself in relation to the Other. In fact in Heaven there are no terms "God" or "Christ." These are terms which we use within the dream, within the illusion, to try to describe what the state of Heaven is like. But there is no way here that anyone can know what a state of perfect unity or perfect oneness is. We will be speaking a great deal this weekend about the mind. In Heaven we are talking about a Mind—the Course frequently speaks about the Mind of God or the Mind of Christ. The Mind of God and the Mind of Christ are totally unified so that, once again, there is no place where the Mind of God ends and the Mind of Christ begins. These are terms that only have meaning for us here, but would have no meaning in Heaven. What this also means, and this is an important idea which we will build on, is that there is no choosing in Heaven. There is no decision in Heaven. There is no free will in Heaven, because free will, decision, or choosing reflect the thought that there are alternatives you can choose between.  
  
Now if all that exists is perfect Oneness, or what we could speak of as a state of non-duality, then there is absolutely nothing you can choose between. There is no way that Christ, God's Son, can choose to be other than what He is: a creation of God, and totally unified with His Source. So that the Judeo-Christian idea that God endowed His creation with free will, a will that could choose a reality or thought or being other than God, is impossible from the perspective of the Course. This is a purely non-dualistic system. The whole notion of God that you find in the Bible, which obviously is the cornerstone of both Judaism and Christianity, is that of a dualistic God. It is a God Who coexists with the devil, a God of good Who coexists with evil. It is a God that allows Himself to be chosen against, as you find in the Adam and Eve story, where the two sinners disobey God's rule and choose to eat of the forbidden fruit. That is impossible in the state of Heaven that the Course teaches us about. Again, we are speaking of a perfectly non-dualistic state in which there is no choosing at all, in which there is no decision. What this then means—and this will be an important idea that we will emphasize later in the workshop—is that the whole concept of choosing is an illusion, the whole concept of making a decision is an illusion. There is nothing real about it. That doesn't mean that it is not an extremely important concept: obviously it is. But it is very important to keep in mind that the whole notion of choosing or making a decision is inherently unreal, because the only state of reality is, to say it once again, that of perfect Oneness or non-duality.

**The Split Mind**

Now we will talk briefly about what the Course refers to as the "tiny, mad idea," which is the thought of separation that seemed to creep into the mind of God's Son, and which in reality never happened at all: "Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh" (T-27.VIII.6:2). In reality this never could have occurred because there could never be a thought of anything other than God. How could there be a thought of imperfection, a thought of duality, a thought of separation in the Mind of perfect Oneness? This is impossible, and therefore it never happened—but we believe it happened. This is the beginning of what the Course refers to as the split mind (always appearing in lowercase), the mind that resulted from the "tiny, mad idea." This mind itself splits in two: the part we call the ego, and the part we refer to as the Holy Spirit. I should mention that in this whole discussion, nothing I say or that the Course says regarding this should be taken literally—these are symbols. In effect Jesus is telling us a myth, and myths are not true. Myths attempt to reflect a reality, but in and of themselves they are not true. These are symbols, and as Jesus says in the manual for teachers: "Let us not forget, however, that words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). We are talking about words that are symbols for an idea or a thought, but the thought itself is not real. This is the language of myth or the language of metaphor.  
  
So when the "tiny, mad idea" seemed to arise in the mind of God's Son, there also arose within that same mind two different ways of looking at that "tiny, mad idea." One is what we call the ego, the other is what we call the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's way of looking at the "tiny, mad idea" is what the Course refers to as the principle of the Atonement—the statement that the separation never happened. It is the Holy Spirit's way of saying to the Son of God: "What you are looking at or thinking about is simply a silly dream. It is not to be taken seriously, because how could a thought like this have any effect upon reality?" There is a wonderful phrase in the section called "The Little Hindrance": "not one note in Heaven's song was missed" (T-26.V.5:4). In other words, this "tiny, mad idea," this thought of being separate from God had no effect at all in Heaven.  
  
The Holy Spirit then can be thought of as the memory of God's perfection, of the perfect Oneness of God and Christ that the Son took with him into the dream. And it is memory that links the Son back to God, just as the memory of a loved one who has died links us with that loved one. You think of this person who was very dear to you and you begin to feel that person's presence. You weep; you feel glad for the happy times that you had; you feel angry for the unhappy times that you had and the grievances that you are holding on to—but it is your memory of that person that links you with that person, so that you feel things now that you might have felt when the person was still alive. Thus, the function of memory in our everyday experience is that it links us with something in the past. In this sense, this memory of Who we are as Christ is the link between our current experience and Who we truly are in Heaven. So again, when that "tiny, mad idea" arose, there was also a thought in the mind that said that the impossible never happened—this thought is what the Course refers to as the Holy Spirit. This is the thought that says that the "tiny, mad idea" is simply that: an insignificant thought that has had no effect at all and is totally insane. When Jesus uses the word "mad" or "madness" in the Course, he always uses it as a synonym for "insanity."  
  
On the other side, however, is the ego, and the ego is a thought that says not only that the separation happened, but it was a terrible event. The Son of God has committed an outrageous offense against his Creator and Source. This is what the word "sin" means. This is a very serious action for which the Son should feel guilty; and he now should be in terror of the wrath of God that seeks to have vengeance on what the Son has done. What the Son has done according to the ego is stolen God's power, stolen God's life, usurped His role as Creator, as First Cause, and over God's dead body now proclaims himself as his own creator and source. This is the Course's version of original sin. Again, this never happened in reality, but within the dream this is the essential point. And so what will end up happening if the Son chooses the ego is that he will believe he has separated from God. He will feel overwhelmed with the guilt over what he has done and will now believe that God is going to punish him.  
  
These are the two choices open to the Son of God. The Son of God who must make a choice we will represent in the **chart** by a blue dot—and we will give it a name: the decision maker. Those of you who have been studying the Course a while know that the term "decision maker" is never used in the Course in this context. It is actually used once in the manual but in a different context. It is a name that we give to that part of the split mind that must choose between these two thought systems. Over and over again Jesus is asking us to make another choice. Certainly in this section, "Rules for Decision," this is a major theme: that we must decide, that we must choose. In fact we could say, as we will certainly elaborate on later in the workshop, that the central teaching of the Course is that we do indeed have another choice. We have chosen mistakenly, and now we can choose again. And as you know, the very last section of the Course, that beautiful section "Choose Once Again" reiterates that for the last time. Thus the part of our minds that must choose or that must decide we just call the decision maker—this makes it easier to refer to it. When Jesus refers to the Son of God in the Course, when he addresses the reader as "you," this is the "you" he is addressing—this part of our minds that must choose either the ego or the Holy Spirit.  
  
What happened—and we all are the witness to the fact that this has happened—is that as one Son we turned to the ego and turned away from the Holy Spirit. We said basically that we don't believe the Holy Spirit's story; rather, we believe the ego. Again, we are talking mythologically, so it is not as if we had a conversation and said all these ideas—but, in effect, what went on in the Son's mind is that he liked being on his own. If indeed he had listened to the Holy Spirit and identified with His Atonement principle, then the separation would have vanished in the same instant it seemed to appear. All individuality would have vanished, and the Son would have disappeared into the Heart of God and would no longer have existed as a separated being. Within the dream, the Son now exists as a separated being who has the freedom (or the illusion of freedom) to choose whether he will listen to the Voice for God, as the Course refers to the Holy Spirit, or will listen to the voice of the ego. He likes being on his own. He likes the autonomy. He likes the individuality that he is now beginning to identify with and to enjoy. The very important term that the Course uses to summarize this is: he likes his *specialness*. In Heaven he is not special. In Heaven he does not exist as a separated personality. Now all of a sudden he finds himself on his own and he likes it—he likes being special. And he is not aware at that point of the tremendous cost to himself, of turning away from the Holy Spirit and turning towards the ego.  
  
In fact, we could say that one of the major things Jesus does for us in the Course is to have us understand the tremendous price that we pay for continuing to identify with our specialness and with the ego. As you work with the Course over a period of many years, you will realize to your horror just what an awful, awful price this has been. If you think it is bad now, wait ten or fifteen years when you really get to the heart of this and realize with a real horror what it is that you have actually done. When you realize what you have done within the dream, you will understand why your guilt is so strong. In reality this has not happened at all, but as long as you believe you are here, as long as you believe you are a special individual, as long as you believe you are a separate personality, you *will* believe that you have indeed done a monstrous, monstrous thing. However, right at the beginning, we are not aware of what we have done. We think we are just playing, we think that we really enjoy our newly found freedom and individuality, and so we choose as one Son—at this point we are still talking about one Son of God—we choose as one Son to believe in the ego, which means that we *identify*with the ego. Once you choose to believe in what the ego says, you not only choose to believe it, you *become*it. So you become this sinful, guilty, fear-ridden self. That is the price that was paid for the specialness, and for the thought of being outside of Heaven and on one's own.

**The World and the Body**

Once the Son has done this, the ego realizes that it has a potential problem on its hands, because the ego knows that it has "pulled the wool" over the Son's eyes. The problem that the ego faces is: What if the Son suddenly wakes up one morning and realizes what he has done? He will change his mind. He will turn against the ego and towards the Holy Spirit. He will awaken from the dream. He will disappear into the Heart of God. Then: no more ego. No more individuality. No more separation. No more specialness. No more personality. No more life—as the ego judges life.  
  
Now that it has the Son in its clutches, the ego does one more thing: ensure that the Son will never ever change his mind. And it does this by a very clever strategy: If the ego can render the Son *mindless* and cause him to forget that he has a mind, how can the Son change his mind? You can't change something you don't believe you have. So what the ego then does is project itself outside the mind and makes or—as the Course says earlier—*miscreates* a world of separation, which is nothing more than the reflection, seemingly outside, of the thought that is inside. The world results, in other words, from taking the contents of this wrong-minded ego box of sin, guilt, and fear and all the other thoughts that go with it—simply taking all this from inside and saying it is now outside. Once that thought of separation has projected itself outside the mind, it does what separation does: it separates—and separates, and separates, fragments, divides, subdivides, over and over and over again. This is a process that seems to occur over billions of years. In reality it occurs in one instant; and in "real reality," if I can make such an awful distinction, it never happened at all. Once the fragmentation process has been accomplished, then each of the seeming fragments is placed in what we call a body. The body, if you can forgive the pun, is the embodiment of the ego. It is the thought of separation now given form and encased within a body, that by its very nature separates itself out from other bodies and other objects. That is how the world of separation was born.  
  
What regulates the body, so we are told, is the brain. The brain is not the mind. The brain exists outside of the mind as a reflection of the thought that is within the mind; but it is not the mind. What the ego then does is cause a veil to fall over the mind of God's Son, and it is this veil, the veil of forgetfulness, that causes the Son to forget where he came from. Again, where he came from is simply from a projection of a thought in the mind. One of the important principles in the Course is that "ideas leave not their source" (T-26.VII.4:7), which means that the idea of a separated body has never left its source, which is in the mind. This in turn means that there is literally no world out there. There is a *belief* that there is a world out there, but the world we think is outside us is simply the projection of what is inside us. However, because of this veil that falls across our minds, we forget where we came from. Idea and source have been split off, cause and effect have been split off, and now we believe we are in this world. We have total amnesia—we don't recall at all where we have come from. So the ego now has succeeded because it has made us mindless. And to repeat, the significance of this is that if we do not have a mind, how can we possibly choose?  
  
All of the choices we think we have are within the illusion, and they are all made-up choices. This is because we are really not choosing anything—we are simply choosing one illusion over another. I prefer *this*illusion rather than *that* illusion. There is this illusory problem over here, and so there is that illusory solution to it over there. In reality there is nothing. The *only* problem, as the Course tells us over and over again, is simply that we turned away from the Holy Spirit and turned to the ego. In effect what we did is we bet on the wrong horse. And we are not aware that the horse dropped dead in the starting gate and is going absolutely nowhere. Now we spend all of our time trying to revive this dead horse and get it to take us some place—and there is no way it can do that because it is not alive. So what Jesus is doing in the Course is saying to us in effect: "You bet on the wrong horse. This horse will take you nowhere. Bet on me—I will take you back home." But we are so stubborn and so stupid and so insane that we persist in trying to get this dead horse up. And it goes absolutely nowhere. Every single thing we do in this world is like trying to revive a dead horse and get it to take us some place—and it will take us nowhere. It cannot take us to the promised land, it cannot take us home—it is dead. Just imagine yourself on a dead horse. You are whipping it, you are cajoling it, you are doing all kinds of things, and it doesn't hear you. It does absolutely nothing. That is what we do in the world. That is what we do with the body. But the body is a dead horse. We don't know what we are doing because we don't know about anything else. It is not the horse that has blinders on, *we* have blinders on. All we see is what the ego wants us to see: what is *outside* us. It doesn't have us see where the real problem is, which is *inside* us—in the mind.  
  
So that, again, the only problem we have is that we turned away from the Holy Spirit and turned towards the ego, which means the only solution to all of our problems, or what we think are all of our problems, is simply to return to that choice point in our minds and make another choice—choose *against* the ego and now *towards* the Holy Spirit. That is what the miracle does. That is why this is called *A Course in Miracles*. What the miracle does is take our attention from the world and bring it back within our minds so we can make another choice. Without that, this section, "Rules for Decision," would make no sense. What the miracle does is take our attention from our problems or concerns in the world, in our own bodies or in other people's bodies, and says to us: "This is not the problem—the problem is back within your mind. Look within your mind." That is all the miracle does. As Jesus states very clearly in the Course, the miracle does not choose for us. All that it does is make us aware of the choice that we have. It brings the problem back within our minds so we can make another choice. We can finally look at what we chose, look at the price we paid for what we chose, and realize that it was stupid—look at the horse and realize it is not alive. At this point then, choice becomes meaningful because now we can choose again. Now we realize that there is another horse, another thought system. There is another presence in our minds that we can choose. And if we choose *that*presence, then we will really find peace and the Love of God.  
  
In a nutshell, then, this is the background for the "Rules for Decision." It is really a way of helping us learn that in fact we *do*have a choice. This means that the sphere of activity, the sphere of action is not the body, not the brain, and not the world, but the mind. Once we can return to our minds and realize what the choice is, the right choice will be obvious.

**Part II  
Introduction (cont.)**

Before we start our line-by-line analysis of this section, let me first situate it for you in terms of where it comes in the text. The preceding section which ends Chapter 29 is called "The Forgiving Dream," which is a wonderful section contrasting the dreams of forgiveness with the dreams of judgment. The dreams of forgiveness obviously would be the Holy Spirit's correction for the ego's dreams of judgment. The last paragraph in that section speaks about "a new beginning," which is when the Son of God begins to turn away from the ego's dreams of judgment—the dreams of specialness, the dreams of attack, the dreams of hatred, etc.—and now begins to move towards the Holy Spirit's dreams of forgiveness.  
  
What becomes very clear right in the Introduction to this section, is that this is a process. It is not something that you learn how to do just like that. That is why Jesus speaks about "a new beginning." Those of you who have worked with the Course a while know that Jesus' view of time is decidedly different from ours. So when he says "beginning" he doesn't necessarily mean one day, or one week, or one year. He says in the "For They Have Come" section: "What is a hundred or a thousand years to Them, or tens of thousands?" (T-26.IX.4:1). When you stand outside time as he does, all of time is the same. So to speak of this as "a new beginning" does not necessarily mean that it is over and done with in no time at all. But it does certainly mean that it is a beginning—that you have begun to recognize what the ego's dreams of judgment and specialness are. Then you begin to realize what the pay-off has been—that judgment and specialness have not brought you happiness, nor have they brought you peace. All the individuality and specialness that you believe you have won and have striven to maintain is not worth it, because it hasn't worked. Specialness will never bring you happiness. It will never bring you love. It will bring you a momentary good feeling, but it never lasts. And good feelings always have an underside: when you are up, you will then fall and go down. The peace of God has no underside—it is level, it is even, it is constant, and it does not go up and down. It is not dramatic. It is not exhilarating. It is not exciting. It is not passionate. All of which will cause many people to say: "Who wants it! It sounds very boring." But it will last, and it will never fail you.  
  
Jesus is thus assuming at this point in the curriculum—after all this is Chapter 30, so students have been at it for a while—that students have at least begun to recognize what the two choices are, even if they are not yet ready to choose. Remember, the miracle does not choose for you; it simply establishes that you do indeed have a choice. Now he is going to urge us in this section to choose with him rather than with the ego.  
  
What is especially interesting about this section from a form point of view is that its whole style is remarkably different from the sections and chapters that precede it and those that follow it. This is written in a much simpler style: it is still in blank verse, which makes it even more incredible. But aside from that, it is not written on the same high poetic level as this whole part of the text is. It is almost as if what Jesus is doing in this section is foreshadowing what will come later on with the workbook. Remember that the workbook was taken down by Helen after the text was completed. The style of this section has much more in common with the lessons in the workbook, especially the early lessons. So in terms of form it is almost an anomaly here. It is almost like a breathing space for the reader. It is much easier to read and understand than many other parts, especially the later chapters—that is why this section is a particular favorite of many students of the Course. But from a thematic point of view it fits in perfectly.  
  
Let me also mention as a caution that even though in this section Jesus talks about seven rules for decision, he is really giving them to provide you with a sense of the process whereby you go about learning to distinguish between what the ego is offering and what the Holy Spirit is offering. They should not be taken literally as steps that everybody must follow exactly. Everybody's process is different—the form of the process is different. At the end of the teachers' manual Jesus says that "the curriculum is highly individualized" (M-29.2:6). The content is the same for everyone: the idea of looking within one's mind, seeing what the two choices are, looking at what the choice of the ego's specialness has brought, and then finally making another choice. The content is the same for everyone, but the way students will go about it is decidedly different. Therefore, take these seven rules for decision really as a basic guideline to help you realize what the overall process is like. This is similar to what you should do with the stages in the development of trust that come at the beginning of the teachers' manual (M-4.I-A). There Jesus gives six stages. These are not to be taken literally either—that everybody has to go through these six stages just as they are given there. They are provided as a way of giving you an overall view of the general process of getting past the ego and attaining the real world, which is the final stage of those six stages.  
  
In this sense, then, don't take these seven rules as being literally true—that you actually have to say these words exactly as Jesus gives them, and that you must follow this exact sequence. Their purpose really is to provide you with a general framework for understanding what happens when you make the wrong choice. Then you can correct it. This section, thus, is a wonderful example of what Jesus meant at the end of Chapter 1 when he called his course "a course in mind training" (T-1.VII.4:1). This is a way of helping you train your mind to think along the lines he is setting forth rather than the lines that the ego sets forth. It is a way of training our minds not to be taken in by all of the veils and the illusions and distractions that the ego provides for us in the world—we can pierce all that and go back to that place in our mind where choice becomes meaningful. This takes a tremendous amount of work. Over and over again Jesus says how simple his course is—he does not, however, overly emphasize that it is easy. What is simple and easy about it is that it only says one thing all the way through: what is true is true and what is false is false. That's it! So as he says at the end of the text: you couldn't ask for anything that is simpler than that (T-31.I.1). But it takes a tremendous amount of concentration and dedication to really learn what that means, and to be able to use that principle each and every time you find yourself getting angry, getting upset, filled with thoughts of specialness, thoughts of vengeance, thoughts of depression, thoughts of pain, thoughts of suffering, sickness, etc. It takes tremendous discipline and hard work to be able to realize that our problems are not here in the world but back in our minds. So again, this section makes it clear that we are talking about a process.  
  
Let's begin now going through the section. We will start with the Introduction.  
  
**(T-30.in.1:3) The speed by which it**[our goal] **can be reached depends on this one thing alone: your willingness to practice every step. Each one will help a little, every time it is attempted.**  
  
This is quite clear. He is talking about many steps, not one step. Unfortunately, people often think this is so easy—they think that they are one step away from the real world, if not in the real world itself, simply because they want to be in the real world. They are not aware of their strong unconscious identification with their egos and with their specialness, which always act against their achieving a true state of peace. This happens because they skip over passages and sections like this. Jesus is talking about the need to practice every step, and every step really means being aware as often as you can throughout the day what you are choosing. Earlier in the text Jesus said to Helen, even though obviously it is meant for everyone: "You are much too tolerant of mind wandering" (T-2.VI.4:6). "Mind wandering" is the mind's wandering from itself through projection and ending up in a world. In other words, you wander away from your mind. Now all of your thoughts are to the world outside of you—and your body is as much outside you as someone else's body is outside you. This is because the "you" that we are speaking about is the mind. Remember, the "you" in the Course is always the Son of God or the decision maker within the mind. So what happens when we "mind wander" is that our thoughts leave their source which is in the mind, and now seem to be outside the mind in the world. But we forget how they got there. Then we find ourselves getting upset about all kinds of things in the world.  
  
The only reason we are afraid is that we chose the ego. We are not afraid because our body has a fatal illness, or because we don't have enough money for next month's mortgage payment, or because a war might break out, or because a wild animal is roaming around. That is an example of mind wandering—thinking we are afraid and upset, or desirous of something that is outside of us. In reality it is all a projection of what is inside of us. This is why we need specific training, and why we have to practice: because we are "much too tolerant of mind wandering." We love our specialness. We love to indulge it—whether it is specialness that makes us happy, or specialness that makes us weep. When our specialness makes us weep, there is a part of us that is secretly glad, because then we can claim to be an innocent victim of what someone else has done to us. So there is a perverse part of our minds that loves to suffer, so that we can point an accusing finger at someone and say: "You did this to me." All of this is an example of mind wandering. This is why we have to practice, and practice, and practice. This is why this is a very difficult Course: because it is so simple! It is uncompromising—it makes no exceptions. There is absolutely nothing in this world that can help us, just as there is absolutely nothing in this world that can hurt us. Absolutely nothing: for the simple reason that there is no world!  
  
One of the goals of any teacher, just as it is the goal of Jesus in his course, is to help the student generalize—to learn specific examples and then generalize. A simple example of this is how we all learned to add, subtract, multiply, and divide. We learned certain principles and then practiced with specific examples. When we mastered all that, there was not a number in the world that we could not manipulate through addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. We no longer had to practice with every possibility in the world. We learned some basic principles, practiced them until we mastered them, and then generalized, so now we can add, subtract, multiply, and divide any set of numbers in the world.  
  
That is exactly what Jesus is talking about here—that we practice with all the specific things in our daily lives that upset or concern us; with all the things that occur within our special relationships; all the things in our lives that are problems to us—our jobs, our bodies, etc. And as we learn to apply the principles, which this section gives us, we will eventually reach a point when we will generalize. Then there will be absolutely nothing in this world that can ever cause us pain or bring us distress. That is the end of the curriculum—when we master the principles and then apply them all the time.  
  
**(T-30.in1:8) We seek to make them habits now, so you will have them ready for whatever need.**  
  
These will be as habitual to us as is the ego's thought system to us now. It is really an overly learned habit to get sick, angry, or anxious, or to get upset over anything that occurs outside us. So what Jesus wants us to do is to have the same power of the mind that learned all of these insane habits learn his sane habit of becoming more and more observant of ourselves. That is what he means when he says we should be very honest with him and hide nothing (T-4.III.8:2). We should become more and more observant and honest with ourselves, so we can begin to see when we have gotten off kilter. Most of the time we realize that when the damage is already done. What we want to do is get back further and further to that choice point in our minds when we first chose against love, against truth, against Jesus—because that is the beginning, the cause of what eventually led to the effect: being distressed, upset, angry, depressed, sick, etc. The time between the cause and the effect will grow shorter and shorter as we progress with the Course.  
  
In a wonderful definition of the miracle, Jesus says that its function is to restore to cause its function of causation (T-28.II.9:3). The mind is the cause; the world is the effect. Whenever we have a problem in the world, it is because we have forgotten the cause which is in our minds. What the miracle does is restore to the mind (the cause) its function of being the causative agent of everything that we feel. That is all the Course is training us to do. This is extremely important, because if we don't understand this, we will do a massive guilt trip on ourselves. We will think we are failing this course because we are still choosing our egos.  
  
The function of the miracle is not to have us stop choosing our egos. It is to have us be aware that we are choosing the ego. Again, I can't emphasize this enough. This is what gets almost all Course in Miraclesstudents way off the mark. They then will believe that they are choosing the Holy Spirit when they are not doing that at all—because they think that choosing the Holy Spirit is the goal of the Course. The goal of the Course is that you choose the miracle, which means that you finally understand what you are choosing, and then you learn to forgive yourself for continually choosing your specialness. If you do that, what you have done in effect is let Jesus look at your ego with you. Later in the workshop we will elaborate on this when we talk about the meaning of Jesus. But that is what the miracle is: going back to your mind and now with Jesus or the Holy Spirit beside you, looking at your ego and realizing that you have chosen it—even though at any given moment, even though at that moment, you may not want to let the ego go. You will at least know what you are doing. And so you will end up as a student of this course realizing how absolutely insane you are—literally—because of how you perversely continually choose your ego and your specialness. But now at least you know that you are doing it, which means you can't blame anybody else for it. You can't blame your environment, you can't blame the person who just raped you, or embezzled money from you, or insulted you. You can't blame your genes, your bad karma—you can't blame anything. Now you will understand that if you are upset right now, it is because you want to be upset right now. You don't want the peace of God. You want a piece of the ego's action. You want a piece of your specialness. You don't want God's peace. But at least you know now what you are doing. That is the goal of the Course. You have successfully completed the Course—because once you do that, it is only a matter of time before you realize this doesn't pay you anymore. That step would automatically happen.  
  
This is another way of understanding what Jesus means when he speaks about "a little willingness," your willingness to practice each step. It is the little willingness to simply know what you are doing. You don't need a great deal of willingness, which would imply your choosing against the ego and choosing for God. In simply knowing what you are doing, you would accept full responsibility for your specialness, for your misery, for your pain—whether it is physical or emotional. You would realize no one is responsible for that except you. Then you would learn that it is not sinful; it is not wicked; it is not evil: it is simply silly. And if you can say it is silly, you are beginning to understand what the Holy Spirit told you right at the beginning: The tiny, mad idea is not evil; it is not wicked; it is not sinful: it is silly. This is the meaning of the line I quoted earlier: "Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh" (T-27.VIII.6:2). We look at our specialness, look at our choosing our specialness instead of the love of Jesus, and smile at the silliness of it. Even as we are embracing it; even as we are defending it; even as we luxuriate in its pain, we will at least know what we are doing, and that is the goal of the Course. This takes tremendous practice, because we don't want to accept responsibility—we want to blame someone else.  
  
We can even blame the ego itself—as if there were an ego outside us. People do with the Course exactly what Christians have done for centuries: "The devil made me do it." People sometimes say: "My ego made me do it!"—as if there were an ego person outside you. At one point in the Course Jesus apologizes for speaking about the ego as if it were an entity of some kind acting on its own (T-4.VI.1). He does that for pedagogical reasons, he explains, so that we can externalize the ego and the Holy Spirit, and thereby be more able to understand that we have a choice. In reality, the ego is our own thought—we are choosing the ego. In the same way, the Holy Spirit is our own thought—the thought of God's Love that came with us into the dream. The Holy Spirit is not a separate being, or a separate person, or a separate entity. The Holy Spirit is really the thought that is Who we are and Whom we have separated from. We think of the Holy Spirit as separate because we think of ourselves as separate—just as we think of the ego as separate. In reality the ego is the thought of hatred and separation, and the Holy Spirit is the thought of Love or the thought of the Atonement. Both are within our minds. Both are part of our minds.  
  
What is extremely helpful as you work with this course is if you have at least some background in psychology, because that will at least help you have a working understanding and a respect for the unconscious. You don't have to be a great student of psychology, but I think the whole notion of the unconscious is extremely important. What that is telling us is there is a part of our minds that we are not in touch with that is choosing against what we consciously want. So just as Freud said that the goal of psychoanalysis was to make the unconscious conscious, Jesus would say the same thing. The goal of his course is to make our unconscious decisions conscious. And what renders something unconscious is fear. What makes something unconscious is fear, that is all it is. There is some thought that arouses too much anxiety in me—it brings up too much guilt in me. Therefore I will not see it, because to see it makes me very uncomfortable. At that point our fear dictates that we look away, and that is what repression or denial is. The Course will have you recognize that that is what you have done. You still may choose your ego, but now at least you know what you are doing, and that is a big first step.

**Part III  
I. Rules for Decision**

**(T-30.I.1:4-5) It is not wise to let yourself become preoccupied with every step you take. The proper set, adopted consciously each time you wake, will put you well ahead.**  
  
What Jesus is saying is: don't obsess about this; don't analyze every single thought that you have every single minute of the day. A good rule to remember when you work with the Course and apply it to your own life is common sense, and it is not common sense to analyze every move that you make. If you analyzed what happens when you tie a shoelace in the morning, you would never get the shoelace tied. If you analyze what goes on as you walk down a flight of stairs, I assure you that you will not reach the bottom step on your feet, because walking down a flight of stairs is physiologically very, very complicated. Brushing your teeth is very complicated. So he is not saying that you have to analyze each thing that you do. What you want to do is become increasingly aware when you are angry, when you are upset, when you are anxious, when you are guilty. And over a period of time you will learn to distinguish between what really is an important lesson for you and what is not an important lesson for you. That is what he is saying. What you find in this section, incidentally, is some very clear practical advice about what to do and what not to do. This is an example of that.  
  
The "proper set" is to really realize the choice you have—that again is the function of the miracle. Jesus is saying that as soon as you can when you wake up, remember what you are here for. You are not here to make a lot of money, or to raise your children, or to be happy, or to save the world through your holy work, your profession, etc. You are here to learn that you made the wrong choice, and now can make another choice. That is the "set" that he is talking about. That is the function of the miracle: to restore to your mind, which is the cause, its function of being the causative agent of everything you believe and experience. That, again, is the mind-training aspect of the Course. You are being trained to remember as soon as possible when you awake, and then all throughout the day, why you are here and what your lesson is.  
  
The Course talks a great deal about function. Everyone has specific behavioral functions in the world, and there is nothing wrong with that. But without your really finding your true function, your external function will fall into the hands of the ego. Your true function is to forgive. This is what Jesus means whenever he uses the term “function” in the Course. He is not talking at all about behavior. He is talking about the function that we all share, which is to realize, again, that we bet on the wrong horse, that we made a mistake. We chose the ego's lies instead of the Holy Spirit's truth. Our function is to realize this each time we are tempted to make some aspect of our world real, or to justify our experience of victimization. Being a victim is the name of the ego's game—that is what keeps the ego thought system in place. So whenever you are tempted to perceive yourself as a victim, remember your function, which is learning that "I am not the victim of the world I see," and that "I am never upset for the reason I think," which are two early workbook lessons. Again, this is the "set" that he is talking about, which we should try to think of consciously.  
  
What is very helpful when you try to do this, is to see how quickly you forget. You may make a firm resolve right here tonight in this workshop, and when you get back to your room say: "I am really going to try to remember this when I wake up in the morning." Just see how quickly you forget. You may go through five minutes, an hour, five hours, and then suddenly say: "Oh my God, I forgot what I was going to do." That is not because you are a bad person; it is because you are a terrified person. This is because your ego knows that if you begin to do this, you will be moving away from your identification with your body and the world and go back to your mind. This in turn means that at some point you will realize what you have chosen, the tremendous cost of what you have chosen, that you have been a damn fool, and that now you are going to make another choice. That is the thing the ego wants to prevent. To the extent to which you identify with the ego's self, you will identify with the ego's strategy, and so you will become afraid of the power of your mind. The ego says: "If you get back in touch with the power of your mind, you will get back in touch with the part that stole from God, murdered God, and usurped His function. You will get back in touch with this awesome, awesome truth about yourself: that you killed God, destroyed Christ, and over their slain bodies built your own self."  
  
Nobody wants to get in touch with that. That is why everybody is terrified of their mind. And that is why, for example, many New Age disciplines that encourage you to get in touch with the power of your mind are really going to end up hurting you. Your mind is powerful indeed; but if you don't let go of your guilt, you will inevitably misuse that power all over again. This is not a Course that wants you to get in touch with the power of your mind to move glasses over tables, to attract wealth or a beautiful person to yourself, to change a cancer cell into a benign cell, or any of those things. This Course wants you to get in touch with the power of your mind that has chosen guilt so you can now make another choice. That is the power of the mind that Jesus is talking about. It is not the power of your mind to effect change in the world or in yourself. Those kinds of approaches may work very well; but don't confuse them with A Course in Miracles. None of them will undo guilt. In that sense they are no different from taking an aspirin or other medication. It doesn't mean that they may not work in alleviating a symptom, but they will not work in alleviating guilt.  
  
**(T-30.I.1:6-7)And if you find resistance strong and dedication weak, you are not ready. Do not fight yourself.**  
  
We should probably spend three whole days on these two sentences. The reason for these sentences and the reason the second sentence is all in italics, is that Jesus is teaching us that we shouldn't pretend that we are ready for something when we are not ready for it. That is arrogance, not humility. It is much more spiritually advanced to be able to say: "I know what I am doing, and damn it, I don't want to stop. I know that I want my specialness. I know I want to be different. I know I want to blame other people. I know I want what I want when I want it, and that's okay!"  
  
"Do not fight yourself." If you fight against your ego, you obviously believe your ego is real. That is what is meant by the biblical line "resist not evil," which is a wonderful line in terms of the Course. When you resist evil, when you resist the ego, you have made it real. Obviously, if you resist something, you must believe it is there. If you believe the ego or your specialness is there, then you have done exactly what your ego wants. That is what makes this course so different as a spirituality, certainly in terms of the Western world. It says nothing about trying to change your ego, or to fight your ego, or to outshout your ego. It simply says: look at your ego and smile at it, because it is nothing. When you fight against it in yourself, you are making it real. So when you forget your daily workbook lesson, or forget how very simple these basic rules are, don't be surprised. Don't be angry. Don't be depressed. Don't be guilty. Simply say: "Ah! That's my ego in action. Obviously I am still afraid of the Love and the peace of God." Then you are being absolutely honest. And you will have gained a thousand years simply by doing that, because you are learning the process of stepping back and looking at your ego and not judging it, not fighting against it, not resisting it, not trying to change it—simply looking at it and saying: "This is my ego, I don't want to let it go, and that is not a sin."  
  
As you practice this every moment of every day, you are learning to undo the original mistake, which was looking at the tiny, mad idea and making a big deal about it. That is why this is so important. That is why this section is so important, if you read it correctly and carefully. What it will do is train you, in the world and in the sphere of experience you believe you are in, to relive that original moment when you, as part of that one Son, looked at both choices and chose against the Holy Spirit. You looked at your ego and you took it very, very seriously. You made the ego thought serious instead of silly. A couple of lines after the line about the "tiny, mad idea at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh," Jesus says: "It is a joke [that is literally what he says] to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which means there is no time" (T-27.VIII.6:5). It is a joke to think that this tiny, mad idea has the power to interfere with eternity. What you want to do is cultivate, as a constant discipline, looking at your ego and not taking it seriously. If you fight against yourself, you are making it real. If you realize that your resistance to choosing Jesus is strong, and your dedication to him and his course is weak, then simply acknowledge that and say: "I am still too afraid of the Love of God, but that is all right." It is those words, "that is all right," that are the most important words of all, because you are no longer judging your ego as terrible, sinful, evil or wicked. You are looking at your ego and saying: "This is what I am choosing, but it has no effect on Jesus' love for me, and it has no effect on the Holy Spirit's Love for me."  
  
It has no effect at all! It will only have an effect if you give it an effect within your dream, because within your dream you can do anything you want. Jesus says earlier in the text that "Dreams are perceptual temper tantrums, in which you literally scream, 'I want it thus!'" (T-18.II.4:1). Like a little child jumping up and down and screaming: "This is what I want, Mommy. Give it to me!" That is what dreams are all about—sleeping dreams and waking dreams. So what you want to be able to do is look at what you are doing and say: "That is what I am actively choosing, but it is all right. It is not anything terrible. I'm simply doing what I want, because I'm afraid of what lies beyond it: the end of my specialness. And I am perfectly willing at this time to choose insanity, because I don't want to let go of my specialness—but it's all right." That will be the way of reflecting the original choice we all did not make, but can now make again: to look at the tiny, mad idea—the idea of being separate from God—and say: "This is nothing. This is a silly dream. It is a joke." We look at that thought, as the Course says, with gentle laughter. Whatever that thought is within yourself, don't justify it, don't rationalize it, don't feel guilty about it, don't judge it. Simply look at it for what it is, but smile at it. That is what this is really about.  
  
At least, then, you are being honest and open with yourself and therefore with Jesus. That is what will save you thousands of years. The goal is not to be without your specialness, your guilt, your attack thoughts, or your sickness. The goal is to be aware that you have chosen them, and that you can make another choice when you are ready to. Nobody is standing with a gun pointed at your head demanding that you do this today. If you think Jesus is doing this, then you are reading the wrong book with the wrong author. That is not what he does. He never did that to Helen. He doesn't do it with anyone. He simply gently reminds you. Right at the end of the text he says: "In every difficulty, all distress, and each perplexity Christ calls to you and gently says, 'My brother, choose again'" (T-31.VIII.3:2).  
  
He doesn't make the choice for you. He simply says:

You are upset because you are choosing against the peace of God, and that is all right. I will stand lovingly beside you and continually remind you until you are ready. You are the only one who has the right to decide your own readiness: I will not do that for you, because in the end it doesn't matter. I will not violate the power of your mind to choose.

Again, that is what is in back of these statements. They are extremely important. If you really understand and learn them, your experience of Jesus will be much more loving, much more gentle; and therefore youwill be much more loving and gentle with yourself. And all the people around you will be very grateful, because you will inevitably be more loving and gentle with them. You will have experienced the love and the gentleness of Heaven, and that love and gentleness will become more and more a part of you, which you would inevitably share with everyone else. So don't fight against your specialness. It is all right to say you are not ready to let it go. At least you are aware of what the issue is.  
  
**(T-30.I.1:8-9) But think about the kind of day you want, and tell yourself there is a way in which this very day can happen just like that. Then try again to have the day you want.**  
  
Jesus is simply saying: "Remind yourself that you have a choice." When he says you can have the day that you want, he is not talking about a day in which you win the lottery, or in which a relationship suddenly works out, or you get the promotion or the job you want. The day that you want is either a day of peace, or a day of conflict; a day of forgiveness, or a day of guilt. These are the only possibilities that anyone ever has.  
  
This Course is so simple because there are but two emotions: fear and love. There are but two choices: guilt or forgiveness, attack or peace, the ego or the Holy Spirit, crucifixion or resurrection, and so on. These are all different symbols for the same idea. So the day that you want is either a day in which you will really know the peace of God, or a day in which you will have anxiety. When you hold on to your grievances against someone, you are saying: "I want a day in which I will have anxiety, in which I will have conflict, in which I will have turmoil. And that is all right. I say I want a day of peace, but obviously I don't." How do you know you don't want peace? Because you are holding on to grievances! You're holding on to anxiety about a meeting you have today. You're holding on to pain, so that you don't feel well. That is telling you that you don't want peace. So to hit yourself over the head with A Course in Miracles and tell yourself you dowant peace is not helpful. What is helpful is to realize that any kind of discomfort—emotional or physical—comes from a choice to be with your ego instead of with Jesus, which is a choice to be in conflict instead of in peace, and that is all right.  
  
Quite often I am asked how I would categorize experiences such as thrills and exhilaration. Are they, too, of the ego? I start by asking, "Are you sure you want me to answer that?" because I'm not so sure they really want to hear the answer: Yes, exhilaration, excitement, drama, ecstasy, and so forth, are all part of the ego. If you think about what is thrilling, or exhilarating, exciting, ecstatic, or even passionate, you'll always find it is something external. Something stimulates you, turns you on, or gets you feeling wonderful—but it is always something outside you. That is why it is of the ego. If you believe the body can give you pleasure, the Course says, you will also believe it can give you pain (T-19.IV-A.17:11). This is not because God is punishing you, but because if you find your pleasure, peace, or your happiness outside you, what are you doing? You are substituting for God all over again, which is a re-enactment of the original moment when you separated from God and in effect said: "I want something more than everything. Heaven is not enough, I want something more."  
  
That is where the guilt is born, and that is where all the pain will come from. And so whenever you seek for pleasure outside yourself and make it real for yourself, you will feel guilt and therefore pain. This does not mean that as a good Course in Miracles student you can't enjoy things in the world. But when you take the world seriously and have something in the world become salvation for you—the be-all and end-all of your existence—you will pay a price. But to repeat, it doesn't mean you can't enjoy the physical things or the emotional psychological things in your world. Just realize that there is a part of you that is choosing that over the peace of God. If you can be aware of that, you won't feel guilty. And if you are not guilty, you won't be paying a price.  
  
Once again, just to end this now: When you realize that your resistance is strong, and your dedication is weak, you are simply saying: "I am not ready." But you also want to say to yourself: "I know that my specialness will not give me the day that I really want. It will give me the day that my ego wants, but not the day that I really want, which means I still have a split mind. And that doesn't make me evil, bad or sinful, but it does mean I won't find real happiness today. And I won't find it because I don't want to find it. And that is all right."

**Part IV  
Rule 1**

**(T-30.I.2:1-2) (1)The outlook**[which is the outlook of the set that Jesus has been talking about that we should adopt when we awaken every morning]**starts with this: Today I will make no decisions by myself.**  
  
Clearly what this means is that we don't make decisions with our ego, because that would be to make decisions with our selves. Rather this is a plea that we make the decisions with Jesus. Interestingly, at the end of this section he seems to say the opposite. He says there that "you cannot make decisions by yourself" (T-30.I.14:3). He does this kind of thing all the way through the Course—saying one thing in one place and then the seeming opposite in another place. It is opposite in form, but not opposite in content—he is just making a different point. Here the point is: don't make a decision with your ego, which is tantamount to making it by yourself. Rather, make it with me. The point he is making at the end of this section is that you can't make a decision by yourself, meaning: the Son of God must choose either the ego or the Holy Spirit. So the content is consistent even if the form often is not.  
  
This obviously is a major theme in the Course, and is repeated all the way through: we are not to make decisions by ourselves. One of those references in the text—about not choosing by yourself—which I want to look at with you is the following:

Whenever you choose to make decisions for yourself [which again means to make it with your ego instead of with Jesus or the Holy Spirit] you are thinking destructively, and the decision will be wrong (T-14.III.9:1).

The reason it is "destructive thinking" is that thinking by yourself and excluding the Holy Spirit symbolizes the original exclusion of God. When you exclude God, you are seeking to destroy Him, because by excluding God you are saying: "I am separate from God." If one of the definitions of God is that He is perfect Oneness and perfect unity, then to say that you are separate from Him is to deny God Who He is, and the ego interprets that as killing God. When you say you are on your own, you are saying: "I am my own creator," which is then denying God His role as the Creator. If you deny God His role and His Identity, He ceases to be God.  
  
This then is one more way of realizing how the ego's thought system is literally based on the murder of God. That is destructive thinking. Anything you do from that base will logically have the same elements of destruction, attack, and murder. Whenever you try to displace someone else, use someone else to meet your own needs, or see yourself as separate from someone else and justified in being separate, whenever you manifest any aspect of the authority problem—as everyone does all the time—you reflect the original authority problem and conflict with God. Thus, whenever you separate from the Voice of the Holy Spirit, or from Jesus, you are also separating from everyone else. If Jesus represents the Christ, if he represents the oneness of the creation of God, and you separate from him, you are obviously also separating from Christ. This means you are attacking your true Identity as Christ, and are attacking everyone else as well.

It will hurt you [the decision will hurt you] because of the concept of decision that led to it (T-14.III.9:2).

That is the crucial phrase I want to emphasize: "the concept of decision that led to it." What will truly hurt you when you decide by yourself is not the specific decision. What will hurt you is the thought that underlies it. When you decide by yourself you are saying: "I know better than Jesus; I know better than the Holy Spirit; I know better than God." That is the concept that will hurt you, because that will remind you of your original "sin," your original attack on God—and for that you will feel very guilty. And because guilt always demands punishment, you will believe you deserve to be punished. That is where fear comes from. This is the source of all pain. All suffering comes from the idea that I can do it on my own. Remember the lines from Frank Sinatra's famous song: "I did it my way." That is the ego's song. So when you make a decision by yourself, it is not that God will punish you, it is that you will believeGod will punish you. And if you don't consciously think of God, as most people do not, then there will be some symbol of God's punishment: The bad weather will punish you. The stock market will punish you. This person you are living with will punish you. Your children will punish you. Your boss will punish you. It doesn't matter. You will believe that you deserve to be punished because of what you believe you did first. Again, what will really hurt you is not the decision you make on the level of form. What will hurt you is the concept of the decision that led to your choosing whatever you chose.  
  
One of the important things to remember when you work with the Course (and this will always help keep you out of trouble with the Course so that you don't distort what it says) is that this is not a course in form. This is not a course in effect. This is not a course in anything that has to do with the world of behavior. This is a course in content, in cause. It is a course only in changing your mind. Even more to the point, and directly relevant to this workshop, this is a course in helping you change your teacher or your adviser: moving from the ego as your guide, to the Holy Spirit or Jesus as your guide. What will hurt you is not what is outside you, not what you believe will hurt you. What will hurt you is your thought system that tells you that you can be on your own, that you should be on your own, that it is a fact you are on your own. That thought itself, which is the concept of decision, will reinforce your sense of separation and sin, which automatically will lead to your experience of guilt, and that in turn will always demand you be punished. There is no way out of this. That is why the concept of choice in this course is so critically important. We really have to recognize what we are choosing and with whom we are choosing it, so that we can then make another choice.  
  
This first rule for decision, "Today I will make no decisions by myself," should not be taken as an imperative. Jesus is telling us rather that this is the guideline we should use if we really want to be happy. It will be clear as we continue with this section, as it is clear throughout the whole Course, that he is not expecting his students to do what he says. If he expected them to do so, he would have stopped with the first line of the Course. He fully expects us not to pay attention. So don't feel guilty when you don't pay attention. All that you want to do as quickly as you can is be aware that you are not paying attention, because you don't want to pay attention, because you are afraid of letting go of your ego. But don't feel guilty because you do not pay attention.  
  
**(T-30.I.2:3)This means that you are choosing not to be the judge of what to do.**  
  
The big illusion that we all labor under in this world is that we know what is best: that we understand what is going on, that we understand what is called for in a situation, and that we know what to do about it. This is why over and over again Jesus pokes gentle fun at everyone and says: "There is no way that you can judge, because you don't know all the details involved in a situation. You don't know what the meaning is." Above all, what he is really saying to us is:

You can't possibly know, because you think you are here in the world. You think there are things going on here in the world, and you think there are problems to be solved here in the world. The reality is that the only problem is back in your mind, that you chose the ego instead of me. But as long as you believe you are in the world, and you are relating and interacting with other bodies who also think that they are in this world, then how could you possibly understand what is called for in a situation?

That is why there is a lesson early in the workbook that says: "I do not perceive my own best interests" (W-pI.24). And it is not even that we do not perceive them. We can not perceive them, because we don't understand. We really think we are here. We really think there are problems to be solved here, and that weare the ones who can be the judge of that. So this is reinforcing the idea of how in our right minds we want to understand that we don't want to make a decision by ourselves.  
  
**(T-30.I.2:3-4)This means that you are choosing not to be the judge of what to do. But it must also mean that you will not judge the situations where you will be called upon to make response.**  
  
Now let me add the word “situations” to the [**chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/rules-for-decision/rules-for-decision-part-iv/javascript%3Avoid(0)), because it will be coming up again in the reading. We find ourselves in all kinds of situations that call for a response. Jesus is not saying that within this dream there are not situations that call for a response. He is saying: "You will believe there are; and you will have to make a response. But try not to make the response on your own." So he is not saying that there are not things that you have to do in this world that require judgment: there obviously are. He is saying: "Try not to make the judgments on your own."  
  
**(T-30.I.2:5) For if you judge them**[if you judge the situations that confront you in your life]**, you have set the rules for how you should react to them**(italics added).  
  
By the time we have reached our thirties, forties, fifties—what the world calls maturity—we have established a set of rules and guidelines based on our past experiences, that we hope will guide us in reacting to the world and relating to other people. We always fall back on these. Many of them would be agreed with by most people in the world; and because most people would agree with them, we think that validates them. We don't recognize, however, that everyone in this world is insane. So you should never take what the world says as a guideline for what you should do. Remember, the world is insane because it believes it is here. People are born and actually think they come into this world; and then they have to learn what this world has to teach them. This is what we call education or socialization. We don't remember—because that is the purpose of the veil—that we literally made up this world to hide the truth. The truth rests in the Holy Spirit in our right minds. It must be chosen by the decision maker—that is what the ego is afraid of. So the ego blocks all of that out and makes up the world as a smokescreen. The world then reflects not the right mind and the Holy Spirit, the world reflects the sin, guilt, and fear of the ego and the wrong mind. The world reflects the specialness, hatred, conflict, and the battleground that is the ego thought system. Forgiveness is necessary, then, as the correction for what the ego has dreamt first. The world is the ego's dream. Looking at the world without judgment is the undoing of the dream.  
  
So there is no way we can understand what is in our best interests, let alone anyone else's best interests. And yet that is the way the world operates. Sometimes this takes the form of the world judging something as evil: such as certain people oppressing and imposing their will on other people—whether this is done individually in acts of rape or murder, or done collectively in dictatorships and the oppressing of one country by another. There are the other forms that are just as lethal, in fact more lethal, because they appear to be something else. These are the various forms in which people appear to be helping others. They judge what is wrong with the world and then set out to fix it, because they know. They are just as insane as the people who hate and kill and oppress, because they think they know what is right. "Right" for them means somebody else pays a price. Killing and oppressing is clearly insane in the world's thinking, but being "helpful" because you think you know what is best for people is just as insane. Jesus is not saying that you shouldn't do things in your personal world or in the world at large. He is only saying: "Don't presume to know what you should do. Ask me first." What asking him really boils down to is getting your ego out of the way. The way you go about asking him what you should do on a behavioral level is to first look with him at what your ego is trying to do. Look at the investment that your ego has in your specialness. When you can look at that with his gentle love beside you, your specialness would begin to disappear. As it begins to disappear, you will more and more be able to hear his voice. So the focus is not on hearing his voice: the focus is on undoing the interference to hearing his voice.

**Part V  
Rule 1 (cont.)**

**(T-30.I.3:1-2) This is your major problem now. You still make up your mind, and thendecide to ask what you should do.**  
  
Obviously, everybody understands what this means. What is so striking is that when we read these words in a workshop like this, their meaning is clear. Yet when you leave this workshop and go back to your daily ritual of asking the Holy Spirit what you should do, you entirely forget what was so obvious before. Jesus is saying here that you are not aware that when you ask him or the Holy Spirit for help, what you are really doing is telling them what they should tell you. And because that is what you thinkthey should tell you, that is what you will hear them telling you. Then you will be sure you are hearing their voice, when in reality all you are hearing is a projection of your own. And this occurs because you are not aware of your silent investment in being right—in knowing what the right thing is for you or for the world. This is very subtle and very insidious.  
  
Many of you, I'm sure, through your own experience with the Course and the experience of other people who study the Course, have seen enough times how often people will swear they are hearing the Holy Spirit, and it is obvious that they are not: They are not acting in a loving or consistent way, and they are certainly not bringing peace to anyone. But they are so sure that they are right, because after all, they closed their eyes, opened up their ears and heard a voice. They forgot that a split mind can hear two voices. The voice of the ego is loud, raucous, and it shrieks. The Voice of the Holy Spirit, to quote from the Bible, is still and small, and very gentle. It will not be heard while the voice of specialness is clamoring in your ear. That is why it is so essential as a student of the Course that you work on recognizing that clamoring voice of specialness. It is only by recognizing what it is, and recognizing that you have chosen it and why you have chosen it, that you can begin to forgive yourself for having done so. Then the shrieking will diminish and you willhear that lovely gentle Voice. But you will not hear It as long as you are still identified with your specialness. Make no mistake: everyone in this world is thoroughly identified with their specialness; otherwise they would not be here. This is very, very important. This is what it means to cultivate an attitude of humility as you work with this Course. Humility means that you don't deny the power of your ego, which really means you don't deny the power of your identification with your ego.  
  
Jesus is teaching us that when we make up our minds, and thendecide to ask what we should do, conflict inevitably results, because we have a hidden agenda about what we want to hear. We have a hidden agenda about what we want to come out of a situation, which means we don't want to hear what Jesus has to say, because we already know what is right, which in turn means we will be afraid to hear his voice. That is the conflict, the conflict born out of a split mind. There is a part of us that knows, on some level, that what we are doing, seeing, and believing is not real—it is not right and is of the ego. But we are terrified to let it go, because we are more afraid of that lovely Voice that means the end of our specialness. That is what the fear really is. So the more fearful we become of the Holy Spirit's Voice, the more we have to attack It by glorifying our specialness. The more we glorify our specialness by attacking the Holy Spirit, the more guilty we will feel. The more guilty we feel, the more we will believe that we deserve to be punished by Him. And then we go on and on in this very vicious circle. There is no way out except to understand what it is we are doing. But before we can understand what we are doing, we have to lookat what we are doing, and before we look at what we are doing, we first have to understand that there is a serious problem in our minds. Just because the Course says the problem is all made up doesn't mean that we really believe it is made up. If we really believed it were made up we wouldn't need A Course in Miracles, and we wouldn't be here in this classroom known as the world.  
  
So what this first rule for decision is pointing out is that we are all laboring under a tremendous conflict. Part of us more than anything else in the world wants to hear Jesus' voice, take his hand, and return home. There is another part of our minds that is terrified of that. That is what the old-time psychologists used to refer to as the approach-avoidance conflict: you want to approach something more than anything else, but you also want to avoid it because you believe it will bring you pain. And we believe that God's Love will bring us pain because that is what the ego told us. Unfortunately the devil we know is better than the devil we don't, and so we are moreterrified of the Holy Spirit's Love. We are more terrified of His answer, because His answer means the end of ouranswer. You can't have two contradictory answers coexisting. If the Holy Spirit's answer is true, which deep in our hearts we know is the case, then, in the end, our answer is false. And our answer is not only the specific answer to a specific problem, the answer is our very identity. This means if Jesus' answer is true, it is not just that my answer is false, it means that Iam false; which means I cease to exist. That is the terror. That is the hidden motivation that lies behind what seems to be an obstinate stubbornness in refusing to hear what Jesus says to us. We must really recognize that what underlies our refusal is the terrifying belief that if I am wrong, my specialness is out the window, which means I cease to exist.   
  
So what he is asking us now is to be aware that most of the time when we are asking for help, asking for a specific answer to a problem, we are really setting it up so we will hear the answer we want to hear. Having forgotten that we set it up that way, we will believe the voice we hear is the Voice of the Holy Spirit. That is why it is so easy to get off track with this course. This is not a course on hearing the Holy Spirit or a course on getting specific guidance. This is A Course in Miracles, and the miracle is realizing that we have a choice between two voices. This is not a course in effect; this is not a course in learning how to decide what we should do with our lives. There is nothing in the Course that will tell us that. What the Course willtell us is what steps to take so that we will leave our ego and join the Holy Spirit. This is a course in cause, which is a course in the mind. It is not a course in the body, in the world, in effect. The way that we resolve situations and problems in the world is to go to the one Answer that underlies all the problems. And as we identify with that one Answer and experience that Love, that Love automatically translates Itself to all the specific things we think we need here. We don't have to do the translating. The translating will be done for us automatically. What we have to do is join with that Love in our minds. That is what is important. Again, we really have to get increasingly in touch with the specialness that demands that the situation is the way we thinkit is, and therefore that it needs the solution that our past experience has told us will work. We have to realize that we are always wrong and that we are better off being wrong than right.  
  
**(T-30.I.3:3) And what you hear may not resolve the problem as you saw it first.**  
  
What he is referring to now is hearing the Holy Spirit. So the answer that we hear may not resolve the problem the way that we perceive the problem, which is through the eyes of our specialness. This means that all the problems we perceive are always through the eyes of our own self-interest: What's in this for me? I don't really care what happens to you. All I care about is that my own needs are met. That's what specialness is. What's best for my family, what's best for my social group, for my religious group, for my racial group, for my political party, for my country, for A Course in Miracles, for the labor union of which I am a member, for the lobbying group in Washington in which I am active—it is always what's best for me and the group that I identify with. It is never what's best for the whole Sonship. Not only does the ego not care about the whole Sonship, it doesn't even know what that means, because the ego does not know what wholeness is. It knows what separation is, what differentiation is, what fragmentation is. It doesn't have a clue as to what wholeness is.  
  
The ego is the thought of separation—it can't conceive of something other than itself. That is the same as saying that the ego doesn't have a clue as to what love is. It certainly knows what special love is, because that's what it made. It doesn't know what love is, because love is wholeness. If God is Love and perfect wholeness, and if the ego is the thought of being separate from that Love and wholeness, how could it understand that Love and wholeness? That is why this is not a course on love. In fact, Jesus says right in the Introduction to the text: "The course does not aim at teaching you the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught" (T-in.1:6). You can't learn about love here. What you canlearn to do, as he goes on to say, is remove the interferences to your awareness of love's presence. This is a course in undoing the ego, not in learning about love. There just is no way we can understand what oneness or wholeness is in this world. Therefore, anytime you are asking for specific help, you know that it is your ego, because anything the Holy Spirit would answer for you would in one way or another help the whole Sonship. That is another case Jesus makes for asking him for help rather than yourself, because we don't know what is in the best interests of everyone. There is no way we could know that. Therefore, it is in our best interests to let go of the illusion that we know—that is our one responsibility: to let go of the illusion that we know.  
  
**(T-30.I.3:3-5) And what you hear may not resolve the problem as you saw it first.**[He is being kind. It is not that what you hear may not—it cannot and will not resolve the problem as you saw it first.] **This leads to fear, because it contradicts what you perceive and so you feel attacked. And therefore angry.**  
  
This is why people don't love Jesus. They hateJesus, because he represents the exact opposite of what they believe. This is why the world hated Jesus and his message, and changed that message when he was here two thousand years ago. This is why the world stillhates him and his message. His message means the end of specialness. And to the extent to which you identify with your specialness, you must hate the one who represents its end—because it means yourend. There can be no compromise with this. If you think you love Jesus, you are badly mistaken. If you loved him, you would still be with him in Heaven! That is why in this course he does not say that you should love him, but that you should forgive him, because in forgiving him you will be undoing the barriers you are placing between you and him. What you want to do, therefore, is get in touch with the part of you that doesn't like him, not the part of you that does. You want to get in touch with the part of you that is ashamed of him and believes he is ashamed of you, the part that sees him as a rival, as someone, who, if let into your life will destroy you. (From the ego's point of view, of course, that's true.) This part of you will lead you to fear what he represents and fear anything that comes to you from him. In the general sense you will fear this course, and in the specific sense you will fear anything that you experience on a personal level. That is what he is saying.  
  
If you have a vested interest in perceiving the situation as you have set it up, and in having the outcome be as you want it to be, then you will have to be afraid and feel imposed on by an answer that comes from someplace else. Jesus does not see the situation as you do. He does not see the situation in isolation. He sees the situation as but one more fragmentary reflection of the problem that the entire Sonship shares as one. Whatever answer he gives you, then, will be an answer that will benefit the entire Sonship as one. We perceive the Sonship as fragmented. He knows it as it is: as one. There is one Son in Heaven, and there was one mistake made. This is another way of understanding why Jesus keeps saying that this is a very simple course: There is only oneproblem, and there is only oneanswer to that problem. Again, setting it up so that you have a vested interest in the outcome will lead to fear, "because it contradicts what you perceive and so you feel attacked. And therefore angry." The anger then will be directed at what is perceived as the enemy. Ultimately the enemy will be the Course. It will be Jesus. It will be the Holy Spirit. It will be God.  
  
**(T-30.I.3:6-7) There are rules by which this will not happen. But it does occur at first, while you are learning how to hear.**  
  
Once again—and we will see this all the way through—it is clear that Jesus sees this as a process—something we have to learn and practice. He is saying to us: "I fully expect you not to do what I'm telling you to do. It does occur at first that you will put your will ahead of mine, that you will believe you know better than I do what is in your best interests and the interests of the world." So you don't have to pretend anymore that you are this holy Course in Miraclesstudent. What makes you a holy Course in Miraclesstudent is realizing how unholy you are. This is not a course in doing. It is a course in undoing. This is extremely important. Don't let anybody tell you this course is about anything else. It is not a course in doinganything. It is not a course in beinganything. It is not a course in being loving. This is a course in realizing how filled with hatred and with specialness you are: thatis the problem. Passages like this make it clear that Jesus fully expects his students not to let go of their specialness just because he asks them to.  
  
This is Chapter 30, and he is saying the same things here as he said at the beginning. Now he is giving us some rules. And by rules he means guidelines—not rules in the sense that "you mustdo this." These are the guidelines that will help you learn that you have indeed made a wrongchoice, which automatically means that you can make a rightchoice. Learning that you have made the wrong choice must mean that there was something else you chose against. This is the purpose of this section, and this is the purpose of the Course: to have us recognize that there is indeed a choice. Remember again: the ego had us choose the ego, against the Holy Spirit. Then it caused us to forget that we did it, because the ego made us mindless. This word “mindlessness”on the [**chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/rules-for-decision/rules-for-decision-part-v/javascript%3Avoid(0)) is extremely important. The ego has made us mindless, so that we are not aware that we have a choice. The Course's purpose is to remind us—which is what the miracle does—that choice has no meaning with regard to what is external to our minds. Choice has meaning only with regard to what is withinour minds. And that choice is always between the voice of the ego (the voice of specialness), and the Voice of the Holy Spirit (the Voice of undoing specialness).  
  
These are the guidelines he will give us now: be clear about how much we don'twant salvation—how we don'twant to learn and do what this course says. The reason people have so much trouble understanding the Course is not that they suffer from a learning deficit. The reason they have so much trouble learning this course and understanding it is that they don't want to know what it says, because what it says is the exact opposite of what we believe, and who we believe we are.

**Part VI  
Rule 2**

**(T-30.I.4:1) (2) Throughout the day, at any time you think of it and have a quiet moment for reflection, tell yourself again the kind of day you want; the feelings you would have, the things you want to happen to you, and the things you would experience...**  
  
Now the reason he says "tell yourself again" is that obviously you have already forgotten. I'm not making this up, right? The words are right here! He is trying to help us begin the training program. You can see how this passage foreshadows the workbook: the mind training that will help you realize that the reason you are miserable during the course of any particular day is that you have made that your goal. If you are miserable you must have chosen to be miserable.  
  
Let me backtrack a little to what we discussed in our last session. If indeed the whole world is an illusion and was made to attack God as the Course says (W-pII.3.2:1), and to be a distraction and a smokescreen to hide what is really happening in our minds, then literally there is nothing outside us. I quoted earlier the important Course principle, "ideas leave not their source." The idea of a separated world has not left its source in our minds. This means effect and cause are not split off; effect and cause are united—just as in Heaven, God is the first Cause, and Christ—His Son—is the Effect. "Ideas leave not their source." This same principle also operates within the dream. The effect, the world, is totally unified with the cause, the idea in the mind—which literally means there is no world outside our minds. The tremendous importance of this is that if there is nothing outside us, then anything we think, perceive, or feel could have come only from within our minds. This is another way of realizing why you must understand the Course's metaphysics if you are going to practice this course. This is not some abstract intellectual concept that you play around with. This is the heart and soul of what A Course in Miracles teaches. You cannot understand forgiveness, let alone the practice of it, let alone what it means to hear the Holy Spirit, unless you really understand what the underlying metaphysics is. There is literally no world outside our minds.  
  
That is why I can't blame you for anything that I feel. If I am miserable, anxious, guilty, sick, or depressed, and there is nothing outside me, then where did these thoughts and feelings come from? They can only have come from within me, because there is nothing and no one else—which means I put them there. I am making myself sick and depressed—it is not a virus that is giving me a fever, it is not your raucous shrieking that is giving me a headache, it is not the food I ate last night that is giving me an upset stomach. This is extremely important.  
  
Now if I have made myself miserable—if I have given myself these thoughts—there must be a reason. The Course tells us what that reason is: I make myself sick so I don't experience the Love and the peace of God. Sickness is a cover for guilt. I forget that the guilt is in my mind, project it out, and voilà my body is sick. Then the scientists in the world explain to me how and why I became sick. The world is very good and very shrewd at telling us why we are not well—on any level. Whether it is a traditional physician, a New Age physician, or any other variety of physician, they are all very good at saying why we are not well. Whether it is our karma, the way our mothers carried us in the womb, the way we were given birth to, the environment we grew up in, whatever it is, there is always an explanation for our being sick, emotionally or physically. And all of these explanations will be wrong, because all of them begin with the premise that there is a world out there that impinges upon us. When you understand that there is no world out there, you won't get caught in that mistake.  
  
Thinking the Holy Spirit does things for you in the world, and makes things better for you in the world is the same mistake. How can He make things better for you in a world that doesn't exist? He makes things better for you in your mind—simply by being in your mind. That is why you need a miracle that takes you away from the world back into your mind where His Love is. That Love is the answer to all problems.  
  
Where we are now with this second rule is realizing at some point during the day that this day is not working out all that well for me, but with the understanding that if it is not working out that well for me, it is because I have not wanted it to work out well for me. This leads us now to the important concept that we have set the goal and are not aware that we have set it. Therefore we are not aware that what is happening to us during the day—what we are feeling and experiencing throughout the day—is a direct effect of the goal that we have set. We forget that we set the goal, and so we think that things happen to us beyond our control.  
  
I would like to elaborate on some of these ideas by reading with you the section in Chapter 17 of the text called "Setting the Goal."

**Setting the Goal  
(T-17.VI)**

**(T-17.VI.1:1-2) The practical application of the Holy Spirit's purpose is extremely simple** [Jesus uses these words in many other places—obviously the Course's and the Holy Spirit's purposes are identical] **but it is unequivocal. In fact, in order to be simple it must be unequivocal.**  
  
Jesus keeps saying this is a very simple course. And here we see why it is simple: it's unequivocal. There are not two different ways of interpreting this course. There are not two different voices you can listen to that are equally valid. There is one Voice. There is one message in this course, not different messages. He made it a point to explain to Helen that there are not different interpretations of the material he was giving to her. The Course is what it is. It says what it says. It doesn't say different things to different people. That is what the first law of chaos says: that truth is relative (T-23.II.2). Those of you who know your Plato would recognize in this the argument of the Sophists that Socrates was always confronted with: that truth is relative, not absolute. Socrates kept saying that truth is absolute. Truth is what it is—you can't say it is different things to different people. Well, that is what people try to do with the Course, too. They say it can mean different things to different people, and that there are different, equally valid interpretations. Again, this is a striking example of the first law of chaos which states that there is a hierarchy of illusions and that truth is relative. The Course is simple because it is unequivocal: it says what it says. It doesn't state one thing and then qualify it with "butyou could possibly state something else."  
  
**(T-17.VI.1:3)The simple is merely what is easily understood, and for this it is apparent that it must be clear.**  
  
Jesus is talking here specifically about the Holy Spirit's purpose, but it is very easy to generalize this to his course as a whole. He thinks his course is very clear and easily understood. The reason practically nobody agrees with him is not that it is not clear and easily understood, it is that it is too clear, and too easily understood. You don't want to understand what it is saying. Once your fear and your guilt have subsided sufficiently, you will understand what it says and you will be astounded that you never knew that before. The words used here are not difficult. The concepts are extraordinarily difficult because they represent the exact opposite of the world's concepts. In that sense the Course is difficult, but not because what it says is difficult. It is difficult because we don't want to recognize what it says. It is a very simple, clear course and it means exactly what it says.  
  
Jesus is saying the same thing about the Holy Spirit's purpose. To the Holy Spirit, everything in this world has the same purpose—all the situations that seem to exist and that seem to confront us every day. The purpose He gives them is to have us realize—through the practice of forgiveness—that we are not here, which means that we forgive what is not out there. We forgive our brother for what he has not done. This does not mean that on a behavioral level he hasn't done something. It means that he is not even there on a behavioral level. It means that everything we think we see outside is a projection of what is inside. That is why this is so simple. The ego made up this world to attack, to kill, and to keep us separate. The Holy Spirit takes the sameworld and uses it as a mirror, so that through the mechanism of the miracle we can look in that mirror and recognize that what is reflected back to us is nothing other than the thought system in our minds. That is the Holy Spirit's single purpose for the world. We are now trained through our study and practice of the Course to observe that what seems to be outside is a direct reflection or a shadow of what is inside. I therefore now know what is inside my mind. Even better, I now know I have a mind! If I really understand there is nothing and no one out there, and that all I see is a shadow of what is within me, it must mean that there is something within me. That is the beginning of the end of the ego. That is the purpose of the miracle: to make us aware that we have a mind, which means we become mindful, instead of mindless. That is the value of the world. Our purpose is not to do things out there in the world, to join with other people, or to save other people. Our purpose is to realize that there are no other people—that what seems to be outside is really inside. When you can really heal your mind, the love in your mind will express itself within the dream that other people believe you and they are in. You may then find yourself very active in the world and doing very loving things in the world. But they will be truly loving, because they will not be based on taking sides. They will not be based on victims and victimizers, nor on fragmenting the Sonship still further. They will be based on the love which comes from a vision that sees everyone as one.  
  
Once again, what Jesus is saying in these passages does not mean that you don't do things in the world. It means, rather, that what you do in the world is irrelevant. What is relevant is what you do in your mind. Then that love will come through you automatically, and you may find yourself doing and saying many loving things in the world, but you will have no investment in them. You will know that the reality is this place of love in your mind that you have now joined with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Again, that is what makes this course so simple, and that is what makes the Holy Spirit's purpose so simple. Everything in the world becomes a classroom; and if we let Jesus be our teacher, he will show us that what we perceive outside is a mirror of what is inside, which means I now realize there is an inside, a mind. The next step from there is to realize a mind has a choice, and then from there I automatically make other loving choices.  
  
**(T-17.VI.1:4-5) The setting of the Holy Spirit's goal is general. Now He will work with you to make it specific, for application is specific** [the phrase "for application is specific" is not in the first edition].  
  
By “general” Jesus means abstract—in other words, it is universal, it is in our minds, it is not specific. "Application" means that we do something on a behavioral level: apply it to our everyday lives; use these circumstances and relationships of our lives as a laboratory. This means moving from the general principle of the Atonement, which says that the separation never happened and there is nothing and no one outside us, to the application in specific situations. You—the person I'm living with, or the person that I am working with—are not outside me. You and I are not separate. We have to practice in specific situations, in the circumstances of our personal lives. We must apply the abstract or general principle to specific situations. That is what the whole Course is about. That is what the whole curriculum is about.  
  
**(T-17.VI.1:6) There are certain very specific guidelines**[the seven rules for decision] **He provides for any situation,** **but remember that you do not yet realize their universal application.**Statements like this make it clear once again that Jesus conceives of this as a process. "You do not yet realize" obviously implies that there is growth we haven't gone through yet, steps we haven't taken yet. We still think there are specific things we have to do in this world, specific relationships we have to forgive; and therefore, because we think in terms of specifics, he will give us specific guidelines. We will eventually realize that they are all part of the one lesson, and we will then generalize. But we are not there yet.  
  
**(T-17.VI.1:7) Therefore, it is essential at this point to use them** [the guidelines] **in each situation separately, until you can more safely look beyond each situation, in an understanding far broader than you now possess.**  
  
This passage occurs roughly in the middle of the text—so he is saying we still have a long way to go. Then we get to Chapter 30 and he says the same thing. Then we get to the end of the workbook and he says: "This course is a beginning, not an end" (W-ep.1:1). This is a long-term study that we are undergoing, and we should be mistrustful of ourselves or other students who say that they have already done everything in this course and proclaim how easy and how wonderful it is: "I turn everything over to the Holy Spirit and all my problems are taken care of, all my questions are answered." They have missed the whole point of this, and have not looked carefully at these passages. Their eyes skip over them because their ego tells their brain not to look at these passages—they are too upsetting—and then the brain sends this message to their eyes. That is why we can get to the end of a paragraph and forget every word that we read; or we may think we have read sections like these dozens of times, and then we hear them and say, "My God, I never saw that before." This section, as well as the "Rules for Decision" is very clearly written—the sentences are not complicated. You almost always know what the pronouns refer to, whereas in many other places you have to guess. The writing here is simple and clear, but because you don't want to see it, you won't see it.  
  
What this passage is saying is that until we are ready to generalize these principles to everything, we first have to practice specifically. The same instructions are found in the workbook. In fact, in the Introduction to Review VI, he says that if you really did one lesson, you would have done them all. But until you generalize, you have to practice each lesson separately:

Each [lesson] contains the whole curriculum if understood, practiced, accepted, and applied to all the seeming happenings throughout the day. One is enough. But from that one, there must be no exceptions made. And so we need to use them all and let them blend as one, as each contributes to the whole we learn (W-pI.rVI.2:2-5).

That is why there are 365 lessons, not one lesson. Each lesson is exactly the same as every other lesson if it is really understood. They all contain the same teaching message. But because we are so terrified of this universality, what we do instead is fragment. We apply a teaching in one situation and decide we are not ready to apply it to another. Or we forgive this person, but not that person. Or we ask Jesus for help in thissituation, but say we can handle that one on our own. What we have to realize is that they are all the same, and until we realize they are all the same we must practice with each one separately.

**Part VII  
Rule 2 (cont.)**

**(T-17.VI.2:1-2)In any situation in which you are uncertain, the first thing to consider, very simply, is "What do I want to come of this? What is it for?"**  
  
"Purpose" is another key theme in the Course. Elsewhere in the text Jesus says that the only question you should ask about anything is: "What is it for?" (T-24.VII.6:1). Its purpose will help you understand the situation. This, too, reflects the very simple nature of the Course. There are only two possible purposes in the whole universe. One is that of remaining in the universe, which is the ego's purpose of maintaining specialness and keeping us all within the dream. The other is that of leaving the universe, which is accomplished through forgiveness. One is the reinforcement of specialness and separation, and the other is the undoing of specialness through forgiveness. There is no other purpose for anything. Thus purpose is a major theme of the Course. If you have gone through the workbook, you will recognize this—especially in the early lessons where there is a great deal of discussion about what things are for. This is true of the text as well.  
  
In light of the first and second rules for decision this means that we should try to be as aware as we can throughout the day that we are choosing between these two purposes. The world will give us all other kinds of purposes to distract us: to have a successful day at work, with this person, or the stock market, or whatever it is we are interested in and think is important. Always try to keep in mind—this is the mind-training part of the Course—that you want to get beyond the specific situation and the specific purpose you have assigned to your life or to your particular day, and go back to the only two purposes that are important: the purpose of the ego, which is to maintain separation and specialness, or the purpose of the Holy Spirit, which is to undo separation and specialness.  
  
If you think you are serious about studying and learning this course, then you must be serious about the ultimate goal of this course which is our awakening from the dream. If you are clear that this is what you want, then it must mean that you will strive to see your entire day as oriented towards that goal. What you want to pay particular attention to is how often you will do the exact opposite. When you find yourself upset, sick, feeling sorry for yourself, victimized, holding grievances, etc., it is because you have switched goals and didn't realize you had done so. This is what the mind-training aspect of the Course is about: Observe your behavior, reactions, and feelings. Then step back from them—the pathway of the miracle—from your perception and experience of your body to the thought which gave rise to whatever it is you are experiencing. As I said earlier, if you find yourself angry, upset, miserable, or in pain of any kind, it can't be from anything outside you, because there is nothing outside you.  
  
You are the dreamer of the dream. The dream is not dreaming you. Anything you are feeling you have put there. And you have put it there to satisfy one of these two purposes, to meet one of these two goals: to stay rooted in the dream of separation and specialness or to take the steps that will lead to awakening from the dream. This theme is clearly spelled out in two very important sections in Chapter 27: "The Dreamer of the Dream" and "The Hero of the Dream" (T-27.VII, VIII). Nothing happens to us by accident, because it is our dream. Similarly, when we dream at night while asleep, nothing is going on except within our own minds. What we see in the dream is the projection of thoughts within our own minds. These thoughts become images and forms. They become symbols in the dream. As I was saying before, in analyzing dreams our aim should be to move from the manifest content to the latent content—from the form of the dream to the underlying meaning of the dream. Our entire world is a dream, and our experiences are dreams, whether we think we are awake or asleep. We are actually neither. The body doesn't sleep and it doesn't awaken. It is the mind which is always asleep within the dream—just as within Heaven the Mind is always awake. "You are at home in God, dreaming of exile," as the Course states (T-10.I.2:1). We are the dreamers of the dream. Therefore, just as at night we are responsible for all of the characters and everything that occurs within the dream, likewise we are responsible for everything that occurs within our dream. Metaphysically speaking, everything is my dream. Everything that I experience I put there. Every other seeming fragment has done the same thing.  
  
In terms of our practical experience as seemingly individual fragments within the dream, this does not mean that we are responsible for what other people do. It does mean, however, that we are responsible for how we react to what other people do, for how we perceive what other people do. This is an extremely important distinction. It is our dream only in the sense that we are to take responsibility for our reactions and perceptions. Whatever we experience in our daily lives comes directly from the goal we set at the beginning. The problem is that we forgot we set the goal, and so we think that things happen to us and that external things have an effect on us. We forget that we are totally responsible for our own dreams. The purpose of this section, to state it once again, is to help us realize that we have set the goal without realizing we have done so, and that everything we experienced from that moment on will have served the purpose of achieving that goal.  
  
The Course talks a great deal about "means and end" (see for example "The Body as Means or End [T-8.VIII] and "The Consistency of Means and End" [T-20.VII]); and although those exact terms are not used in this section, the ideas are the same. We determine the end, and everything else then becomes a means to help us reach that end. The problem is never the means or the specific situation. The problem is the goal or the end that we have established for the situation. The idea again is to have us get back more and more quickly to that choice point in our minds when we established our goal for the day, or for a particular meeting, or situation. The goal has absolutely nothing to do with externals. The goal simply has to do with whether I want conflict, guilt, and anxiety, or forgiveness and peace.  
  
**(T-17.VI.2:3) The clarification of the goal belongs at the beginning, for it is this which will determine the outcome.**  
  
The outcome referred to here is not about specific behavior. It is not about the outcome of a difficult meeting you are going to attend or the outcome of a date you are going on this evening. The outcome is either that I will feel more guilty, more fearful, more anxious, more special, or I will feel more peaceful. We see over and over again that what makes this course so simple is that everything is seen only in terms of "two." There are two emotions, two worlds, two evaluations—everything is in terms of two. One of the two will be true; one of the two will be false. That is why this is so simple.  
  
**(T-17.VI.2:4-5) In the ego's procedure this is reversed. The situation becomes the determiner of the outcome, which can be anything.**  
  
In other words, I will feel peaceful if the meeting ends up the way that I wanted it to. Therefore, the outcome—peace—is directly dependent on the situation, which makes me vulnerable and a victim of forces beyond my control. "If only my fever would abate, I would feel better. If only this person who ran out on me would come back to me, I would feel better." The ego always speaks in an "if only" context. When what we want occurs, then we feel good. That means we are not in control of ourselves, because our happiness and peace depend on something outside us—just as our unhappiness, disease, anxiety, pain, and guilt depend on something outside us. The Course is teaching us something entirely different. It is saying that the outcome depends on the goal we choose right at the beginning. If peace is our goal, then the outcome must be peace, which means everything that happens will now be understood in light of its ability to help us reach our goal, which in turn means that each situation becomes identical to every other situation. It doesn't matter whether I get captured and am tortured as a prisoner of war or am released. It doesn't matter if nothing happens externally to make me more comfortable. It will make no difference. If my goal is peace and I know that Jesus is with me, absolutely nothing can change that. I am the author of my own dream. If I say I want to have a dream of peace, then that is what will happen—regardless of the situation.  
  
Obviously the best example would be Jesus' own life and death. What happened to him on the cross was totally irrelevant to his state of mind. His state of mind was one of absolute and perfect love. Therefore what people did to him made no difference to him at all, because he was not the person on the cross. He knew that. He knew this was a dream and that he was not part of other people's dreams. He was aware of other people's dreams, but he did not let himself become part of their dreams. This meant that while people were victimizing him, he did not experience himself as a victim. In "The Message of the Crucifixion," he says that in the eyes of the world, he was "betrayed, abandoned, beaten, torn, and finally killed," but he did not share this perception (T-6.I.5:3; 9:2). He did not perceive himself that way; therefore, it didn't happen that way. Other people had other dreams. In fact, the whole religion of Christianity has been based on other people's dreams, dreams that have nothing to do with reality, which is why Christianity has not been a religion of love. What happened on the cross was totally misunderstood. And the correction of this misunderstanding is one of the purposes of the Course.  
  
People just don't understand that the goal is set first. To state the point still once again: the purpose of the Course and of these sections is to have us truly understand that, so that when things don't go right for us and we find ourselves upset, we will realize that things are not going right because we made the wrong choice—we chose the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. That is the problem. The situation is not the "determiner," the cause, of what we are feeling. Remember, there is nothing outside us. That is an extremely important concept in the Course as I have been saying and as Jesus says very clearly in Lesson 132: "There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach" (W-pl.132.6:2-3).  
  
If there is no world, then I am the only one responsible for how I feel. Nobody can make me feel anything that I do not choose to feel. In our experience of this world, there may be other people who have power over our bodies, but they have no control over our minds. Again, that is the lesson that Jesus taught from the cross. People may have control over our bodies, and they can make us do things we don't want to do. They can put us in prison camps we don't want to be in. They can bomb our villages, our homes, etc., which will have adverse effects on our bodies and the bodies of those whom we care about, but this has absolutely nothing to do with the state of our minds. And if we are not even here in the body—that is all part of a dream—what difference does it make? What matters are your thoughts. Nobody can take Jesus away from you. You can take Jesus away from you, in your dream.  
  
In other words, if you are clear about the outcome, then you will realize that anything that occurs in your life is a classroom with Jesus now chosen as your teacher to help you learn the lesson that there is nothing outside you that can hurt you, nothing outside you that can help you—in fact: there is nothing outside of you.  
  
**(T-17.VI.2:6-9)The reason for this disorganized approach is evident. The ego does not know what it wants to come of the situation. It is aware of what it does not want, but only that. It has no positive goal at all.**  
  
The ego doesn't know about anything positive, because the ego is, literally, a thought that denies what ispositive—it is a denying thought. I think sometimes people in the past have spoken of the devil as being the great denier. In this sense the ego would be similar, except the ego is not outside us. The ego is not anything positive, the ego is literally the opposite of God. It is the attack on God, the undoing of God's perfect Oneness. So the ego doesn't know anything about love. It does know about the antithesis to love, the opposition to love: hatred, specialness, death, separation, guilt, etc.  
  
The ego is aware of what it does not want: it does not want to cease to exist. What will cause the ego to cease to exist is our taking Jesus' hand and looking at specialness with a gentle smile, instead of with horror and with guilt. The ego is very good at helping us look at specialness with horror, saying: "This is so awful, I will never look at it again." But the ego doesn't know about looking at what is positive. So the ego then is the denial of truth. That is why Jesus says earlier in the text that the responsibility, function, or task of the miracle worker is to deny the denial of truth (T-12.II.1:5). Nothing is said about anything that is positive. Since the ego is the denial of truth, what we are to do is look at the denial of truth and deny that it makes a difference. That is the undoing of the ego's attack on God. If the ego's attack on God is the veil that keeps God's Love hidden from us, and then it is removed through forgiveness, then the attack on God is gone and what is left is God and Love.  
  
This is why, as we have been saying, this is not a course in love, it is not a course in what is positive; it is not a course in having beautiful experiences or beautiful feelings. This is a course in getting in touch with negative feelings and negativeexperiences, because these are the interferences to the awareness of God's Love. When you can look at your negativity and your opposition to God and to everyone else, which is the glorification of specialness, and you can look at all of that without judging yourself for it, you are denying the denial of truth. You are undoing what never was. And then what is left is the Love which always has been.

**Part VIII  
Rule 2 (cont.)**

**(T-17.VI.3:1)Without a clear-cut, positive goal, set at the outset, the situation just seems to happen, and makes no sense until it has already happened.**  
  
Think of any particular thing in your life which is important—a relationship with a person, a meeting you have to attend, a decision you have to make, etc.—and realize how you are setting it up in your mind so that what happens really makes a difference. It will really make a difference if this person does or does not pay attention to me. It will really make a difference if this person approves or does not approve of me. It will really make a difference if my boss approves of my work and gives me a promotion. All these things make a difference—that is what this is talking about. Nothing will make any sense until this occurs, because the ego doesn't know what it wants. It is just clear about what it doesn't want. There is nothing positive about the ego.  
  
What Jesus is telling us, therefore, is to be clear about the positive goal that we want. In this context he is talking about truth as the goal. You can substitute peace, forgiveness, etc. as the goal as well. If that is what you want as your goal, then you will realize that no matter what happens, the meaning is already there. The meaning doesn't have to wait until the event occurs, because you have already given the meaning to the event before it occurs. Therefore, it doesn't matter what happens in this meeting that I am going to sit in on, because my goal has been set. Whether the meeting ends up the way that I want it to, or the way that I don't want it to, I can still see the meeting as an opportunity to practice and learn forgiveness—to learn that nothing external matters. If I am going on a date with this person and I really care about this person, it won't make a difference whether this person likes me or not, because I realize I have a greater goal in mind than the satisfaction of my specialness. The greater goal is that I will learn forgiveness, which means undoing all the interferences I have put between myself and the Love of God. That is what I want. And when you are clear that that is what you want, it doesn't matter what goes on externally.  
  
This doesn't mean that you don't do things in the world and pay attention to them. But your peace of mind, the Love of God within you, is not contingent upon what happens with you externally. Applying the principles of the Course to your life in this way makes your life in this world so much simpler and easier, because what happens externally no longer makes a difference. Now, you may have to act as if it does make a difference in the world; but somewhere inside you there is that gentle smile that says: "It doesn't matter how this vote in Congress goes, it doesn't matter how this vote of my board of directors goes, it doesn't matter what happens within my family—it doesn't matter because I know that the love of Jesus is with me regardless of the outcome. And nothing and no one can take that away from me." But that will be your experience only if that is what you want. That is why it is so important to get back to this choice point in your mind, the decision maker—because that is where the action is. In other words, you learn not to give your power away to someone else. All power in Heaven and earth rests within you, which is Jesus' reinterpretation in the Course of the scriptural passage. It is not just that he has all power in Heaven and earth, we have all power in Heaven and earth, which means we have all power to choose Heaven, or to choose earth or the ego. That is the Course's reinterpretation of the scriptural passage.  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:2) Then you look back at it**[the situation that happened]**, and try to piece together what it must have meant.**  
  
We ask in some way: "Was this good for me, was it not good for me?" I grew up in a Jewish home, as most of you know, and the way most Jews think of things (and actually it is no different with any other group), but Jews will always say: "Is this good for the Jews?" That was something that was always heard in my house: "Was this good for the Jews?" The President made a decision: "Was this good for the Jews?" That's an example of what we are talking about. You look back at what happened, and you piece together what it must have meant. And your understanding of what it must have meant will always be in the context of: "Is this good for me, or the group that I identify with?"  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:3) And you will be wrong.**  
  
You have no idea about the meaning because you will always look at the situation through the eyes of your specialness, which already is a distortion. This is because specialness states that there are special people and special interest groups within the Sonship, and I am a member of one of these groups. Therefore, what is good for this group, what is good for me, is good—and I don't care about all the other people. Consequently, I must be wrong, because I am not coming from a unified perception that perceives everyone as the same. If it is good for me, it must be good for every member of the Sonship. If it is good for any part of the Sonship, it must be good for me and for everyone else. It can't be good for one group and not another group. It is obvious as you think about your own personal life, let alone what goes on in the world, that this is the exact opposite of the way the world thinks—the exact opposite. The world's thinking is always based on we-they, my group versus another group. And all that I care about is that my group is taken care of, my family is taken care of. I may not particularly wish ill on anybody else, but I don't particularly care about them either. All I care about is myself. Therefore I must be wrong, because Jesus looks from the perspective of the unified Christ and the unified Sonship—that it must benefit all, otherwise it benefits none. It is all or nothing.  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:4) Not only is your judgment in the past, but you have no idea what should happen.**  
  
Because, again, what we think should happen is only what will benefit a certain part of the Sonship. And even more than that, we have the arrogance of believing that we really know what is in our best interests. Our best interests will always be what we think satisfies our specialness. And all that that will do is further reinforce the very guilt that got us in the world in the first place.  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:5) No goal was set with which to bring the means in line.**  
  
What he is speaking about here is the real goal, or the positive goal. We did not bring the goal of peace or the goal of truth in our mind, which then would mean I would see everything that happens in my day as a means to help me reach that goal. Everything is a classroom, everything is a learning opportunity. It doesn't matter what the form of the classroom is. All that matters is that I perceive it as a classroom with Jesus as my teacher. And if I do that, I will always learn his lesson, regardless of the form, regardless of the specific outcome. On the other hand, the ego does have a goal with which it brings all the means in line—but it is a false goal. The ego's goal is to reinforce specialness and isolation and separation, and so everything will be seen in that light. If your goal thus is to re-establish that you are a victim, then you will go through your day looking for people to upset you, to insult you, to reject you, to victimize you. Then this will happen or seem to happen (often it doesn't even happen in the world—you just make believe it happens), and then you will experience exactly what you wanted to come of the situation. You wanted somebody to upset you and reject you and betray you and abandon you, and sure enough they did.  
  
So in that sense, too, the means was brought into alignment with the end: you wanted to feel victimized and unfairly treated. Then you perceived everything in your world that day as serving that purpose, and therefore everything didserve the purpose of making you feel that way. Thus when Jesus says: "No goal was set with which to bring the means in line," he really means no true goal.  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:6)And now the only judgment left to make is whether or not the ego likes it**[is it good for my group?]**; is it acceptable, or does it call for vengeance?**  
  
This is how we always think. Something happens and then my ego interprets it: Do I like this, is it good for me? If it is, then everything is wonderful. That is special love. If it is not, then it calls for attack, or counter-attack, or vengeance. That is special hate.  
  
**(T-17.VI.3:7) The absence of a criterion for outcome, set in advance, makes understanding doubtful and evaluation impossible.**  
  
This is Jesus' way of saying there is no way you can understand anything in this world. There is no way at all, because you will try to understand it through the eyes or mind-set of an illusory thought—the illusory thought of being separated, the illusory thought that what is good for me is not good for anybody else, but I don't care. Remember: the ego built its whole existence right at the beginning on the judgment: "What is good for me is not good for God, but I don't care; He doesn't exist anymore anyway, because He has been knocked off." That is the basic paradigm that underlies the way in which we perceive our lives and all our relationships in this world.  
  
**(T-17.VI.4:1) The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to make it happen.**  
  
This is the kind of thinking that you want to cultivate as you work with the Course. It is a totally different way of experiencing yourself and the world. The idea linking this with the "Rules for Decision" is that as quickly as possible, when you wake in the morning, you should try to really think about what you want to come of this day. If you catch yourself saying, "I want to get what I want when I want it," don't resist it, and don't fight against yourself. Just be aware that you are going to get what you want, and it won't make you very happy. Specialness will never work—it will never make you truly happy. It might make you happy in the short run. But if you believe you got what you wanted, you will believe you got it because you stole it: you manipulated and seduced other people in order to get what you wanted. Furthermore, because you stole it, you will believe it is not really yours, which means on some level you will believe the person you stole it from has every right to steal it back from you. This means there will be real fear that what you got you will not be able to keep.  
  
For example: I really desperately wanted your affection and your attention and your concern and your love and I got it. But I know I didn't get it fairly—I stole it from you, which means I'm not going to get to keep it. Now I always have to be on the look-out lest you take it back. I would be thinking, therefore, that maybe you like me now, but the next hour you won't like me. I always have to be watchful and vigilant to keep what I stole, and to keep you from stealing it back from me. That is hardly a very peaceful way of living. Yet that is how everybody lives in this world. On the most general level we know of as an individual, the life we think we have, we secretly know we stole from God. That is why we are always so terrified that our little flame will be extinguished. We are always trying to keep ourselves alive a little bit longer, a little bit better. But in the end we know God is going to come crashing through and take back what we took from Him, because everybody dies. Thus we live in a state of mortal terror from the time we are old enough to be aware of it—that if we are not careful we could be killed.  
  
We could be killed in a car crash, by a germ, by bad nutrition, by having a bad heart, by eating certain foods, etc., etc. Or we could be psychologically devastated by an angry look from our parents or any authority figure. Tremendous fear permeates our entire lives because we know the life that we think we possess is not ours—we stole it. And the One from Whom we stole it at some point is going to steal it back. If you can understand that, then you will understand the little fears, the little anxieties, and the little terrors that we live with day in and day out, because they are all part of this larger fear. Therefore what you want to do is be really clear that that is the goal that you have set for yourself: to preserve your life as you know it. And you want to be clear that it is a fight and a battle you will never ever win. Be really clear during your day that you are getting what you want. Then you will have to decide at some point: what I am getting, what I wanted, is not really making me happy. This signals the beginning of the end of the ego—the recognition that what you are basing your whole life on is not really giving you the happiness and peace that you thought you were going to get. At some point you will say: "There must be another way of doing this." That is the beginning of the effect of the miracle: that there is another way, there is another choice I can make.

**Part IX  
Rule 2 (cont.)**

**(T-17.VI.4:1-2) The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to make it happen.** [So now you will see the situation is the means that will bring you the end that you have already chosen.] **You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.**  
  
When you set the goal of truth for yourself, you realize that you don't want an illusion. For example, let's say I'm in a relationship with you and I have set up in my mind, ahead of time, that forgiveness is what I want to come from this relationship. I want to understand that your interests and mine are not separate. I want to understand that I cannot find happiness at your expense, that you are not an object that I want to use to meet my own needs—physical or emotional—and that you and I are really part of a larger whole. I am not separate from you, and you are not separate from me. If that is my goal, what I want to learn, then I will overlook anything that occurs between you and me that smacks of specialness. When Jesus says "overlook," he does not mean that you don't look. In fact, he means just the opposite: you look at it, but you overlook the ego's interpretation of it. You don't give it any power.  
  
I will then see things that you say or do that yesterday, with the goal of specialness in my mind, I would have seized on and made the focal point of my attention as a way of proving that you are a terrible person, and that all you want to do is hurt me, abandon me, and reject me. I will now see all that and say, "Isn't that silly? Maybe that is what you are doing, but that is your call for help and your call for help is a mirror of my call for help." That is what Jesus means by "overlooking what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective." It doesn't mean that you don't see the ego in the other person, nor does it mean that you don't see the ego in yourself. In fact, if you are going to do this right, you must see the ego in yourself. But then the idea is not to make a big deal about it—don't judge it, don't condemn yourself or someone else for it.  
  
To repeat, this doesn't mean that you don't look at what is going on between you and the other person. But now that guilt is not your goal, you will not make the ego in the other person or the ego in yourself into something prominent. You will not use this as a way of justifying your own belief in specialness. You will see that what the other person is doing is simply part of your classroom: ordinarily it would have tempted you to make your specialness real, but now you say: "This is something that I can choose to see differently." And so you "overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you to meet it.” If my objective is to see that you and I share a common interest and that we share the same goal, and you do something that appears to make you different from me, I will now realize that you are not different from me. Maybe you are different from me in form, in your behavior, but you are not different from me in the sense that we both share the same split mind. We both have a part of us that is attracted to the ego, and we both have a part of us that wants to return home with the Holy Spirit. That makes us the same. So I don't deny what I am seeing or experiencing or hearing. But I do deny that what I am seeing makes a difference. This is not a course in denying. It is a course in really looking directly at all the negative thoughts and feelings in myself and in someone else, and then realizing they don't make any difference.  
  
As we practice that, what we are really practicing, as I said before, is the return to that original ontological moment when we looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said: "This is serious." We could just as easily have looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said: "This is silly." There is a part of our minds in which we did that. And that is the part we want to access. The way to access it is to continually practice right where we believe we are—with all the relationships and circumstances in our lives right now. We are not to deny the obvious differences, but rather that they make a difference. No matter how hateful and vicious our thoughts or behavior might be, they are nothing more than a reflection of the original "tiny, mad idea." And we can either see them as something serious, whereby we call them sinful, which then means that they have to be punished in you or in me, or we see them simply as silly thoughts that have no effect at all, because the truth that underlies our seeming differences is the truth that we are all one in God's Love.  
  
If that is my goal, what I want to learn, then I will see whatever happens between you and me as something which will bring me closer to that goal, and I will be grateful for it. It doesn't mean on the level of form that I am grateful for your hatred and your viciousness. What I am grateful for is the opportunity for this dream, this classroom I have chosen, in which Jesus now teaches me that regardless of what you do, I can still be at peace. When he says in the Course: "Take me as your model for learning," that is what he means. Take me as the model so that when you are tempted to feel unfairly treated, you will think of me and you will realize that there is another way of looking at what is going on.  
  
Let's turn to the workbook for a moment, to Lesson 24: "I do not perceive my own best interests." I will read the first two paragraphs which basically echo what we have been talking about in the "Rules for Decision" and in "Setting the Goal."  
  
**(W-pI.24.1:1-2) In no situation that arises do you realize the outcome that would make you happy. Therefore, you have no guide to appropriate action, and no way of judging the result.**  
  
Because we get everything backwards, we think that "appropriate action" is what will satisfy our needs and make us happy. "Appropriate action" is whatever will teach us the Holy Spirit's lessons of forgiveness. In other words, the situation is the means that will help us serve the goal that we have set.  
  
**(W-pI.24.1:3-4) What you do is determined by your perception of the situation, and that perception is wrong**[because, again, the way we will perceive the situation is in terms of what will meet our specialness needs]. **It is inevitable, then, that you will not serve your own best interests.**  
  
Our real own best interest is to undo our ego and to really find peace. That is the last thing in the world the ego wants.  
  
**(W-pI.24.1:5-6) Yet they are your only goal in any situation which is correctly perceived** [namely, your own best interests]. **Otherwise, you will not recognize what they are.**  
  
So we see everything in the world as what will meet our separate special interests, not the interest that will restore to us the awareness that we are all one and that what happens to one affects everyone.  
  
**(W-pI.24.2:1-2) If you realized that you do not perceive your own best interests, you could be taught what they are. But in the presence of your conviction that you do know what they are, you cannot learn.**  
  
So much of the Course is geared towards having us understand that we don't know anything. Near the end of the text there is a passage that summarizes this emphatically: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself" (T-31.V.17:6-7). What this really says is that I have made everything up, and therefore I can understand nothing. That is a Course—classic statement of undoing the seeming certainty and arrogance of the ego. However, the ego will respond with: "Well, if you don't know who you are, that must mean you are nothing—because if you are not with me, you are nothing." The ego purpose in this then is to make you very confused and frightened. What the ego doesn't tell you is that if you are not with it (the ego), you will be with God. The ego tries to confuse you about not being confused. Confusion is a defense against knowing the truth. There is first a fear of knowing the truth, and then the confusion is a defense against that.  
  
Let me just elaborate on this a little more. The ego would have us believe that we really do understand the difference between what is true and what is false, what is important for me, and what is not important. So that the most important thing, to repeat, is to understand that we don't understand. That is what Jesus means by the difference between humility and arrogance, which is an important theme in the Course. Arrogance says: "I do know, I do understand." Arrogance says: "I can read this course once or twice or five times and understand what it says." Humility says: "I don't have a clue as to what I am about, therefore how can I have a clue as to what this course is about?"  
  
So much of this, as is so clearly stated in this passage, is helping us realize that we don't know. But if we think we know, we will not believe we have to be taught. Therefore, how can Jesus help us with this course? This is a teaching course. This is a spiritual path that aims directly at teaching, which means as a student of this path you have to be open to being taught. If you think you already know what the world is, if you think you already know what forgiveness is, there is no way this course will teach it to you. There is no way that anyone will teach it to you, because you are already so sure you understand. I said earlier that people think there are different valid interpretations of this course. If this is what you think, you will never learn what this course means, because you will think that your interpretation is valid because it is your interpretation and that is fine. It is not fine. You will not know what the Course is teaching you precisely because you are so damn sure that you understand it. Consequently, you will not be open to being taught.  
  
This is a course in teaching with Jesus as the teacher, and his message comes through these books. If you think you already understand them, how are you going to learn from them? Then you will even think that you can teach it! What he is saying is that it is very important that you understand that you don't understand. You don't understand your best interests, so how could you understand a course whose purpose is to teach you how much you don't know, and how insane you are. And simply being in this world is proof that you are insane! Thinking that you have a brain that thinks is insane, because the brain doesn't think: the brain is the reflection, or the shadow of a thought system in your mind. But if you are mindless, how can you know that there is a problem?  
  
This is not a course that you can master on an intellectual level. There is no question it is written on a high intellectual level, and it is meant to be studied and thought about. But if you think that the understanding comes from your thinking about it, you are going to miss the whole point. Your understanding will come in spite of your thinking about it. What makes this such a powerful spiritual tool is that it seems to be doing onething, when it really does the exact opposite. It is written, again, on an intellectual level, and is meant to be studied over and over again. Jesus told Helen and Bill: "Study these notes. You are not studying these notes and that is why what happened to you yesterday happened—because you didn't study what I dictated to you." So he wanted these "notes" to be studied just as a text in college is studied. But as you study, you will begin to realize over a period of time that you are learning the exact opposite of what you think you are doing. This is a course that will lead you beyond your intellect and your brain to an experience of love. And so as you go through the process of studying and practicing it, and doing exactly what it says, you will be led on a journey that is the exact opposite of what you think you are doing. This is a journey that will lead you, by its very nature, to the heart of the problem, which is your mind.  
  
That is why when people try to change this course around (e.g., come up with a different way of doing the workbook or a different way of studying the text), they are not aware that they are tampering with the very heart and soul of this book, because the curriculum is to do exactly what Jesus says here: study the text as he gives it, do the workbook as he says you should do it. The very fact that you do it that way would automatically lead you on the journey with him as your guide. When you change it around, when you write abridged versions and shorten it, what you really are doing is attacking this course and its author by saying: "I can do this better than he did. You don't need 365 lessons; you need x amount of lessons. There are shortcuts to studying this text. You don't have to wade through all this—after all it is only the same stuff over and over again." What you are really doing is subverting the pedagogical process which again is the meat of the Course. The shortcut to this course is that there is no shortcut! You should do it exactly the way it is given. Why would you want to do it differently, unless you thought you could do a better job than he could? It is not sinful if you do it differently. It is not sinful if you do the workbook lessons backwards; it is just another reflection of your authority problem. You won't be punished for it, but you won't find peace or truth either. One of the best ways of learning this course is to observe how subtle your ego will be in trying to subvert it, change it, distort it, and make it into your own image, rather than growing into the image that he gives you.  
  
Doing the Course the way he gave it is the way that you will "unlearn" your ego. And you don't have to understand how that happens—it will happen in spite of your seeming understanding. There is that wonderful line in the text: "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). That is another line the ego hates, because we are always trying to understand. The way to understand this course is to do what it says, which is to look at your specialness and your guilt with the love of Jesus beside you. That is how you will understand this course. Understanding is not achieved through intellectual mastery of its principles. You can spout back the Course perfectly and not have a clue as to what it says. You don't have to distort the Course by changing what it says intellectually: you can give back exactly what it says intellectually, but you won't understand what it is saying, because you have not become part of the process. The intellectual mastery of the Course is the stepping stone towards the experience the Course will give you. This is a very carefully conceived and well-thought-out curriculum: don't try to change it. Simply do what it says as best you can. The learning and the understanding will come from another part of your mind—it certainly won't come from your brain.  
  
**(W-pI.24.2:3) The idea for today** [I do not perceive my own best interests] **is a step toward opening your mind so that learning can begin.**  
  
To say that the purpose of the Course is to open your mind is to say that it is a course in undoing. In the teachers' manual Jesus states that "true learning" in this world is "unlearning" (M-4.X.3:7). You don't have to be taught anything, because truth is already present in your mind via the Holy Spirit. You have to be taught to "unlearn" what the ego made in the place of truth. This is about opening our minds, because our minds are closed shut. That is another way of saying what it means to be "mindless." Our minds close shut on guilt, then put it outside, and now we are so positive that we understand what goes on in this world. We understand how to survive in this world, because we live in a world that seems to be outside us—that seems to be hostile and threatening to us. It is a world in which we experience ourselves as extremely vulnerable. We are so sure we understand how things work in this world. We are so sure we understand how the body works. We have all these brilliant scientists that are so clear about how the body works. They are all dead-wrong! The body doesn't work within itself, the body works because the mind tells it that it should work that way.  
  
The reason that this coin falls when I drop it is not the law of gravity. Practically everybody in this world will tell you that this coin falls because of the law of gravity. That's not true. The coin falls because we made up a world with a law of gravity which results in objects falling, because that is another way of proving that this is a lawful world that obeys principles that always hold. The whole thing is made up! The reason the coin falls is that we chose to listen to the ego. And then step by step from that belief, from that choice, we made up a world that mirrors the ego's thought system. The law of gravity is not a law. It is a distortion of a law. The body doesn't work for all the reasons people say it works: The body works because we chose the ego instead of the Holy Spirit.  
  
If you really want to make a meaningful change in the world, change your mind. To quote the famous line: "...seek not to change the world, choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7). If you are serious about wanting to change the world, change yourself—because you are the world. There is no world outside, remember. There is no world outside you, so why do you want to change a world that doesn't exist? You want to change your mind, or a thought that tells you there is a world out there. Change your mind, then your mind will be totally identified with love. And then that presence of love will be reflected in the dream, and will work through you, so that you will act lovingly in the world. But your only focus will be on the Love of God in your mind. That is very simple—you don't have to worry about the world. Love will work through you and will guide you in the world with no effort on your part at all. Because of the widespread misunderstanding of these principles it is worth noting again that the Course's concentration on my reaction to what you do in no way supports an attitude of indifference toward what is going on in the world. On the contrary, once my ego thoughts are out of the way, love will be expressed through me, and therefore I will automatically do what is in everyone's best interests, instead of being motivated solely by the urgency to have my specialness needs fulfilled. But for this to happen you first must have the attitude of humility that says: "I do not understand anything." That way you are opening your mind so you can be taught. If you have the attitude of being a little child, as Jesus continually tells his students in the Course, then as a little child you will learn. That is the attitude you should have: I am a little baby and don't understand anything, but thank God, there is this loving brother within me who will teach me. And that teaching comes from within me; it doesn't come from outside me.

**Part X  
Rule 2 (cont.)**

Returning now to "Setting the Goal," let me re-read the second sentence in paragraph four:  
  
**(T-17.VI.4:2) You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it.**  
  
To reiterate, you don't deny what you see; you simply deny that what you see has any validity. You don't deny what you perceive, you just deny that it has any validity in determining how you feel.  
  
**(T-17.VI.4:3-5) It is quite noticeable that this approach has brought you closer to the Holy Spirit's sorting out of truth and falsity. The true becomes what can be used to meet the goal. The false becomes the useless from this point of view.**  
  
As you practice this more and more you will begin to understand the difference between truth and falsity, truth and illusion, which is not the way the world looks at the difference. This is a totally utilitarian practical approach.  
  
There is nothing in this world that is true. Forgiveness is not true. This "holy" Course in Miracles is not true. Nothing is true in this world. Truth is only of God. We can, however, have the reflection of truth in this world. This course, therefore, is the reflection of truth. Other spiritualities are reflections of truth. Forgiveness is a reflection of truth. It is not truth, but rather the reflection of truth. That is why Jesus says that love is not possible in this world, but that forgiveness is this world's equivalent of Heaven's Love. Holiness is not possible in this world, but it is possible to be the reflection of holiness. In fact, "The Reflection of Holiness" is the title of a section in Chapter 14 in the text. Jesus speaks about the holy relationship as being the "herald of eternity." It is not eternity, but it is the forerunner of eternity. Thus, what is true in this world is anything that reflects the truth of Heaven, anything that helps you awaken from the dream.  
  
Again, we are talking about a purely practical way of understanding truth. This certainly doesn't mean that anything in this world is true. It means rather that I can give this world a purpose that reflects the truth. If the truth of Heaven is perfect Oneness and perfect unity, then the purpose in this world that reflects that truth is realizing that we all share the same interests and the same goal. By my not seeing your interests as separate or apart from mine, I am reflecting the truth of Heaven that we are one. That is what Jesus means when he says that what is true is what meets our goal of peace. It is not true literally, because truth is only of God, but it is the reflection of truth. The perception of you as separate from me becomes false, because it is the reflection of the ego's original false idea that I can be separate from God.  
  
What is true is not based upon the fact, the form. It is the content or the purpose that establishes it as true. The second of the ten characteristics of God's teachers given in the teachers' manual is honesty. And the definition Jesus gives for honesty is not in terms of form; rather, that your behavior is consistent with your thinking. If your thoughts are loving, then whatever you do will be honest, even if in the eyes of the world it is not true. In other words, you could say something that is literally not true, and yet it would be honest because it serves a loving purpose. This is what we call a white lie, for example. Obviously you have to be very careful not to abuse or misuse this principle. But the definition of honesty is centered on purpose. The definition of truth in this course also centers on purpose—at least in this world within the dream. So again, you can see that Jesus takes the same idea and applies it to seemingly separate thoughts. Truth and honesty both are defined and interpreted and understood in the Course by fidelity to purpose. If your purpose is love, whatever you do will be honest and will be true.  
  
Therefore, once you have set the goal (that you want to remember who you are as God's child), once you have set the goal of truth, everything that occurs in your day will serve that purpose. And you will see everything in that light. That is what will make it true. A false interpretation, for example, "what's in this for me?" you will discount, because it is not going to contribute towards the goal. You give it no meaning, no importance, no power. When your goal is specialness, you will give the ego thought system tremendous power. You will just lie in wait until somebody does something from their ego. And if they don't do it, you will make it up anyway. You want people to reflect the ego because that is what will prove that your goal of specialness has been served. But if your goal is truth and the undoing of specialness, you will see other people's specialness as having no effect at all on you. And you will realize that it is their call for help which mirrors your call for help.  
  
**(T-17.VI.4:6) The situation now has meaning, but only because the goal has made it meaningful.**  
  
If you think back to the early lessons in the workbook, you will recall that Jesus wants us to see that nothing in this room means anything, nothing around me means anything—everything is meaningless. The reason that it is meaningless is that the ego has given it its meaning. These early lessons help us realize what is meaningful. And what is meaningful in this world is anything that fulfills or reflects the Holy Spirit's purpose. On another level, nothing in this world has meaning because there is no world. The only Meaning is in Heaven. Within the dream, however, what is meaningless is whatever roots you still further in the dream, and what is meaningful is whatever leads you beyond the dream.  
  
Everything in this world, then, will become meaningful to you if you see it as a way of realizing that you have projected your unconscious sleeping guilt onto the world. Now the world shows it to you, and you can look at it and say: "No, it is not out there, it is in me." That makes the situation very meaningful. What makes the situation meaningless is thinking that there really is something out there that you want—or just something out there, period. So to sum up: What establishes something as meaningless is that it has been given the ego's meaning; what establishes it as meaningful is that it has been given the Holy Spirit's meaning. This means you are the one, the only one in the whole universe, who can control life's meaning for yourself, because you are the one who chooses whether to identify with your ego, which makes everything in your life totally meaningless, or to choose Jesus or the Holy Spirit as your teacher, which gives everything in your life total meaning. You are the one who is in control of that. Lesson 253 says "My Self is ruler of the universe." It is my universe, my dream. And this dream could be anything that I choose to have it be. Whatever my dream becomes is solely my responsibility. There is absolutely no one who can do it for me.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:1-3) The goal of truth has further practical advantages. If the situation is used for truth and sanity, its outcome must be peace. And this is quite apart from what the outcome is.**  
  
This second "outcome" is something behavioral, external. The "outcome" spoken of in sentence two is a result in your mind. Here again you see, in two sentences, how Jesus uses words differently. If the situation is used for truth (i.e., this is a classroom that I have chosen, and I have chosen Jesus as my teacher so I can learn that your interests and mine are not separate), then the outcome must be peace. This is so because if this is the goal that I have established and it is my dream, then I will achieve what I want. I must achieve what I want because it is all occurring within my mind. If I want peace, I will be in peace. If I want conflict, I will have conflict. No one outside me can do that for me. So that, again, if I see the situation as the means that I have chosen to achieve truth and sanity, then it must do that and I will be at peace. And this is totally independent of what happens externally. What happens externally is irrelevant. To use an extreme example: you could be in Auschwitz where the physical outcome is not very happiness-inducing. But what if the goal of your being in Auschwitz is to learn that you are not your body and that they can do nothing to you—and the they is not really a they—the Germans are as much a part of the Sonship as you are—we are all part of the same whole—they are not your enemies. The "enemy" is the decision maker within our own minds that perceives others as the enemy. If that is your goal, that you learn that lesson, then regardless of what happens in that death camp, to you or the people that you love, regardless of what happens, you will still be at peace. That is what this is about.  
  
Again, what these sentences at the beginning of the paragraph are saying is that once you have set the goal of truth, regardless of the form of the classroom, regardless of what happens to you or what happens around you, you will still find truth because that is what you wanted. You will see that the situation is the classroom which will help you learn that. Your outcome will be one of peace, therefore, regardless of the external outcome. This gives you perfect freedom. There is absolutely nothing in this world that can imprison you. There is nothing in this world that can take the Love of God away from you. And in the most extreme form, which is what Jesus taught, there is nothing in this world that can take life away from you—because you will realize at some point that you are not alive here. You are not dead here either. You are just plain not here. You are not born; you don't die; you are not here. All of this is a dream. Therefore no one can take your life away from you. The reason Jesus was perfectly at peace and had absolutely no pain on the cross was that he knew he was not here. He knew he was not his body. Since he is part of the mind of the Sonship, he was aware of the dream. But he also knew he was part of God, and so he knew that this was only a dream and nothing was happening. Therefore for him, literally, nothing happened. A great deal seemed to happen in the eyes of the world, but nothing happened to him, because he knew he was not here.  
  
That is the most extreme form. But that is what you learn when your goal is love and peace, and you know that that love and peace is within you, and that you have simply chosen against it. Having recognized this, you will then see all the situations and circumstances in your life as opportunities for learning in the specific forms that are needed in order to learn. We learn through the specific forms that we have chosen againstlove, but we could just as easily now choose forit. The situation then becomes the laboratory or the classroom in which we practice that lesson. And the ultimate meaning of the lesson is that I am simply remembering what is already inside me. I don't have to find Jesus; I simply have to accept him, because he is already present in me. So I can learn that lesson regardless of the form that my classroom takes. I am the one who chooses the form of the classroom, because it is my script. I chose the form of the classroom in which my ego spoke first and wrongly by telling me that I was a victim. Now I go back into the same classroom with a different teacher and learn a totally different lesson. The Course says that the ego speaks first and is wrong, and the Holy Spirit is the Answer (e.g., T-5.VI.3:5; T-6.IV.1:1). So we go through the same scripts over and over again until we learn the lesson.  
  
When we learn the lesson the script disappears. When the right mind corrects the wrong mind, they both disappear. When my dream of attack and separation with you as a specific relationship in my life is replaced by the dream of forgiveness, the dream ends. Then we no longer have to be together in a classroom. We may still be together physically, but the lessons are gone. When you learn the forgiveness lesson which undoes the lesson of judgment, then bothdisappear. The only purpose of forgiveness is to correct and undo the ego's thought of judgment. When the thought of judgment is undone, forgiveness has served its purpose and is no more. At the very end of the process, just before you attain the real world, your ego is replaced once and for all by the Holy Spirit—which means the ego disappears, the Holy Spirit disappears, and you become, just as Jesus was, the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, no longer separate from you. That is at the very end of the process.  
  
What helps us make our way step by step is keeping in mind our goal of truth, the goal of really wanting to learn what forgiveness is. As we learn that more and more, we see more and more that everything that occurs in our lives is simply another opportunity to learn that lesson.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:4) If peace is the condition of truth and sanity, and cannot be without them, where peace is they must be.**  
What Jesus is saying is that if your goal is truth, and therefore you see the situation as being the means to reach that truth, then you will feel peace. And it is by that peace that you will know that you have accomplished the purpose of the situation, which is truth.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:5) Truth comes of itself.**  
  
In other words, you don't have to worry about truth. This is the same as saying that you don't have to worry about love, you don't have to worry about God. All you have to do is remove the interferences that you have placed between yourself and truth. There is a passage in Chapter 16 in which Jesus says: "Your task is not to seek for love [truth], but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it" (T-16.IV.6:1). So again, this is why this is not a course on anything positive, it is not a course on love. It is a course in miracles, because it is the miracle that helps you remove the interferences that you placed between yourself and love.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:5-6)Truth comes of itself. If you experience peace, it is because the truth has come to you and you will see the outcome truly, for deception cannot prevail against you.**  
  
If you want truth, if that is your choice, then whatever deception is around you will have no effect on you. "Deception" here is just another term for the ego thought system. If you turn away from the ego thought system and turn towards Jesus or the Holy Spirit—which means that your goal now is truth (which is what the Atonement principle states)—then whatever ego behavior or ego thoughts are going on around you will have no effect on you whatsoever. You can only be affected by your own choice to identify with the ego, not by what anyone else's ego does to you.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:7-8) You will recognize the outcome** [truth] **because you are at peace. Here again you see the opposite of the ego's way of looking, for the ego believes the situation brings the experience.**  
  
I experience peace because the situation has worked out a certain way. I experience happiness, joy, love, whatever, because the situation has worked out a certain way. We always, then, are the victims of what other people do. We are at the mercy of forces beyond our control, as the Course says at one point (T-19.IV-D.7:4). We are affected by the dream: the dream is dreaming us, rather than—which is what the truth is—that we are the ones who dream the dream.  
  
**(T-17.VI.5:9) The Holy Spirit knows that the situation is as the goal determines it, and is experienced according to the goal.**  
  
Thus there is no objective anything in the world. What gives anything its meaning or its purpose and helps us to understand it, is the goal that we ascribe to it—the means that we ascribe to the situation to help us achieve the goal that we choose first. So the point of all this is that we are asked to set the goal first; we would then automatically see the situation, relationship, meeting, or circumstances as a means to help us achieve that goal. If the goal is the reinforcement of specialness, then that is what we will experience in our daily life. If the goal is the end of specialness through forgiveness, then that is what we will experience. And the experience has absolutely nothing to do with the situation. The experience rather has to do with which teacher we have chosen. The world then, as it is, is irrelevant to that.  
  
This is as far as we will go in this section ("Setting the Goal"). Before returning to the second rule in the “Rules for Decision” section, I wanted to go back over the meaning and application of "forgiveness" using a student’s situation to illustrate what I've been teaching. She is still quite angry with her ex-husband and is aware that she does not want to forgive him. She is not fighting herself on that, but realizes that she cannot be peaceful without forgiveness. I explained to her that she is not getting peace because she doesn't want it. And that is where she must stop. The reason she is not going to forgive her ex-husband and maintain instead that she is justified in holding grievances against him, is that she doesn't want the peace that would come from letting go of the grievances. And that is extremely helpful information to have, because now she knows the reason she is upset: it is not because of her ex-husband!  
  
The temptation at this point—for anyone involved in this kind of situation—is to feel that you have failed forgiveness. And yet you are doing exactly what forgiveness asks of you. One of the best definitions of forgiveness comes from the workbook summary called: 'What is Forgiveness?'. That is where Jesus says: "Forgiveness . . . is still, and quietly does nothing. . . . It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-pII.1.4:1,3). So you are doing that. You are looking at your ego in action and realizing you still want to hold on to it. Then you wait patiently until you are ready to let it go, and all the while you don't judge yourself. Forgiveness, thus, as Jesus uses the term, does not forgive the way the world understands it. Forgivenessinvolves the process of realizing that the problem is not outside me in somebody else, but that the problem is inside me, and it is inside of me because I chose to have it be inside me. And the “miracle” basically is the term the Course uses for the dynamic by which forgiveness occurs—they are virtually interchangeable.  
  
Forgiveness doesn't mean that your heart is filled with sweetness and light. Forgiveness means that you forgive yourself because your heart is filled with evil, darkness, sin, and murder. You are much more honest with yourself that way. And then you don't have to feel that you have to make believe that you are feeling something that you are not. Go right ahead and feel all the hatred, all the obstinacy of holding on to it that you want to, but be aware that you are doing it because you don't want to be peaceful. Remember the first obstacle to peace, explained in Chapter 19 of the text. In the Introduction Jesus talks about how it is these obstacles that prevent peace from just flowing through you. The first obstacle to peace is the desire to be rid of it. That is the first obstacle to peace: you don't want it! So the problem is that most people are not aware that is not what they want. Most people say they want peace, love, and joy, and they want to do what the Course says, and they want to forgive, and all of that stuff. And they don't mean it at all!  
  
The workbook lesson "I want the peace of God" begins with: "To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything" (W-pI.185.1:1-2). As I have been saying throughout, a statement like that makes it very clear that Jesus understands his students very well. Why would he say something like that if it were not for the fact that most people don't want the peace of God? And yet those people will mouth the words and say them. But they don't mean them. And what the Course helps you to understand is why you don't mean those words. All of us in our right minds would say: "Of course I want the peace of God." But we are not aware that to say: "I want the peace of God" means to say: "I don't want my specialness." That is the kicker.  
  
That is what Jesus means in the section "The Last Unanswered Question," when he discusses four questions, the first three of which are relatively easy to answer. It is the fourth one that is very difficult, and the fourth one which we have not answered yet: “Do I want to see what I denied because it is the truth?" (T-21.VII.5:14). Do I want to see what I denied, which is the Love of God, because it is the truth? And in his discussion of this Jesus explains that the reason you haven't answered this yet is because you don't understand that to say yes (that I want to see what I denied because it is the truth), means you must first say not no. This is exactly the same statement we discussed earlier, that the task of the miracle worker is to deny the denial of truth. To say not no means that you look at the ego's thought system which is the negation of God's thought system, or the Holy Spirit's thought system (that is the no), and then you look at that and say: "I don't want this".  
  
So to say: "Yes, I want the peace of God, I want to be with Jesus, I want his love, I want to practice his course," means that you must look at the ego's specialness (which is the negation or the denial of the Holy Spirit's Love) and say: "I don't want this anymore." How many people are going to say that and mean it? Very, very few. Especially when they begin to understand what they are really saying. To say: "I don't want my specialness" is to say: "I no longer want my individuality, I don't want my uniqueness, I don't want what makes me different from anybody else, whether it is better or worse." And the ego doesn't care if you are the best person in the whole world or you are the very dregs of society. It does not care, as long as you are different and special.  
  
Those of you who grew up Catholic probably can recall that sometimes you had a contest about who was the most miserable sinner. Some of the most widely known saints in Christianity are those people who made a real big deal about being the most miserable sinner going. And the ego doesn't care, as long as you are the most. The most miserable or the most best—I just made that up. So that you have to realize that the reason you don't want the peace of God, really, is that you don't want to give up your self, your self-importance, your specialness. I think what happens, as you work with the Course over many, many years is that you begin to understand what that really means. It takes a while until it begins to penetrate, because it is very easy to read this book and skip over all the awful passages—the ones that deal with gore, violence, viciousness, murder, guilt, and hatred—and see only the wonderful ones that talk about love, peace, joy, unity, and oneness. As you begin to pay attention to the ego passages, you realize what they are really talking about and what the ego thought system is really all about, and how much identified with that thought system you are. Again, it is very, very frightening to realize this.  
  
So to say yes to Jesus is to say no to the ego, which means you cannot say yes until you first are able to look at your ego thought system and say: "I am not willing to pay this price anymore." When you look at it and say: "Obviously I still amwilling to pay this price," then say: "That's all right. I am not as far along as I would like to be, but at least I am far enough along to know I am not that far along." That is wonderful progress. So there is hope!

**Part XI  
Rules 3 and 4**

**(T-30.I.6:1) (3) Remember once again** [in other words, let us go back to the beginning] **the day you want, and recognize that something has occurred that is not part of it.**  
  
By "the day you want," Jesus means the day that you truly want, which is a day of peace and happiness. Something now has happened that is not a part of that: you are not happy. You are disappointed, angry, or feeling triumphant because you have gotten what you wanted. Again, I think I said before that triumph is not peace. Ecstasy is not peace. Exhilaration is not peace. Great drama is not peace. Peace is the peace of God, which means it is constant and steady—it does not go up and down.  
  
So what you are asked to do is monitor yourself during the day and realize as quickly as you can that something has gotten off kilter. You have gotten off track because you are not at peace.  
  
**(T-30.I.6:2)Then realize that you have asked a question by yourself, and must have set an answer in your terms.**  
  
Here again he is saying that the question we are asking of the Holy Spirit is not really a question. It is a statement: "I want this. And I want you to tell me that it is OK that I want it." "I want" means we are into the ego thought system, which then means the answer that we receive will be an idol made by the ego. Then we call that idol the Holy Spirit or Jesus or God. But the whole thing has been set up. We have established what the question is, and therefore the answer must come in those terms. This is an extremely important point.  
  
The Song of Prayer supplement, which Helen had taken down from Jesus a year after the Course was published, was originally written for Helen—and then for everybody—to correct the misconception that asking the Holy Spirit meant asking for parking spaces, where to go shopping, where to live, what to do with your life—whether it is something that we might label trivial or something we think is important. What Jesus explained to her (first in a special message which was then re-written for the general audience, which is now in the supplement) was that while there is nothing wrong with this kind of asking, it is only the beginning step and it is not really what you want. Whenever you ask the Holy Spirit for a specific question, you are in effect telling Him what the answer should be. You are not leaving Him any room for anything He might want to say, because you are telling Him what He should say. When you ask: "Should I take job A or job B?" the only answer you will let yourself hear is A or B, because that is how you framed the question. What you are not aware of is that this is a very subtle attack and an attempt to control God all over again, just as we tried to do right at the beginning.  
  
So asking a specific question is really an attempt to control the answer. It will not seem that you are really trying to control God. What Jesus says in The Song of Prayer is that when you ask for something specific, it is exactly the same as looking on sin, making it real, and then forgiving it. Later on in the supplement he coins a new term, forgiveness-to-destroy, which is not used in the Course even though the process is described. I make sin real when I say that you have done something wrong to me, but in the goodness of my heart I will overlook it—after having made it real. That is what he calls forgiveness-to-destroy. He is saying that asking the Holy Spirit for specifics is exactly the same thing, so even though it is not a term he uses there, we could say that is an example of asking-to-destroy. And yet it seems to be the right thing to do. The Course says that you should ask for help, you should pray, etc. But you don't understand that your specialness is really getting the upper hand.  
  
In The Song of Prayer, he says that the specifics of the song of prayer are not what you want; you want the song itself. In other words, it is not the specific answers to specific questions that you want. You want the love that inspires that. You want the song itself, not the contours of the song, not the melody, not the harmonics, not the intervals. It is not the formof the song that you want, it is the love which has inspired it. In "The Forgotten Song," a beautiful section at the beginning of Chapter 21 in the text, Jesus talks about the forgotten song as that presence of the Holy Spirit's Love in our minds, which reminds us of the song of Heaven. He says that "the notes are nothing" (italics added). The parts of the song, the form that the song takes, are nothing. It is the song that you want.  
  
So what he is talking about is that what you want is an experience of Jesus' love. When you insist that what you want are specific answers to specific questions, you are dragging his love from your mind, and putting it into the world, because that is where you believe you are. Then you go further and say: "Fix this for me!" You deny the fact that you made up the problem so you could fix him, so you could take care of his love, so that you don't have to experience it. Imagine the arrogance of that: Here we are—we make up a world, make up a problem to exclude Jesus' love; and then we get into so much trouble that we bring him into it and plead: "Please fix it!" And he says: "No." Not because he is angry or vindictive. But because he says there is nothing there to fix. "Don't ask me to fix up your specific problems; ask me rather to joinwith you, which will undo the cause of all of your specific problems." The cause of all of our specific problems is the belief that we are separate from the Love of God. We call this separation sin. Then we feel guilty because of what we have done and believe we deserve to be punished for our sinfulness. That is the source of all of our distress—in anyform. Therefore, by asking to join with Jesus and asking his help (which really is a way of asking ourselves to join with him), we are undoing the separation from God's Love that is the cause of all the problems. And that is why this course is so simple.  
  
To complicate everything, Course in Miracles students drag Jesus or the Holy Spirit from the mind where They are, into a world where They are not, into a world where we are not, and demand that They fix things for us here. And then we get good and angry when They don't do it. The Song of Prayer picks up on all of these ideas in the Course, because people were not paying attention. The Song of Prayer was dictated so that all of the mistakes that were already beginning to occur within one year of the Course's life would be corrected. The problem, of course, is that people never bothered with the pamphlet (now called a supplement), because they never bothered with what the Course really says. So now the same mistakes have been repeated over and over again, having become almost universal with people.  
  
People don't pay attention to what the Course says, because they think they understand what it says simply because they can read English. They don't realize that the meaning of the Course does not lie in the words (or, as I said before, in the intellectual understanding). The meaning lies in becoming part of the same process and joining with the love that inspired the Course. This means, again, that you really have to cultivate an attitude of humility when you work with this, because it is so easy to think you are hearing the Holy Spirit, when all you are doing is hearing the resonance of your own voice. That is what this is about.  
  
**(T-30.I.6:2-5) Then realize that you have asked a question by yourself, and must have set an answer in your terms.**[Which means you will hear exactly what you wanted to hear and that is how you set it up]. **Then say** [now this is the third rule]: **I have no question. I forgot what to decide.**  
  
That is the beginning of real humility. It is not only that I don't have a question: I don't even know what to ask. At least now you are wiping your slate clean. At least now you are withdrawing the arrogance that says: I know what my problem is. I know what the solution is. And I have an "in" with the Holy Spirit—He'll solve this for me. And if you are very good at this, you'll say to your friends: "I'll get Him to solve your problems for you, too—because He talks through me. And if you come to me, He will talk to you through me." Well, guess what that means? That makes me very special, because I have an "in" with this wonderful Voice. And it makes you special, because you are privileged to sit in my company. The whole thing is so fraught with specialness, it is astounding that people do this in the name of A Course in Miracles and don't realize what they are doing. When you understand what specialness is, you can see clearly what is happening. People who do this are not evil, bad people. They are just fearful people who are afraid of what the message of the Course really is and then substitute their own message, unaware of what they are doing.  
  
**(T-30.I.6:6) This cancels out the terms that you have set, and lets the answer show you what the question must have really been.**  
  
If your mind is a blank slate, then the answer will be some experience of Jesus' love, and you will understand what the question really should have been. Namely, the question has to do with the ego no longer being your teacher and your wanting Jesus as your teacher instead. So the question is never "Do I do A or B?" The question is: "Which teacher will I choose? Which adviser will I choose? Which guide will I choose to help me learn which is the 'right' thing to do?" What you want to do, which again is the message of The Song of Prayer, is join with Jesus' love. And in that love you will find all the answers to the specific questions you think you have.  
  
In The Song of Prayer, he quotes the famous line from the Sermon on the Mount: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and all else will be given you." And he says in that one answer—joining with my love, with my song—all the little answers will be found; you don't have to worry about them. That doesn't mean that you don't have to make a choice between job A and job B, to stay in job A or to leave job A, to stay in a relationship or to leave a relationship. Of course you have to make a decision. And you do the best you can at any given moment when the decision has to be made. But above all, try to be involved with the underlying process of getting beyond your ego's investment in the answer—"Damn it! What do I do?!"—to the real question, which is to ask, "Why do I persist in choosing my ego when the Love of God is there for the asking?"  
  
So the third rule now is to undo our having forgotten about the first two rules. So we say, "I have no question. I forgot what to decide."  
  
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**(T-30.I.7:3) And your fear of being answered in a different way from what your version of the question asks will gain momentum, until you believe the day you want is one in which you get your answer to your question.**  
  
The word "until" here is used slightly differently from the way that it is usually used in popular English. What this means is that your version of the question will gain momentum up until and including the point when you believe that your happy day will come when your question is answered with your answer—in other words, when you get what you want. So that basically is the culmination of the process. And you stick to this more and more because you don't want to hear the other answer—because you know somewhere inside you that the other answer means that you are wrong, which in turn means that you don't exist. That is the terror of being wrong. Being wrong becomes a symbol of a much larger thought that says if I am wrong, then the Holy Spirit must be right—because it is always one or the other. One of the hallmarks of the ego's system is "one or the other." You never have more than two choices, and it is always one or the other. It is a seesaw: if one is up, the other must be down. If one is right, the other must be wrong. If one is innocent, the other must be guilty. And there is no choice in that. Once you identify with the ego system, that is what you are buying into: the idea that it is one or the other. The ego doesn't know about the word “same”. The word “same” doesn't exist in the ego's vocabulary, because its whole existence is predicated on the idea that God and the Son are different, by which the ego also means separate.  
  
God and the Son are the same—that is the Atonement principle. God and Christ are totally one. They are the same spirit. God is the Creator, Christ is the created. God is the First Cause; Christ is the Effect. But as I mentioned before, in truth there is no God and Christ in Heaven, no Cause and Effect in Heaven. These are categories that we introduce in a dualistic world to help us understand the world that is beyond duality. The whole ego thought system begins with and rests on the premise that God and His Son are separate and different. Consequently, if that is what the ego's thought system is, everything that comes from it must share in that idea. However, if we are all the same, we are not fragmented; and if we, as spirit, are the same as God, then we are not separate from Him. That is the end of the ego. That is what the Atonement principle is.  
  
So the ego only knows about difference—that I am different from God and therefore different from everybody else. That is one of the ways of understanding what specialness is. The very word “special” implies a comparison. Someone is more special than someone else; someone is different from someone else. Therefore again, if I am right, you can't be right, because we can't be the same. We must be different. Let's use something trivial as an example—a simple fact in the world: You say that the capital of New York State is New York City. Somebody else says that it is not New York City, it is Albany. You are proven wrong, and you get upset. Why are you getting upset? Because that is a symbol—not that you are wrong about a state capital, but that you are wrong, period. That is why so often you meet people who can't be wrong—they always have to be right and they get very upset if they are not right. They get so upset because the underlying thought is that I am wrong, period. And if I am wrong, it is only because the Holy Spirit is right. And if the Holy Spirit is right, then this whole thought system is wrong—this whole world is wrong, which means I cease to exist as a creature of the ego. That is the terror. That is why we strive so hard to always be right, which means to always be special; and to always prove that God is wrong.  
  
This is the problem in all of this. Our fear is that we will be proven wrong, which means that we don't know what is in our own best interests.  
  
So again:  
  
**(T-30.I.7:3-4) And your fear of being answered in a different way from what your version of the question asks will gain momentum, until you believe the day you want is one in which you get your answer to your question. And you will not get it, for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want.**  
  
The distinction here is between what you want and what you really want. What you really want is the peace of God. What you want is the ego's version of that—some indulgence and satisfaction of your specialness. So what Jesus is saying is that you will never get what you want because what you want is in conflict with what you really want. In other words, even if you get what you think you want, it will never be enough. Everybody in this society is aware of that: it is never enough. You always want more, and more. Whether it is more food, more money, more sex, more fame, or more material things—you always want more, you always want better—because it is never enough. You get what you think you want, but it doesn't really satisfy you, because somewhere deep within you is this gnawing sense that there is something missing.  
  
What is missing is the Love of God that you threw away. But the ego will never let you know that. Instead, the ego says that this sense of lack in you is coming from the fact that you are imperfect. That is what the Course refers to as the "scarcity principle." What results from this is that you always have to take from the outside to fill up the gaping hole within. And that is why what you take in is never enough. The gaping hole is never filled, and can never be filled until you change your mind about the original decision. That is why this course always keeps coming back to that, and that is what you always have to look at. That is why Jesus says that you will not get what you want, "for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want." So what Jesus is doing is appealing to us now, telling us: "You have a split mind. Yes, you have an ego mind that only wants and wants and wants, and will kill to get it; but you have another part of your mind, too—the right mind." Once you understand that your mind is split, then the concept of a decision maker becomes incredibly meaningful, because now your choice is meaningful. You are choosing between the ego thought system, which is an illusion and a lie, and the Holy Spirit's thought system, which is the truth. And even if you don't exercise that choice right away, you will at least understand now that you have a choice—between what you want as an ego, and what you really want, which is to return home.

**Q:** Suppose you have reached the point where the things of the world such as sexual relationships and food don't work for you anymore. You think you don't want them. You realize that you no longer have an investment in them—similar to the realization that you keep slamming the door on your fingers, so the thing to do is stop slamming the door on your fingers. How can you tell though, if you are in denial about all this?  
  
**A:** This is an extremely important question, because the solution you are proposing will not work. Yes, if you keep slamming the door on your fingers, for goodness' sake stop slamming the door on your fingers!—if that is the cause of your pain. If you believe the cause of your pain is all these lousy relationships you keep getting involved with, which never work anyway, then you are absolutely justified in saying: "No more relationships, I'll become a nun."  
  
**Q:** That doesn't work either.  
  
**A:** Right! Because that is not the problem. The problem is not the relationship—the problem is the guilt in your mind and the choice that you made regarding who will help you with the guilt: the ego versus the Holy Spirit. If you are in this world in this body, then you are here so you can learn lessons. Relationships are the classrooms par excellence. That is why the Course is filled with material on that topic—that is what this is a course in—because our guilt is most clearly and powerfully expressed in our special relationships. We take the guilt in ourselves and we dump it onto someone else.  
  
Ontologically the way all that begins is our literally splitting off a part of ourselves that we don't want and making a new person with it. Basically, your special relationship, your special partner, is a split-off part of the same whole of which you are a split-off part. That is why it is so important that you not see each other as separate. Trying to resolve this on the level of the body will never work: you just kind of slam your fingers in the door over and over again. And then you will seem justified in concluding that you just will not get involved in relationships anymore because they don't work. But these relationships are the perfect classroom. What the Course would say is: "Don't give up relationships. Rather, invite me in [Jesus or the Holy Spirit] so I can now teach you through this classroom. If you close the door on the relationship, how can I teach you? You have come into this world in a body, with all these special partners all around—past, present and future—just so you will reach the realization that I could be your teacher. And just when you reach that point you close the door and declare: 'No more classroom.' Then I [Jesus] have to go on unemployment!"  
  
What you want to realize is that the problem is not what goes wrong between you and the other person. The problem is what goes wrong in your mind—when you choose against Jesus and for the ego. That is the problem. The ego will try to convince you that the problem is the situations or relationships in your life. And once you have identified that as the problem, the solution is easy: give them up! That is how monasteries began. Literally! They began in the 5th  century when men fled the evils of the city (which really meant the evils of women) and became monks—mistakenly thinking that they wanted to be with God alone. Being with God alone meant to them that they could have nothing to do with anyone else. Certainly nothing to do with sex! Because the ego would say that the problem is between bodies; so therefore the solution is to just ignore or deny the body. The Course says, through the miracle, that the problem is not the body—the problem is with whom you are looking at the body, namely with your ego.  
  
The problem always comes back to this choice point in your mind. Therefore what you want to see is that relationships are the perfect classrooms, and that of course you are going to mess them up. They are going to begin with specialness, thrive on specialness, and end with specialness. This is the perfect way for you to learn that specialness is not the answer. But you must choose a different teacher. So when you go into a relationship, you can tell yourself that of course I am going to screw this up, I know I am going to do it. But now I can have Jesus alongside me while I do it, and I can watch myself making all the choices for specialness with him by my side. The difference will be that now I don't have to be guilty about them. I don't have to be afraid of them. I don't have to be ashamed of them.  
  
That will be the beginning of the process of learning to let them go entirely—not the relationship, but the specialness of the relationship. So you don't want to give up the relationship necessarily. What you want to give up is the teacher you have chosen to teach you in the classroom.  
  
So returning now to the last sentence I read:  
  
**(T-30.I.7:4-5) And you will not get it** [namely, you will not get your answer to your question—you will not get what you want], **for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want. This can be very hard to realize, when once you have decided by yourself the rules that promise you a happy day.**  
  
Here is another one of those places where, if you read it carefully, you will hear Jesus saying to you: "This is not easy!" No one, once again, wants to be told that they are wrong, because, as I explained before, if you are wrong, it means your very existence is a lie, which means you are not even here. That is very frightening, if you are convinced you are here. That is what he is talking about.  
  
So once you have done this by yourself, it is very hard to shift gears. You know this is true—just look at what has happened in the world. We made the choice to be on our own—we didn't need God as our Source because we became our own source—we didn't need the Holy Spirit as our Teacher because now we have a better teacher, namely the ego—and from that point on we were just off and running, glorifying and luxuriating in our specialness, in our self-centeredness, and in our self-importance. And we will never, ever give it up—certainly not without a big fight! And from that original identification came this whole world and all the things that go on in this world. It just goes on and on and on.  
  
In the beginning of the teachers' manual, Jesus talks about how this world winds on wearily (M-1.4:4-5)—because nothing ever works. People are beginning to see that nothing ever works. You get a glimmer of hope, and you know exactly what will happen—because it always happens. You get a glimmer of hope here with the economy, for example, and you know what will happen. This is because the thought system that underlies all of this is the thought system of me, me, me—it is a thought system of specialness. It is not a thought system that says that we are all part of the oneSonship. It is a thought system that says that we are part of a special sonship, and my special part is better than your special part. That is why nothing ever works—and people realize that. That is why this course is so terribly important, and also why nobody pays any attention to it—because it is so important. To really pay attention to it means that you must look at your own specialness, which means undermining your very existence as you have established it.  
  
So now, once again he is saying: "I have given you a third rule, but you are not going to listen to this one either." So now he has to give us a fourth rule.  
  
**Excerpts from Rule 4:**  
  
**(T-30.I.8:1-2)(4) If you are so unwilling to receive you cannot even let your question go, you can begin to change your mind with this: At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now.**  
  
If I am not willing to let go of my specialness or of my investment in being right, at least I can say that I don't like the way I am feeling. I may still be tempted to blame you for it, but at least I can allow myself to be aware that I don't like the way I feel. The reason this is important is that—as a number of people already have commented—very often it is easy to fool yourself into thinking that you are really feeling happy and peaceful and have no grievances against anyone. When the fact of the matter is that you are furious—you are very depressed and anxious, but you are covering it over. So what Jesus is saying here is: "At least try to be honest with yourself this much: Admit that you don't like the way you are feeling—that you are feeling angry, disquieted, in pain; you're guilty, lonely, fearful. You're this, you're that. At least be honest with that: don'tcover it over."  
  
We have a term for people who cover over their pain: "bliss ninnies." You won't find that term in the Course, but bliss ninnies are people who put on a happy face and say everything is wonderful. They not only try to convince other people, but they try to convince themselves. This is not a course in being happy. This is a course in recognizing how unhappy you are. Forgive yourself for the cause of the unhappiness and then you will be happy. Jesus is not against happiness, obviously. But what he is saying is if you truly want to be happy, you must let go of all the decisions you have made to be unhappy, and then blame other people for your unhappiness.  
  
Again, the happiness that the Course promises us is the result of the process of first realizing how unhappy, depressed, anxious, fearful, and angry we are. These are not sins: we have to be all those things. How could anyone be homeless and orphaned and not be depressed and angry? Everybody in this world is homeless and orphaned, within their belief system, because they believe they ran away from home. And they believe either that God is killed by them, or God is so angry that He disowned them. No one in this world can be happy because no one in this world believes that he or she is home. And you can only be truly happy when you are home. Therefore, to try to pretend that you are happy here, that you could make this world a better place for yourself and a home in which you could be happy is to feed the very thought system that got you into trouble in the first place. This is a course in helping you realize how unhappy you are, because you are not at home. And then it helps you realize that the reason you are not at home is a choice you made. This has nothing to do with what someone else did, or what God did. And if you don't realize it is a choice you made, how can you ever change it? That is why, to make the point once again: you can't change your mind unless you know: (1) that you have a mind, and (2) that your mind has chosen the wrong thought system.

As long as you think that you are happy and filled with thoughts of love and peace, you will never study this Course in Miracles. You may think you are studying it, but what you are doing is re-writing it so it says what you want it to say. This course is for people who don't know how unhappy, miserable, lonely, alienated, and depressed they are, so that they can then learn that this is what they feel, and understand where the feeling came from—not from anything in the world, but from their own choice. Once they understand it is their own choice, they can then make a better choice. That is how the Course fulfills its purpose. But if you think you are already happy, or have become happy, forgiven, and forgiving because you have "done" the workbook lessons for a year and have read through the text a couple of times, then you are not really paying attention to what this is saying. The reason is that it is just not that easy to let go of an identification that you very strongly hold on to. Real happiness in this course comes from looking at your guilt, at your self-hatred and your sinfulness, and forgiving yourself for it. That is where the real happiness comes from. It is not something you can impose upon yourself, thereby pushing down all these hateful thoughts. It can only come when you lookat those hateful thoughts with Jesus' love beside you and then realize that there is nothing there. Then the happiness will come, a happiness born of the recognition: "Thank God, I was wrong.” Not that I was right.  
  
If we believe we are happy and peaceful, there will be no motivation to change. And so the source of all of our problems, both individually and collectively, will remain buried in our unconscious. All that guilt will stay there and continually throw off a shadow, but we won't know where the shadow is coming from, and we'll always mistake the shadow for the reality. Those of you who remember your Plato will remember that that was his principal point in the Allegory of the Cave: that people think the shadows are the reality. And so we will see all the pain and suffering around us, but we won't realize that they are the shadows of the guilt that is in our own individual mind, and in the mind of the Sonship. It is our allowing ourselves to experience our unhappiness and our not being happy with how we are feeling that will motivate us to begin to explore where the unhappiness is coming from.  
  
Before moving on, I just wanted to make a few more comments about the concern people have when they begin to take this seriously—that is, the feeling that their "safety nets" are being taken away and the feelings of confusion when they accept that they no longer feel comfortable asking Jesus "What should I do?" and other questions along those lines.  
  
It is true as I have been saying that your ego will get in your way if you ask Jesus to help you that way. But it is different when you ask Jesus to help you look at the problem, because then you realize that the problem is not whether you do A or B. The problem is that you want to do it on your own. You would experience indecision or confusion only because you have already chosen your ego. If you had chosen Jesus, there would be no indecision, hesitancy, or confusion—you would just do it. As Gloria says: then you become "thunk." Then the answer, the Love of God, just comes through you and you automatically do what is most loving. The issue is getting your ego out of the way. Asking Jesus for help means asking him to help you look at the problem, the problem being: I don't know what I should do because I have already chosen my ego. So by asking him to help you, you are already undoing the cause of the confusion, which is your having separated from him. If you ask him to help you, you are joining with him and therefore undoing the problem.  
  
You don't even have to know how to listen. The problem again is when you think you do know. The fact that you don't know may seem to be confusing to you, but the reason it is, is that all your life you have labored under the idea that you understood and you knew how to act. Now all of a sudden you recognize that you don't understand anything. That is a big, big plus, even though it may not feel that way.  
  
Let me read the lines from the end of the text, which I often quote or refer to: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this: I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself" (T-31.V.17:6-7). Now, does that describe everybody in this room? You have a lot of company! Remember again how this begins: "There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear then this …" This is why we become so uncomfortable—because now we realize that we don't know anything. It seemed as if this course is saying that we should listen to the Holy Spirit, but now we realize that we don't even know what that means or how to do it. But now the way this ends is: "Yet in this learning [learning that you don't know anything] is salvation born. And What you are will tell you of Itself" (T-31.V.17:8).  
  
Remember workbook Lesson 24 which emphasizes the idea that we do not perceive our own best interests. The problem is that we think we do; and therefore we do not believe we have to be taught, because we already know what to do. If you already know how to listen (so you think), then you won't be taught how to listen. And then you will think that you are listening, when all the while you indeed are listening, but to the ego's voice, not to the Holy Spirit's Voice. Understanding that you don't understand anything, especially how to listen, or what asking the Holy Spirit means, is very, very helpful because now your mind is clear. Now you are saved from your own arrogance, and then "What you are will tell you of Itself." Now you have made room for Jesus to come to you and speak to you. And you realize that what listening means is getting your ego out of the way. Remember what we had discussed before about the last unanswered question—that to say yesmeans to say not no. To say yes to Jesus or to the Holy Spirit—to say: "Yes, I want your help, I want your advice"—means that you must look at your ego and say: "I don't want this anymore."  
  
That is what listening really is: getting the interference out of the way. So then you can be more and more assured that the voice you are hearing (and of course that is a metaphor, you don't literally hear a voice) is not your own but is coming from the Holy Spirit. It feels very uncomfortable—that is why "there is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this." Most people pride themselves when they reach a level of maturity, in thinking that they really know how to get by in the world: they know how the world works. They may not like it, but at least they know how it works and they know how to survive in it. All of a sudden you are told everything you believed in is wrong. That is very disconcerting. In one series of statements Jesus describes the experience as disturbed, disjunctive, and distressing (T-17.V.3:3). That is what happens when you suddenly realize that everything you have believed in is false, and it seems that there is nothing to take its place. That is when the ego is tempted to rush right in and call a psychic, perhaps, because then somebody else will tell you what to do. That's very nice, because then you don't have to do your own work of undoing your ego. Somebody else's ego will tell you what to do, and then say it is the Voice of the Holy Spirit or they are channeling it. It is very tempting to take this route when you are feeling so uncomfortable. It is best, though, to just stay put and not do anything, because your ego will want to rush right in and fill in the empty space, and the empty space will always be filled in by itself, by the ego. If you can stay put, then your fear will abate, and then that loving Voice will indeed speak to you, and you will know what it is saying.  
  
One further point: Many students fall into a trap when they try to take seriously that "I do not know the thing I am." They stop taking all their roles seriously, but in the wrong way. Using an example from a student here: You never stop being a mother, a friend, a daughter, a lover, or a wife: you never stop these roles. What you begin to realize is that it is a role, it is not me. But it is a role that I have chosen so I can learn lessons in it. That is really important, otherwise you will skip over the step and say that this is silly, it is all made up—I'm not any of these things. It is important that you recognize that your identity is not in the role. But nonetheless the role is something you have chosen because you don't really believe in your true Identity. You may begin to understand that you are not the person you thought you were, but there is a part of you that still does not want to understand or remember the Self you truly are. So you need steps that will get you through your fear. Those steps are the classrooms that we choose—the roles. So the trick is really to be increasingly faithful to the role—not because it means anything, but because it is a classroom for you.  
  
I urge you to study Lesson 184—paragraphs nine through eleven—in this regard. The material in these paragraphs is extremely important in clarifying this major issue: If the world is an illusion, why should I pay any attention to what I am doing here? These paragraphs in Lesson 184 make very clear why you should pay attention. Paragraph eleven, for example:  
  
**(W-pI.184.11) Use all the little names and symbols which delineate the world of darkness.** [Again, these are all the symbols of your work, all the symbols of your personal life, all the roles that you are in: use them, don't separate from them.] **Yet accept them not as your reality.** [This again is the split vision: you are still a mother, you are still a father, you are still a child, you are still a friend, you are still a spouse, you are still a lover, you are still whatever your profession is. But you realize that this is a classroom.] **The Holy Spirit uses all of them, but He does not forget creation has one Name, one meaning, and a single Source which unifies all things within Itself. Use all the names the world bestows on them but for convenience, yet do not forget they share the Name of God along with you.**  
  
This is a reflection of the point that I have been making frequently during this workshop: this is a very, very simple course. The reflection of the unity of Heaven in this world is the idea that everything and everyone serves the same single purpose. We are not united here in form at all, but we are united in purpose, which then becomes the reflection of the union that we all share in Christ and with God. There is no way in this world of knowing what that oneness is like, but we can be the reflection of it when we realize that everything and everyone shares the same purpose. That is what you remember when your mind leaves the world, goes back to the mind (which is what the miracle does), so then you remember: "Ah! This is all the same! This is all a learning opportunity for me that I have chosen so that I can remember why I am here, and I now have chosen Jesus as my teacher. I am not here to do all the things that the world thinks I am here to do; I am here to remember Who I am as God's one Son. And the way that I will remember that, is by taking certain classes. This situation I am in right now is one of those classes. It may seem to be a very painful class, but it can be a helpful class if I choose the right teacher. That will save me a thousand years, because it will undo a big chunk of my guilt. And I will realize that this is the way that I will learn that my interests are not separate from anyone else, especially those people that I am involved with right at this moment."

**Part XII  
Rule 4 (cont.) and Rules 5 to 7**

Let's now turn to the last paragraph of Chapter 5, which is a wonderful elaboration of this fourth rule for decision: "At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now." I can't emphasize enough how important it is that you allow yourself to feel your pain, to feel your ego's thought system in whatever way it comes to you. If you do not allow yourself to feel it, which again is what the bliss ninnies attempt to do (in other words, cover it over and everything is wonderful), then there will be no motivation to learn and practice this course. If you really believe you are happy and at peace, then what do you need a course for? The purpose of this course is to give you a way of undoing your pain. If you don't believe you have any pain, then you don't need this. So again, one of the first ideas in working with this course is to understand that one of Jesus' central purposes is to have you recognize that you *do not* recognize how much in pain you are.  
  
**(T-5.VII.6:1-2) Decision cannot be difficult. This is obvious, if you realize that you must already have decided not to be wholly joyous if that is how you feel.**  
  
This whole thing rests on the idea that you are allowing yourself to be aware that you are not feeling joyous or happy—that you are feeling anxious, guilty, lonely, sad, depressed, fearful, etc. If you don't let yourself feel that, then nothing else is possible. Another premise is the idea that if you are not feeling joyous, *you* are the one who has chosen that, as we had discussed before. If there is no world outside your mind, then there is nothing that can have any effect on you. If you are unhappy, *you* are the only one who has made you unhappy.  
  
Resistance to this is enormous, because—going back to that original instant—the ego said that if you look at your guilt, which is over *your* responsibility for separating yourself from God and from Christ, and then literally destroying Heaven and making up a world opposite to it—if you look at your guilt and accept responsibility for what you did, right in back of that is the wrathful vengeful God Who will destroy you. That is where the terror comes from. That is what works in the back of everyone's mind. This whole world becomes a massive layer of *stuff*, just to keep the pain of that thought away from us. And the whole thing is made up because the whole thought system of sin and guilt is made up. But you won't know it is made up until you look at it—that is why this is such an important theme.  
  
So again, the first step in the undoing, which is the undoing of the decision and of the effect of the decision (which is to feel terrible), is to recognize that you actively decided wrongly but can as actively decide otherwise. The keyword here is *actively*. Jesus is telling you very clearly that you have actively chosen this. This is a deliberate choice: You do *not* want to be with Jesus. You do *not* want to be with the Love of God. You want to be with yourself. You want to be with your specialness. So this is an active choice. Then he makes the point even more clear:  
  
**(T-5.VII.6:4) Be very firm with yourself in this** [in realizing that you have actively chosen the ego] **and keep yourself fully aware that the undoing process, which does not come from you, is nevertheless within you because God placed it there.**  
  
In other words, as egos we are not the ones who can undo the ego—that is the role of Jesus and the Holy Spirit. So what we are really talking about is the decision maker, the part of our minds that chooses, that turned away from Jesus and turned towards the ego; therefore, it is that same part of our minds that now must choose against the ego and turn back towards Jesus. Our job is to do that. Once we join with him, which again means we look without judgment at our or anyone else's ego, then we have completed our part in the Atonement.  
  
This next line states that clearly.  
  
**(T-5.VII.6:5) Your part is merely to return your thinking to the point at which the error was made, and give it over to the Atonement in peace.**  
  
This is a wonderfully clear statement of your part. This is what the little willingness is: to "return your thinking." Earlier I discussed the idea of "mind wandering," where Jesus had said to Helen that she was much too tolerant of her mind wandering (T-2.VI.4). Your mind wanders when your thoughts of the ego wander out of your mind into the world, and now you think that they are in the world. So he is saying to return your thinking and your attention from where it had wandered to—the world—back to the mind to that choice point at which the error was made. That is the decision maker. That is the whole problem. There is no problem in the world, there is no problem in your ego mind—there is a problem in *your* mind, in the decision maker that has *chosen*to believe in the ego mind, and that then chose to leave the mind and make up a world. So that is your only part: to "return your thinking to the point at which the error was made, and give it over to the Atonement in peace." At that point, then, you legitimately turn it over to the Holy Spirit—you legitimately offer your fear and guilt to the Holy Spirit, because now you have actually *seen* it. You have seen the fact that you chose it, made it real, and now can reverse the decision, which then means giving it over to the Holy Spirit. "Giving it over" means that you now look at it with His Love beside you, and without judgment.  
  
Basically what we have up to now is a wonderful description of what forgiveness is as a process. So that when we speak of forgiveness as a process, we can see that the first step in the undoing is to recognize that we actively decided wrongly, but can as actively decide otherwise. Then our part is merely to return our thinking to the point at which the error was made and give it over to the Atonement in peace. This is really what the forgiveness process is.  
  
Let's turn now to the workbook, Lesson 23. Those of you who may have read my earlier books and heard me speak several years ago know that I used to talk about the "three steps of forgiveness." I got that from the passage at the end of Chapter 5 which I just read, and from paragraph five in Lesson 23, which I will read now.

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

Reviewing the process of forgiveness as specifically expressed in this final paragraph of Chapter 5, therefore, the process begins with the idea: I'm not feeling right, something is wrong, I'm not at peace. I now realize that it is not that I am not at peace because something external has happened or has not happened; I am not at peace because I *chose* not to be at peace. And at some point I will be able to choose *to* be at peace. So, in other words, I realize that the cause of my problem is in my mind, not outside it. I am the one who put the problem in my mind, I am the only one who can remove it, and the way I remove it is by joining with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. And in joining with them in looking at my ego, I have undone the cause of the problem and the suffering. So at this point, now, Jesus gives us some help with this process.  
  
**(T-5.VII.6:6) Say this to yourself as sincerely as you can, remembering that the Holy Spirit will respond fully to your slightest invitation.**  
  
Now why would Jesus say "as sincerely as you can"? Because he knows no one is sincere. He is not judging you, he is not attacking you, he is not mocking you or poking fun at you. He is trying to relieve you of your guilt by letting you know that he knows that you are lying. So there is no guilt in this. This is a way of learning to look at the "tiny, mad idea" of wanting to be separate from God and saying: "This is no big deal." So you don't have to feel that you have to fool him.  
  
"The Holy Spirit will respond fully to your slightest invitation" is a metaphoric way of describing the fact that the Holy Spirit is fully present. You have just slammed the door in His face. Then you just open the door and He is there. You do not have to send Him an invitation and wait for Him to respond. He doesn't respond in an active way. His very Presence is the response. He is there. His light is shining—and you have covered it over. What forgiveness does is remove the coverings. And then His Love, which was always there, is there for you to remember.  
  
Now Jesus gives us a sequence of statements. You don't necessarily have to repeat the statements literally, but you do want to get to the content underlying the form in each of the statements.  
  
***I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.***  
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***I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.***  
                                               \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

The third statement is a positive statement of what we want:  
***I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.***  
  
Over and over again in the Course Jesus is appealing to the purely selfish motives in everyone. That is the hook here. He is saying: "Do you really want to be happy and peaceful? If you do, do what I say. Don't do it because I say so and because this is the holy word of God. Do it so that you will feel better." Again, he is appealing to the basest motives in everyone: that we want to feel good. He is also telling us that we don't know what will make us feel good, but he does, so we should ask him to teach us. We think what will make us feel good is getting what we want. That will never make us feel good! Temporarily it might, because it will remind us that we feel good because we killed God. In one of the important sections on special relationships in Chapter 16, Jesus asks us to consider: "If you perceived the special relationship as a triumph over God, would you want it?" (T-16.V.10:1). If you really understood that by getting what you want from somebody else—getting your needs met—you were reliving that original instant when you triumphed over God and felt so good because you finally got out from under His Love and were now on your own—if you realized that is what you are doing, would you still keep choosing it?  
  
Well, the obvious answer is that we keep choosing it because we don't know that is what we are doing. That is what he is teaching us: that we really want to feel better, really better, with the real peace of God that is not dependent on anything external. That is why we want to make another choice.  
  
***I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.***

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

So the Holy Spirit doesn't take away the consequences outside, because there are no consequences outside. There are reflections and shadows outside which come from the consequences *inside*. What happens when you feel guilt? You feel terrible. You feel anxious, terrified, and sick. When you choose the Holy Spirit instead of the ego, you are joining with the Love of God that you had separated from, which undoes the "sin" of being separate from God. That undoes the guilt and all the terrible consequences of guilt. So it is not that the Holy Spirit in an active way takes away all the bad thoughts and feelings you have. *You* took them away, because you are the one who put them there. But you took them away by joining with Him. That is why joining with Him or with Jesus is so central in the Course. That is why asking Them for help is so central to the Course. Asking for help is saying: "I don't know, but *you* know."  
  
Finally:  
***I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.***  
  
*I* don't decide for God, because the God that I will decide for is my ego-God: that is the God of specialness. That is the God of religion, of formal religion. I rather let the Holy Spirit choose God for me. And basically all that that means is that by joining with the Holy Spirit, I now accept *His* understanding of God, which is that God is perfect Love. When I join with my ego, *my* understanding of God is that He is a God of specialness, Who believes in separation, sin, vengeance, form, ritual, etc., etc.  
  
So by joining with the Holy Spirit what we are really doing is *undoing* our insane beliefs about what God is.

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Let's turn back now to the "Rules for Decision"—Chapter 30 in the text—Rule 5.  
  
**(T-30.I.9:1-2) (5) Having decided that you do not like the way you feel, what could be easier than to continue with: *And so I hope I have been wrong.***  
  
This is very difficult. We have been through this path already. We are aware now, having gone through all these other steps. Again, we are not talking about literal steps, but rather a general description of the process of wanting peace and then being afraid of it, of wanting to take Jesus' hand and then wanting to drop it and take the ego's hand back. So at some point we want to understand that we are wrong: *I* thought what I was doing was right, but it is not making me feel good. That is the crucial step: making a causal connection between not feeling good (the effect) and the cause (I decided wrongly)—which means I made a mistake. And this means that I don't know what is best for me. Now what is so important about the statement "*And so I hope I have been wrong*" is if I am right and I am still feeling miserable, then there is no way out. If I am aware that I am feeling disquieted, anxious, guilty, unhappy, and in pain, and yet I have been right in everything I have done, then there is literally no hope. The hope comes in thinking: well, maybe I was *wrong*. Now notice the statement doesn't even say: "And so I *know* I have been wrong." It says: "I *hope* I have been wrong." If I am wrong, then there is a right answer, because right and wrong are opposites. If I am wrong, then there must be a right answer somewhere. That is the beginning, once again, of turning towards Jesus. Maybe he knows better than I do.  
  
The premise here is that I am not feeling happy, and that the cause of my not feeling happy is that I made a wrong choice.  
  
If that is the case (if I am now able to admit that), this works against the sense of opposition, because now I will no longer perceive Jesus as my enemy. Now I am praying he is still my friend and that he is not angry at me—I no longer see myself in opposition to him. If I always have to be right, then he is going to have to be wrong, because my fear is, obviously, that he knows better than I do. So I always have to insist that I am right, which means I have placed myself once again in that original, ontological moment when we believed as one Son that we were right and God was wrong. God's "being right" is His saying that "there is nothing else but Me—that My reality, which is also your reality, is perfect non-dualism. It is perfect Oneness. There is nothing else." If I want to exist as a separated being, that means God is wrong and I am right. That is what we relive over and over again. This is the authority problem. I want to be right, which means God must be wrong. This means I always believe I am in competition with God. And this means I am in competition with Jesus. And this must mean I am in competition with his course, because his course is telling me over and over again I am wrong, and he is right. I will resent that bitterly until I can make the determination for myself that it is my insisting that I have been right that has led to my feeling so terrible. And this means that I am now hoping that *he*was really right and I was wrong.  
  
Jesus now is perceived as your friend, as someone who can help you, because you are in a miserable mess and you can't help yourself anymore. You already know nothing out there is going to work, and now you realize that you don't work either. And so you are hoping there is someone else who does have the right answer. So basically Jesus is not pleading that we be his friend so his ego would feel good—he doesn't have an ego. He is pleading because he is saying: "If you really want help, I can help you. But I can't help you unless you join with me."  
  
**(T-30.I.9:3) This works against the sense of opposition, and reminds you that help is not being thrust upon you but is something that you want and that you need, because you do not like the way you feel.**  
  
Until you reach this point, you may believe in a Jesus, you may even believe in *A Course in Miracles*, but there will be a part of you that feels it is being thrust upon you against your will. There will be a part of you that will stubbornly insist that you are right. And you will stubbornly try to push him away. And if you are too fearful of this part of you, it will go underground and you will do all this in very subtle ways. One of the most subtle ways, as we have seen, is to try to change what this course says and make it mean something it does not mean. That is one of the subtle ways. The *un*subtle way is just telling him to go to hell, or you just slamming the book down and saying: "This doesn't work, and I want something else."  
  
So again, the idea of hoping that you have been wrong, which directly implies that Jesus is right, "works against the sense of opposition and reminds you that help is not being thrust upon you, but is something that you want." See, over and over again Jesus is appealing to the power of our minds to choose what we want. But he first has to remind us that we do not know what we want, so he has to teach us what we want, and that we indeed want it and need it. All too often in religious circles, and certainly this was true in Christianity, people felt that they had no choice. They *had* to do what the Jesus of the Bible, or the Jesus of the Churches said. And they didn't do it because they *wanted* to do it. They had no choice, because if they didn't do it, they would be punished. Here Jesus is saying: "Do what I am telling you to do, not because it is sinful if you don't, but because you won't be happy—not because *I* say so, or the Bible says so, or the Churches say so, but because *you* will say so once you understand that if you really want peace you must do it *my* way, simply because I know better than you. And I am right and you are wrong."  
  
Most of the time—in fact all of the time—the ego in you will resist that with a real vehemence: "I don't want to be told you are right and I am wrong." That is the authority problem. That is what takes a long time. You have to work toward this, and realize that you are better off being wrong. That is a very hard pill for anyone's ego to swallow. See, what we hate God for is that He is right. And what He is right about is that we don't exist—that life only exists in Heaven. Anything outside Heaven, anything in a state of duality doesn't exist—that is what we hate Him for. His very Presence, His very Being is saying: you don't count, and you don't exist, which means your specialness is out the window.  
  
What we hate Jesus for is that he reflects that message, in words and language we can understand. He basically says: "You can protest and yell and scream as much as you want, but in the end I am very sorry to tell you: you are wrong and I am right." Just imagine yourself in the presence of someone who talks to you that way! You want to kill him! That is why people killed him then, and that is why they are trying to kill him now. It is extremely important that you take this very literally and understand how terrified and angry this makes you—that here is this person who says to you: "You are wrong and I am right." These words are true, and they mean exactly what they say. You can't interpret them; you can't change them—they mean what they say. And your ego will rise up with a fury.  
  
It is very important that you understand that that is what he is talking about here. The turning point comes when you realize that you are the cause of your own unhappiness, and that your arrogance is the cause of everything that has gone wrong in your life. Then you will begin to develop that gratitude that says: "Thank God I was wrong. Thank God there is someone still within me who loves me, who does not condemn me, who will show me my mistakes." That is why Jesus refers to himself as an older brother. An older brother is someone who guides his younger brothers and sisters. Humility comes in being able to say: "I was wrong. Thank God I was wrong. About everything! Not just about a specific issue in the world. I was wrong about everything!" It is at this point, then, that you realize that you *want* this help—you *need* this help, because you are so unhappy. Above all, you can see that this is a course in developing humility. And gratitude goes hand in hand with humility. That is why "love is the way we walk in gratitude," as the workbook lesson says.  
  
**(T-30.I.9:4) This tiny opening** [which simply is: "I hope that I was wrong." You don't even have to say affirmatively "I was wrong"—just "I hope I was wrong"] **will be enough to let you go ahead with just a few more steps you need to let yourself be helped.**  
  
So Jesus is not even talking about accepting help at this point—remember, we are talking about a process. He is talking about at least hoping that maybe I was wrong and that there *is* help. If you take that step, then inevitably you will take all the other steps.  
  
**(T-30.I.10) Now you have reached the turning point, because it has occurred to you that you will gain if what you have decided is not so. Until this point is reached, you will believe your happiness depends on being right.** [Everyone in this world believes that: that is why people come to this world.] **But this much reason have you now attained; you would be better off if you were wrong.**  
  
The turning point again is realizing you were wrong. Just think within yourself how difficult this is—how difficult it is to say this to somebody who is a superior of yours, or an authority in your life—let alone someone like Jesus who comes along and says: "My very existence in your life is showing you that you are wrong." Just watch how stubbornly and ferociously you resist that. Nobody wants to be told that they are wrong, because, as we have already discussed in the workshop, to be told that you are wrong about anything specific is a direct reflection of the original fear: I was wrong about everything. I was wrong about God, wrong about Heaven, wrong about myself. And therefore I am wrong about everything I see in the world.  
  
This is a real turning point.  
  
Let's turn to Chapter 29, section VII, "Seek Not Outside Yourself." Here is where the line comes which is referred to in what we just read: "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" "Seek not outside yourself" is an important theme in the Course. Earlier Jesus speaks of the ego's fundamental maxim: "Seek and *do not* find." What the ego does after making up the problem of guilt is say, as we have seen, "Don't look at it; let's put the guilt outside us." So the problem is now seen in the world, and hence we need to find a solution to the problem of the world. That is what literally made up this world. Remember, this world is a huge distraction or a smokescreen to keep the *real* problem from ever being resolved. The real problem is that we chose to identify with our guilt and with our ego. Therefore, the only solution that can be found is to go back to that choice point and then make another choice. The ego's fear of that, as we have seen, is so great that what it does is deny the mind entirely and place its contents of sin, guilt, and fear outside in the world. It is outside you in your own body, in your own psyche, which is not the mind. The Freudian psyche is some derivative of the brain. It has nothing to do with the mind. So when psychologists talk about the psyche or the unconscious, their conceptualization would always end up, if you press them enough, with some aspect of the brain. Freud himself, near the end of his life, said that at some point, people will discover that all of the dynamics he talked about can be explained electrochemically. He never stopped being a physician first—everything he saw was in terms of the body. And so the psyche he talked about is still of the body. So whether you say you have a problem in your psyche or in your body, or that there is a problem in the world, you are still seeking outside yourself for a solution to a *problem* that is outside yourself.  
  
That, again, is why this course is so radically, radically different. The only problem, to state it still once more, rests in our minds. This whole world, covered by this veil—this veil of denial which causes us to forget the guilt in our mind—this whole world is made as a defense against that. So the ego is saying: "Indeed, you have a lot of problems, but they are all outside your mind—in your body, mentally or physically, or in the world. And therefore, let us go about trying to find the solution to all of those problems." So the ego's maxim is "seek and do not find." That statement, of course, is taken from the famous passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus says "seek and you shall find." That scriptural verse is the most frequently quoted one in the Course. Over and over and over again you will see references to seeking and finding—whether it is from the Holy Spirit's point of view, where you seek the problem in your mind and then you find the problem in your mind, or the ego's point of view which is always to seek outside yourself for a solution. According to the ego, the problem is outside yourself, and if you look outside yourself in the world, you will find a solution.  
  
So the theme of the section is Jesus saying: "Seek not outside yourself." The problem is not outside yourself, and therefore the solution is not outside yourself. The ego continually attempts to seek a solution to a problem, but it will never find it. It doesn't tell you that you will never find the solution. When you don't find the solution, the ego says it is because you haven't tried hard enough, or you are not smart enough. Or it says to wait a hundred years and then a cure to this illness you have will be found. It is always that at some later point you will find it. What the ego never tells you is that the whole system, which is the world, is set up so that you will never find a solution, because the solution to the problem is in the mind. And the ego will never let us remember the mind. Therefore, what Jesus is exhorting us here in this section is to "seek not outside yourself" for the solution to your problems.

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

Let's turn back now to the "Rules for Decision." We are at the end of the fifth rule, which is that we hope that we have been wrong. We looked at "Seek Not Outside Yourself" to really elaborate and make clear why it is that we are wrong, and just how wrong we are. So it is not just being wrong about a specific thing; it is being wrong about the very substance of our existence. So the last line before Rule 6 is:  
  
**(T-30.I.10:3)But this much reason have you now attained; you would be better off if you were wrong**[because that is the way that we will be happy].  
  
And now we are going to move to Rule 6.  
  
**(T-30.I.11:1-4) (6) This tiny grain of wisdom will suffice to take you further. You are not coerced, but merely hope to get a thing you want. And you can say in perfect honesty: *I want another way to look at this*.**  
  
"This tiny grain of wisdom" is the idea that you would be better off if you were wrong. So you still have not fully accepted that you are wrong and Jesus is right. But you now recognize—with hope—that you really would be better off if you were wrong. You are not convinced yet that you are wrong, but at least you are open to the suggestion that you are wrong and he is right. Remember, we take very small steps.  
  
Sentence 2 is the same idea as the one we saw in the preceding rule. Nobody is forcing this on you. This is something you want. This is why this takes so much time: because you have to be convinced that you are not losing anything. That is the real fear: I am really afraid that if I do what Jesus says and I give up my specialness and all the things that I value in the world, there will be nothing left. There still is that thought in my mind that the ego just may be right, and God can't be trusted. That is what takes so long, and that is why it is so important that your experience of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, and your experience of the Course be of a very, very gentle teaching. Nobody is forcing you to do anything, at any time. All that Jesus is doing is making a suggestion that you consider what he is teaching you, and that you would be better off with him than with your ego.  
  
There are two lines in the text, something like four hundred pages apart, when put together read: "Resign now as your own teacher, for you have been badly taught" (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). And basically what he is saying is: "Look honestly at what your ego has taught you and realize that it hasn't done very well with you. You are *not* happy. You get a few crumbs every once in a while, but the happiness doesn't last. And you spend all of your time trying to deny how unhappy you really are. So why don't you give me a shot?" That is what he is asking for here. That is why he urges you to take very small steps, fully aware that you are going to be terrified with each step you take. So all you have to do is just think about what he is teaching you here (which obviously makes very good sense), and then think about what *you* have taught yourself, and have let the world teach you. Then realize that that makes no sense at all.

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

**(T-30.I.12) (7) This final step is but acknowledgment of lack of opposition to be helped. It is a statement of an open mind, not certain yet, but willing to be shown: *Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?*Thus you now can ask a question that makes sense, and so the answer will make sense as well. Nor will you fight against it** [the answer]**, for you see that it is you who will be helped by it.**  
  
Another way of understanding all of this is that, recalling that original ontological moment, the ego made us believe that the Holy Spirit was an enemy. This is extremely important to understand, because this is what set into motion a whole series of thoughts within ourselves. And the end product of that process is the formation of formal religions. The ego makes the Holy Spirit the enemy, because He is seen as representing God, Who has made sin real. Where would formal religion be without sin? This God, Who obviously is the ego's God of specialness, has made sin real, and then threatens us with punishment if we don't do what he wants. So that God is now perceived as an enemy, and we are in opposition to Him. That is the whole idea of a battleground. That really is what the ego thought system is and what the wrong mind is: a battleground where we are pitted against God—where God is hell-bent on destroying us because of our sin against Him. All this obviously is made up, but this is the ego's fairy tale to help us *not* pay attention to the Holy Spirit, and to have us become afraid of remaining within the mind, which is now a battlefield. It's like a mine field, where the ego says: "Watch where you walk, because if you take one wrong step, you will be blown up."  
  
So what has been established is that God, truth, love, the Holy Spirit, Jesus, salvation, forgiveness—all these words really are synonyms here—are all seen as the enemy and in opposition to us. If you read "The Laws of Chaos" again in Chapter 23, you will recognize what those five laws are all about: the insanity of believing we are in opposition to God, and God (the insane God that we have made up) is in opposition to us. And there is no hope. That same idea is carried through in the teachers' manual, in the section "How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts?" which is a very powerful and succinct description of this insanity. And it, too, says there is no hope. That is where the phrase: "Kill or be killed" is found. There is no hope. The only hope there is, is to forget—that is the ego's use of denial. This whole idea is so fraught with terror (that at any moment God is going to swoop down and destroy us), that the only way we can deal with it is to just forget the whole thing, and run away from our minds and make up a world in which we hide—and hope against hope against hope that we will never ever think of this again.  
  
The only problem is that the thought seeps through all the time. It seeps through in religions. You find it in the Bible. You find it in all kinds of things—even in systems which are not religious in form. You find it in the *Chicken Little* fairy tale—that the sky is going to come crashing down. So the thought always seeps through. And as it does, we always try to kind of push it away or rationalize it away, but not make it real for ourselves. So this is what Jesus is up against with this course, which is why he is fully aware that nobody is going to pay any attention to this—certainly not right away. There is an inherent distrust of him, because he represents God's truth and God's Love. And the ego has taught us not to trust God's truth—it will destroy you. We are the direct product, the shadow of that thought system. If the body is the embodiment of the ego, and the ego is the thought system that proclaims that we have sinned against God, God will destroy us as punishment for our sin, as we are the embodiment of that thought system. Then, within the very fiber of our being is this thought that we can't trust God, we can't trust the Holy Spirit, we can't trust Jesus. If you read both the New Testament and the Old Testament, it becomes very obvious why you should not trust God. You make one false move and you are finished!  
  
The New Testament is just as brutal as the Old Testament. Christians used to pride themselves that theirs was a civilized Bible and was all about love, and the Old Testament was all about judgment and law and everything else. And they are not aware that it is a continuation of the same book. Whether you read the Bible as a Jew or as a Christian, you will tremble in your boots. You know that if you make one false move, it is all over for you. Now why was the book written that way? And why does that book have such a hold on Western consciousness? Because it tells the truth from the ego's point of view. And we are creatures of the ego, so we recognize it. Like is always attracted to like: this speaks to us. That is what Jesus is up against with this course. And that is why it is so easy to misinterpret this and change it around and distort it. It says the exact opposite, not only of what you believe, but of what you believe you are. This is why he keeps talking about the idea that you believe that he is in opposition to you. So at some point you must begin to understand that there is something very, very wrong with your thinking. And so what you find in this section is a very simple, yet clear description of that process of going back and forth—which really means to examine what you really believe—which means you really have to get to the heart of what your thought system is, and how you really think you know what is best.  
  
Rule 7 "*Perhaps there is another way to look at this. What can I lose by asking?*" is somewhat tentative, right? It is not a bold affirmation of what you want, but at least it is saying: "I can't lose anything because I know that I am already a loser. I can't lose any more than I have already lost."  
  
So, at least you now have recognized that the ego is not right, because the ego says: "If you ask, you are going to lose a great deal; you are going to lose your life. If you ask for the Holy Spirit's help, or for Jesus' help, you are going to lose." What this rule is really expressing is the breaking of the allegiance to the ego. In this original instant when we chose the ego, what we basically did was pledge an eternal oath that we would never ever forsake the ego. The ego became our friend, and we "put all of our eggs in its basket," vowing never to trust the Holy Spirit or Jesus again. What this passage is now saying as part of this process is that perhaps it is the ego we can't trust. So since our trust in the ego hasn't brought us anything worthwhile at all, what can we lose by asking the other side? It at least opens up the possibility.  
  
These, then, are the seven rules. The process doesn't stop, but this is as far as Jesus goes here. And you don't have to go any further, because the door is open. Remember again that what the miracle does is basically leave that door open. It brings you back to your mind and reminds you that you do have a choice. It doesn't make the choice *for* you, but it says that you *do* have a choice. That is exactly the position we are in now, after this seventh rule. We are at least now saying we have a choice. We haven't made that right choice, but at least we know that we haven't. And that is as far as this course will take you because that is as far as it *has* to take you. Once you get that far, the rest is inevitable.

**Part XIII  
Rule 7 (cont.) and Conclusion**

***Editor's Note:****A line-by-line commentary was presented on the remaining paragraphs in the "Rules for Decision" section. Some excerpts follow:*

**(T-30.I.14:1-3) We said you can begin a happy day with the determination not to make decisions by yourself. This seems to be a real decision in itself. And yet, you *cannot* make decisions by yourself.**  
  
If you think he is bringing you back to square one, you are absolutely right. Except now he is saying that he can talk to you about this on another level. As we will see, he is going to talk about this first rule in a different way from what he did at the beginning, because now you have been through the process and have a better understanding—at least that is the assumption of this section—of your investment in being right, and how being right does not make you happy. In fact, it makes you very *un*happy. And again, this basically is the way he approaches everything in the text, which is why he says the same thing over and over again. He is gently leading you through a process, even if you are not aware of his doing so, which will help you get past a lot of your investment in your ego, so you can begin to understand what he says on page one, even though he says it on page two, and ten, and twenty, and all the way through.  
  
So now he is taking us back to that first rule, but he is taking it to a deeper level of sophistication. What he is going to explain now—let me do it first—is that the decision maker *must* decide between the ego or the Holy Spirit. He cannot decide with *neither* of them; he cannot decide with *both* of them. This is why it is not a decision. The rule of the mind is that the decision maker cannot do anything without either the ego or the Holy Spirit. It is as if the decision maker is in neutral, and no matter how much gas he gives to the accelerator pedal, the car won't go until he engages one of two gears. The ego's gear will go backwards, the Holy Spirit's will go forwards, just to carry the analogy further. But he must do one or the other. He can't do both. You can't put your car in reverse and forward at the same time. And if you stay in neutral, nothing happens. This is exactly what he is talking about in terms of the decision maker, or the power of the mind to choose. You must choose one or the other. Not neither, and not both. You can certainly go back and forth, as everyone does. So again, this highlights even more the idea of how important it is to know that you have a choice, and that you be fully aware of what is involved in both choices.  
  
That is what we have seen in this section, and certainly the whole Course is about this, where Jesus very painstakingly sets out for us what the ego's thought system is like, and what will happen when you choose it—all the horrors of specialness, all the ravages of fear, all the awfulness that occurs when you choose the ego. But you must know that, because without that you can't make a meaningful choice. On the other hand, he then explains what happens if you choose *him*. And when you see clearly what the choice is between, what the alternatives are, then there is no problem in choosing. And again, that is what the miracle does. It makes it clear to us (1) that we have a choice, and (2) what the choice is between. So that is what he is saying now: you cannot make decisions by yourself.

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**(T-30.I.14:6-7) The first rule, then, is not coercion, but a simple statement of a simple fact. You will not make decisions by yourself whatever you decide.**  
  
Because you can't make decisions by yourself! Remember he is talking about the same rule, but totally differently. In the first presentation of Rule 1, Jesus meant: don't decide with your ego; decide with me. Now he is understanding this in a more sophisticated way (because we have gone through this process), which means that you *can't* decide by yourself—you must choose either your ego or the Holy Spirit. What is important about this is, if what he is saying is true (that you must choose between the ego and the Holy Spirit), *who* is the you that is choosing? In other words, what this statement is reflecting is that you do indeed have a decision maker. There is a part of your mind that chooses between the ego and the Holy Spirit. Why is that important? Because then you are no longer your ego. See, the ego had us convinced that when we chose the ego, that was the end of the ballgame: we *were* the ego. There was no longer any Holy Spirit. God now became a split-off part of our own self. And there was nothing else. That is why the world is so hopeless and there is so much pain, suffering, and misery, culminating in death. Because there is no hope. When we chose the ego, we became the ego, and for all intents and purposes, the right mind disappeared. In reality, of course, it didn't—but we believe it did. God disappeared, and His place was taken by an idol; which is a split-off part of our own ego self.  
  
So what he is reflecting here is that that is not true. You are not the ego. You *chose* the ego. And there is a part of your mind—which we are calling the decision maker—that chooses the ego. And if it chose the ego, it can now make another choice. That is why this is so important. The *you* that he is addressing when he says that "you will not make decisions by yourself" is the decision maker. That is the Son of God—the one who chooses—and therefore the one who has tremendous power in his mind. So the idea is to begin to separate yourself from your ego, which is why looking at your ego is so essential to forgiveness. In fact, it *is*forgiveness. If you are looking at your ego, who is the you that is looking at your ego? Obviously it is not your ego! Again, this is a very tightly argued, logical course. Even if you may not agree with it or like it, the logic is very tightly presented. If you are looking at your ego, you *cannot* be your ego. You must be something separate from your ego that is looking at it. If you are looking at your ego with judgment, you are not looking at all. Then it is just the ego playing games with you. But when you look without judgment and say: "Oh, there's my ego again. It's up to its old tricks of attacking love, attacking this one, attacking that one, making trouble, making me sick, making everybody else sick, confusing me, making the world real, making the body real . . . " and then say: "Ah, that's my ego, what else is new? That's what egos do." Then you are beginning the process of separating yourself out from that thought system. You are breaking the identification that got the whole world in trouble—in fact, that *made* the whole world. Remember again: when the Son of God chose the ego, he *became* the ego, and he knew nothing else. Jesus comes along and says: "Wait a minute, there is something else. Look at me and you will see the reflection of that something else in you." That is what his message was 2,000 years ago, and that is what it is again now in the Course. That is what you have to understand—that you are *not* the ego. That is why it is so important again, to be able to look at it without judging it. When you judge it, you make it real.  
  
Another way of saying this, which is what I said earlier, is that the ego has no power within itself. It has absolutely no power within itself. When you identify with it, you give it total power. The power rests in the decision maker—in the power of the Son's mind to choose. What gives the ego thought system its power is your identification with it. Again, all the seeming power that the ego has, on a physical level, on an emotional level, on a pseudospiritual level is all found within the Son's belief in it.  
  
When you begin to separate out from it, the ego begins to lose its power. And as you separate more and more, its power wanes more and more, until at the very end you are totally separated from it. This means you now choose the Holy Spirit, because it is *one or the other*. Whatever you invest in the ego, you have taken from the Holy Spirit; whatever you invest in the Holy Spirit, you have taken from the ego. When all the power is gone, then the ego, as I said before, disappears back into its own nothingness. The process of looking is disengaging the gears. Then the ego will just disappear. What gives the ego its power is your having joined with it, your identification with it. When you *fight* against it, obviously you make it very real. That is why you don't want to fight it. When you want to *change* it, you are making it real. When you want to *love* it and embrace it, you are making it real. When you look at it and smile gently and sweetly at it, then it begins to disappear, because then you are saying: "This is just a silly idea." And you go back to that original mistake when we all looked at the "tiny, mad idea" and said it was serious. Now you begin the process of undoing that. You look at the "tiny, mad idea" in whatever form it comes to you in your experience, and say: "This is not serious; this is silly!" But you must be able to step back and look at it.

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**(T-30.I.15:1-4) Your day is not at random. It is set by what you choose to live it with**[the ego or the Holy Spirit]**, and how the friend whose counsel you have sought perceives your happiness. You always ask advice before you can decide on anything. Let this be understood, and you can see there cannot be coercion here, nor grounds for opposition that you may be free.**  
  
You can see how often in this section he comes back to this idea of coercion and opposition, because again, he is fully aware of how people feel about him. He is fully aware of how people feel about his course. Unfortunately, the students of the Course are *not* fully aware of how they feel about the Course. But *he* is fully aware of how they feel about it. It would be good if they *asked* him, instead of judging themselves.  
  
Again, it is so easy to feel you are being coerced—that Jesus is stronger, he represents God, and you don't stand a chance. So you better do what he says, even though you don't particularly like it. That is all part of the ego's version of God, which is a split-off part of itself. That God *is* harsh, and that God *does* demand, and that God is hardly loving. He may act loving when you give Him what He wants, but when you don't, He is fierce. That is the God, again, that we believe in, because that is the God we made. And you know you made up that God and still believe in it because it was to run away from that God that the world was made. The world was made to hide from that ferocious God, a God we believed was in opposition to us, because that God believes we were in opposition to Him. We project everything onto God, so we seem to be the innocent victims. We forget that we threw the first stone, that we attacked first, and the God that we made up was a projection or a split-off part of our own belief in sin and guilt.  
  
So once you understand the purpose that the world was made to serve on the macrocosmic level, and the purpose that the body was made to serve on the microcosmic level, then you have no trouble understanding all these things in the Course. They are all logically deduced from the idea that we made up a God in our own image, a God Who would destroy us. We had to flee from Him and make up a hiding place, which is the world. We had to make up a body, which is our individual hiding place. That is the nature of our existence. We are always running away from God's hatred and His punishment, which the *ego* calls God's love. That is why love is so frightening in this world; that is why people then become so frightened of letting other people get close to them, unless they can be in control. The fear is always: if I let go of my guard, or my defenses, I'll be vulnerable, and I will be hurt, and I will be crushed. This does not make you alone in the world as you experience this. Everybody experiences this.  
  
Remember, the world was made as a hiding place, a defense, an attack on God. And the body is the individual fortress that you make to protect you from the split-off part of yourself you don't want anything to do with. Again, we made up that wrathful God to get rid of the guilt we found unacceptable in ourselves. That is the paradigm that underlies what we do all the time in every aspect of our dream. There is a part of myself I don't like: I split it off, I project it out, *I make you up*—and then, of course, I have to hate you, because I believe you are going to do back to me what I did to you. I make up a body as a fortress and I give you a body, because that keeps you separate from me, just as my body keeps me separate from you. I am terrified then of having those boundaries violated: that is why people get so crazy about boundary violations. Nations get crazy about it, individual people get crazy about it, homeowners get crazy about it—everybody gets crazy about it. It doesn't matter whether you are talking about a physical boundary or a psychological boundary, because that is what protects you from the wrath of God. Everybody has that thought inside. That is why you are not going to willingly embrace this course without a lot of hard work and practice. Again, if you read this section very carefully, you will see how often Jesus talks about this issue of opposition and coercion. That is what we believe. That is why, again, there are seven rules for decision instead of one—because you are so terrified of that first one!

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**(T-30.I.16:8-9) Whose kingdom is the world for you today? What kind of day will you decide to have?**  
  
These basically then are the final questions of the section. Whose kingdom is the world for you today? Is it the kingdom of the ego, of anger, specialness, murder, death; or the kingdom of the Holy Spirit, which is a kingdom of forgiveness and peace? And what you choose will determine the kind of day that you have.  
  
What happens after this paragraph is that there is an intervening step which is not specified. The intervening step is that you have made the right choice, i.e., to have Jesus or the Holy Spirit be your adviser. You will then understand what Jesus discusses in the last paragraph. Having already joined with the Holy Spirit allows you to understand the importance of not seeing someone else's interests as separate from your own. What gets talked about in the last paragraph is not joining with the Holy Spirit—you have already done that. That is the intervening step which is not specified here. Once you join with Jesus or the Holy Spirit, you understand that when you meet someone, it is a holy encounter. And what he is really talking about, which is what I will elaborate on later, is that this special person that you are involved with (and you are always involved with one person in any given moment in your life—one special person who is the object of your attention and thoughts) is literally a split-off part of a larger self that you are a split-off part of. And it is joining with that other person who you think is outside you (because you think *you* are outside the mind) that really represents joining or re-uniting with yourself. Joining is undoing that dynamic of splitting off and making up a self that you now believe is in another person and is outside you. There is no way you can understand that without first joining with the Holy Spirit. What follows from these questions "Whose kingdom is the world for you today? What kind of day will you decide to have?" is that you then choose that it is Jesus. And once you do that, you will understand what he teaches you in the next paragraph.

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**SUMMARY**  
  
Before moving on to the final part of the workshop, I want to give a brief summary of what we have covered:  
  
At the beginning, when we had the "tiny, mad idea," when we believed we had separated from God, our already split mind—the mind that we believed had split off from God—now split again, and we split into two thought systems: the ego's and the Holy Spirit's. The ego's thought system says that the separation is real, and therefore I am real as a separated self. The Holy Spirit's thought system, which is reflected in the Atonement principle, says the separation never happened, and the person you think you are does not exist. You remain at home in God.  
  
The decision maker, which is the part of our minds that has to choose between these two thought systems, chose the ego. At that point what it did was split off from the Holy Spirit, so that all that seemed to be reality now was the ego's thought system. And as we have seen, when we chose the ego thought system, we *became* the ego thought system. A psychological term for describing this is "dissociation," where you disassociate from something: you split it off. That is what the word literally means: you were associated with the Holy Spirit and now you disassociate—you move away from (“dis” being a negative prefix). So dissociation merely refers to the splitting off, which specifically here means that we split off from the Holy Spirit, thereby forgetting about the Holy Spirit. What we split off *to*, namely the ego, became the only reality for us. Then the ego made up its whole big story, which is basically what attracted us in the first place: the idea that specialness was really grand and that we really would be happy being right, while God would be wrong. Then following the ego's thought system in terms of its inevitable logic, the Love of God becomes fearsome, avenging, wrathful, and punitive. So we have to escape, and then we make up the world.  
  
What happens when we make up the world is that we split off, basically, from our mind. So in a sense we are always going through a process of splitting off. This process of splitting off from the mind—projecting out into the world—gives rise to the whole process of fragmentation. The section "The Substitute Reality," at the beginning of Chapter 18, explains and describes that clearly. The outcome of this process of fragmenting and subdividing, and subdividing still again, over and over and over again, is this world—what the Hindus refer to as a world of multiplicity. In our context, we can refer to it as a world of fragmentation and separation: the exact opposite of wholeness. And that one Son of God that made this choice then fragmented into billions and billions of fragments. Each of us, now, is a representation of one of those fragments. It believes it is on its own, and is its own self-contained universe.  
  
And at this point, we seem hopelessly trapped, because there is no way out once we find ourselves here. There is no way, that is, except to remember that we are not here, and to remember that all this came about because we simply made the wrong choice. We fell into a state of mindlessness, a state of a deep sleep, and the only way to awaken from this sleep and from this dream is to remember. This, once again, is what the miracle does: it reminds us that all this came about simply because we made the wrong choice. We chose *against* the Holy Spirit, *against* truth. We dissociated from it, and then identified with the thought system of the ego. That is the problem. The solution then is remembering that.  
  
Jesus is the name we give to one of those fragments, one of those parts of the Sonship who *remembered*who we all are. There is nothing in the Course that would indicate when he remembered—everybody always wants to know when he did it. Please don't go by the Bible, because the writers of the Bible certainly did not know anything about Jesus—otherwise the book would not have turned out the way it did. Basically you have to go within yourself, and get that answer for yourself. And, of course, it doesn't matter *when* he remembered, because there is no time anyway. So it simply becomes something that you would like to argue about when you get a little drunk or something. There's no point to it. Simply be grateful that he did.  
  
Since he is part of the Sonship, and we are all joined as one thought in that mind, then he remains within our mind as the shining example and reminder that we can do what he did. What he did was realize that all this was silly. When the Course says that the Son of God remembered not to laugh . . . *he* laughed, because he realized it is simply preposterous that we could be separate from our Creator and our Source—that a part of God could wrench itself away from the All and the Everything. Therefore, when we join with Jesus, we are joining with that thought. In the Course he says: "I am in charge of the process of Atonement" (T-1.III.1:1). Elsewhere he says: "I *am* the Atonement" (T-I.III.4:1)—because he is the correction principle. In him is found the answer, because in his remembering that nothing happened he *knew* that he was still part of the Christ. And Christ is perfectly one, perfectly whole, and perfectly united with His Source. So by joining with Jesus, we are joining with that oneness, and therefore we are joining with Christ.  
  
That is why it is so important that you join with him—because he is the symbol of the end of the dream. He *is*the Atonement principle. He says also, earlier in the text, that the Atonement principle which came into existence at the time the separation seemed to occur (which is what the Holy Spirit is), is basically too general, and had to be put into action (T-2.II.4:2-3). What he really means by that was that it needed a concrete symbol within the world that people could identify and recognize. *He* is that symbol. He makes it clear that he is not the only symbol. He does say he is the first. But clearly he is not the only symbol. For our purposes, since we are studying within the context of his course, we will speak of him as the symbol. But it is also important that you realize that he is not the only one. But he is the one who set the Atonement principle in motion—the phrase used in the Course (C-6.2:4). And all these really are metaphors to simply describe the fact that Jesus, within our dream, is the symbol of the Atonement principle—that the separation from God never happened. If he is the Love of God, if he is the manifestation of the Love of God in form and in the dream, then by joining with him and accepting his love as truth, what we are really doing is joining with the same principle that he represents.  
  
Then we will become like him, as expressed in that beautiful poem of Helen's, "A Jesus Prayer." He says in the Course that he is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. He then asks at one point that we become *his*manifestation in the world (C-6.5:1). So just as he has symbolized for all of us the Love of God in the presence of the dream, he asks, as students of his course, that we become more and more like him, so we would become symbols within the dream for other people of what it means to really accept the Atonement for yourself. In one sense, you could say that that is one of the purposes of the Course: to have people do this. Basically, it only takes one, as we have seen, because there is only one Son. But as long as there is the illusion of many, then you have the illusion that many people have to do this. It is an illusion, as we have already seen before. This whole idea of quantification of salvation is an illusion. But again, as long as we believe that we are here, we have that illusion. So the purpose of the Course is to have more and more people become like Jesus. Even though in reality we are all only one person, we are all split-off parts of one person.

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I want to do one more section with you before we go over the last paragraph of the "Rules for Decision" and conclude the workshop. This is a section in Chapter 8 of the text called "The Undivided Will of the Sonship." It is a very beautiful and moving section on a number of levels, especially in terms of the clarity of what Jesus says, as well as his plea for all of his students to join with him. It is one of the clearest statements in the Course on this theme, although it is referred to in many, many different places.

***Editor's Note:****A line-by-line commentary followed on "The Undivided Will of the Sonship" and then the last paragraph of "The Rules for Decision." This commentary has not been included in these excerpts. We conclude this series with one of Helen Schucman's lovelier poems,*“A Jesus Prayer,”*which was read as a meditation during the workshop.*

For those unfamiliar with Helen's poetry: It is collected in a book called *The Gifts of God*. Her poetry "came" and was written down the same way the Course was. These were not poems that Helen herself wrote, as she might have written something herself. She experienced the same process she did when she took down the Course. The only difference is that with the poetry, she always felt that her voice was somehow part of it, as well as Jesus'—that basically, the poetry was a collaborative venture, while the Course was not. In other words, she felt that she had absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with the transmission or the scribing of the Course. But with the poetry she felt that her voice was like a part of Jesus' in doing this—not her voice as she identified herself as an ego. Many of the poems come in the first person, where it is Helen's voice that is the speaker. All of the poems—the early poems that are relatively simple, as well as the later poems that are more complex—deal with themes that are in the Course in one way or another.  
  
There is one whole series of poems that deal specifically with Jesus and with Helen's relationship with Jesus. This one, “A Jesus Prayer,” which is one of my favorite poems, does not specifically deal with Helen, though. The speaker in the poem really should be each of you. It is really a prayer addressed from each of us to Jesus. And it does make very clear his importance in our lives—the model that he holds up to us, that we can become like him and join with him. Another important theme in this poem is that in joining with him we also are joining with everyone else. So what you find in this poem is exactly what we will be spending time talking about now, namely the importance of our joining with him and joining with everyone else, and that in fact it is impossible to join with everyone else *without* joining with him, and equally impossible to be joined with him and not with everyone else.  
  
For those of you who don't know the poem, let me also mention that the poem begins with the phrase: "A Child, a Man, and then a Spirit"—which refers to Jesus and his life. Two stanzas down, the same phrase appears, but now it refers to us—again with the hope that we would become like him. And the lines at the very end of the poem are based upon the prayer of Cardinal Newman, a famous 19th-century convert to Catholicism, in which he basically said what is echoed here. His prayer was that as people would look on him, they would not see him, but only Jesus. It is with that prayer that this poem ends.

**A JESUS PRAYER**  
  
A Child, a Man and then a Spirit, come  
In all Your loveliness. Unless You shine  
Upon my life, it is a loss to You,  
And what is loss to You is also mine.  
  
I cannot calculate why I am here  
Except for this: I know that I have come  
to seek You here and find You. In Your life  
You show the way to my eternal home.  
  
A child, a man and then a spirit. So  
I follow in the way You show to me  
That I may come at last to be like You.  
What but Your likeness would I want to be?  
  
There is a silence where You speak to me  
And give me words of love to say for You  
To those You send to me. And I am blessed  
Because in them I see You shining through.  
  
There is no gratitude that I can give  
For such a gift. The light around Your head  
Must speak for me, for I am dumb beside  
Your gentle hand with which my soul is led.  
  
I take Your gift in holy hands, for You  
Have blessed them with Your own. Come, brothers, see  
How like to Christ am I, and I to you  
Whom He has blessed and holds as one with me.  
  
A perfect picture of what I can be  
You show to me, that I might help renew  
Your brothers' failing sight. As they look up  
Let them not look on me, but only You.