**What It Means to Be a Teacher of God**

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

**Part I**

I have structured the topic, *what it means to be a teacher of God*, into three basic categories, based on the more important sections in the teachers' manual that deal with the teacher of God. The first is the characteristics of God's teachers, at the beginning of the manual (M-4). The second is the theme of magic, an extremely important issue in the manual, and a crucial one for anyone who works with the Course. We will discuss not only what magic thoughts are and how they interfere with our functioning, but also the important issue of how one deals with anger, which is closely related to the concept of magic thoughts. The final theme is healing and the relationship between teaching and healing, which actually are the same. So these are the three basic areas of being a teacher of God that we will talk about.

I will begin by saying a few words of introduction about what a teacher of God is and is not. The phrase *a teacher of God*does not appear in the text or the workbook at all—it is used only in the manual. Basically, a teacher of God is anyone who has accepted his or her function, which is to teach and learn forgiveness. The Course says that "the sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself" (T-2.V.5:1; T-5.V.7:8; M-7.3:2). At the moment that we accept that as why we are here, we become a teacher. The Course repeatedly equates teaching and learning. We teach what we are learning and, as we teach it, we learn it. We are all teaching and learning all the time. This teaching-learning theme is reflected in the very structure of the Course. Its three books include a textbook, which obviously we are supposed to study; a workbook, which obviously is supposed to teach us as we practice its lessons, and a teachers' manual, which reminds us of our teaching-learning function. So the curriculum, by its very structure, emphasizes that we are all teachers and students at the same time.

A lovely summary of what it means to be a teacher of God is given early in the manual:

A teacher of God is anyone who chooses to be one. His qualifications consist solely in this; somehow, somewhere he has made a deliberate choice in which he did not see his interests as apart from someone else's (M-1.1:1-2).

The principle criterion that establishes one as a teacher of God is that he sees joining, and not separation, as his reality. This is also a way of characterizing the difference between a holy relationship and a special relationship. In a special relationship, we always see our interests as different and separate and more important than anyone else's. In our minds, then, this justifies the murderous attack that is the underlying content of specialness. In a holy relationship, on the other hand, I do not perceive you as separate from me nor as having interests separate from mine. Rather, we go to Heaven together. This shift is not on the level of form—it occurs in my mind, so that I do not perceive my salvation as separate from or independent of you.

Thus, attacking you in the belief that my attack on you will let me off the hook so I will feel better will keep me in the ego's hell. In the shift to a holy relationship, I recognize that you are really one with me and we both share the same problem. We and everyone else on this earth believe that we are trapped in the world without any hope of getting free. And in joining with you, I realize that we share the common interest of awakening from this nightmare dream. That is what characterizes the teacher of God and makes the relationship holy. Not that we identify with that purpose perfectly. If we did, we would not be here. That simply is what our goal has become. This is a theme that we will return to over and over again in this workshop.

As in many other areas of its teachings, the Course talks about *a teacher of God* on two levels. It is clear in the introduction to the section on the characteristics of God's teachers that the characteristics belong to what the Course refers to as the "advanced teachers of God" (M-4.2:2)—those who have already learned some of the more basic lessons of forgiveness. Once those basic lessons are learned, then we share in the ten characteristics.

On another level, however, we are all teachers because we are all learning. On this level, being a teacher of God does not mean that we have mastered all the lessons. In fact, a point is made in the text that is repeated in the characteristics of God's teachers, which should always be remembered as a comfort: readiness does not mean mastery (T-2.VII.7; M-4.IX.1:10). We can be ready to teach without having mastered the curriculum. If that were not true, none of us could do anything because, obviously, none of us has mastered the curriculum of the Course.

So we learn the Course—and obviously this is meant, not intellectually, but experientially—by learning our forgiveness lessons. The more we learn them, the more we teach them. And as we teach them, we are also learning them. Teaching and learning are always reciprocal.

A teacher of God is not someone who teaches great things or does great things in the world. Rather, a teacher of God is someone who has accepted his purpose in this world as learning forgiveness. When the Course talks about function, it is not talking about anything external. It is talking only about accepting a function of forgiveness. And ultimately, of course, we do not forgive the person out there. We forgive ourselves.

Once we accept forgiveness as our purpose—not once we have learned it, but once we have accepted it as our purpose—then we are established as teachers. And then I will see that everything that happens in my daily life, as well as what happens in the course of my whole life, is part of a classroom in which I learn my lessons of forgiveness. So it does not matter whether things go well or things do not go well as I evaluate them. I will realize they are all the same because they all share the same purpose. The Course says the only question we should ask about anything is: what is it for? (T-4.V.6:7-9). If we listen to the ego, then everything is for establishing that we are victims or somebody else is a victim. And everything in the world is seen from that point of view—the whole theme of victimization is alive and well in this world. And that, of course, keeps the ego alive and well.

The Holy Spirit, in contrast, sees everything in this world as serving the purpose of undoing that belief in victimization—that is what forgiveness does. Once we accept forgiveness as our function, we become teachers of God, who see everything in this world as enabling us to learn the lesson that there are no victims. And as we learn it, the Love of the Holy Spirit and of Jesus extends through us. And that teaches others. It is not our words or actions or behavior that teach—it is the Love of God through us that teaches simply by its presence.

The Course, as we know, makes a distinction between form and content. The form is our words, our behavior, and our deeds. But those are not what teach. It is our *content* that teaches. In other words, if love is in my mind and there is nothing else extending through me, then no matter what I am doing or not doing, the message I am teaching is love. It makes no difference whether I am standing up in front of a class teaching *A Course in Miracles* or I am teaching a third grade class how to read and write and add. It is not the form that teaches—it is the content in my mind that teaches. The words and the behavior become simply the means through which that content or that love in my mind is expressed.

Let us go to the teachers' manual now, and we will start with the characteristics of God's teachers (M-4). We will discuss these ten characteristics in depth—this is actually a good way of talking about what the whole Course is about. We will begin with the Introduction.

**(1:1-2) The surface traits of God's teachers are not at all alike. They do not look alike to the body's eyes, they come from vastly different backgrounds, their experiences of the world vary greatly, and their superficial "personalities" are quite distinct.**

This is obvious to anyone. Everyone looks different from everyone else. We are all different in form. The characteristics this is addressing are of content, of attitude—not how we look, or what we say or do, but basically how we think and the characteristics of that thinking.

**(1:3) Nor, at the beginning stages of their functioning as teachers of God, have they as yet acquired the deeper characteristics that will establish them as what they are.**

This is the initial level of being a teacher, the first of the two levels I described earlier. The "beginning stages" would be our starting out on the journey of forgiveness, which comes with the recognition that that is our purpose in being here. We have not yet begun the process of truly learning and integrating what these lessons are—we are still starting out.

**(1:4) God gives special gifts to His teachers, because they have a special role in His plan for Atonement.**

This is one of those statements which, if taken out of context, does make it sound as if God has favorites, which is clearly antithetical to everything the Course is saying. This really is saying that those whom the Course would call "advanced teachers"—those who really have let go of their investment in guilt, separation, attack, fear, etc.—have accepted the gifts that are already there. And basically there is only one gift from God—the gift of Love. Or we could say the gift of freedom or the gift of eternal life—all different aspects of the same basic gift. None of these aspects can be known in this world, as we will read at the end of this section on the characteristics (M-4.X.3). What is known in this world is the *reflection* of this gift of Love.

The ten characteristics of God's teachers then are reflections of this one gift that God has already given to all of us. So when the Course says here that God gives His special gifts, it really is that the advanced teachers who have set aside their egos, are allowing themselves to accept and experience God's Love. That Love then will manifest itself in their daily living through these ten characteristics. Please do not think that God favors certain people or gives His gifts only to those who are good, etc.

**(1:5) Their specialness is, of course, only temporary; set in time as a means of leading out of time.**

In this sense, someone like Jesus is special. All special relationships are based on the idea that we are different from each other. You have something special that I need and I want to get it from you—that is special love. Or you have certain special traits that I hate, and therefore I am justified in attacking you—that is special hate. But they are all predicated on the idea that we are different. The Course makes it very clear that we are different in time, but we are not different in eternity. Hence, the Course talks about both beginning and advanced stages of a teacher of God. The section on *trust* (M-4.I) describes six stages in the development of trust. It is obviously talking about differences—different people will be at different stages. Now there is always the danger of trying to determine who is at what stage and when they got there, etc.—that is an ego trick.

But in this world there are differences and so Jesus in the Course is basically saying to us, "I am no different from you in eternity, but in time I am different because I am wiser than you are. I have awakened from the dream and I will now reach back and help everyone else awaken from that same dream." Within time there are differences—we are not asked to deny that. The idea would be that we not make judgments based upon the differences. Because Jesus has already awakened from the dream does not mean that he is any better than anyone else or that God loves him more. It simply means that he loves himself more at this point than we love ourselves. But those differences disappear when the ego disappears. This same idea is expressed when Jesus says, "You are not guiltless in time, but in eternity" (T-13.I.3:2). In the world of time, which is the world of illusion, the world of the dream, we are all guilty. Otherwise we would not be here. But that is not our true reality in Heaven—we are all the same in Heaven. In this world we are not the same.

**(1:6-7) These special gifts, born in the holy relationship toward which the teaching-learning situation is geared, become characteristic of all teachers of God who have advanced in their own learning. In this respect they are all alike.**

What gives birth to these special gifts, then, is the holy relationship. We evolve towards and accept these ten characteristics through the process of letting go of all of our negative feelings about ourselves, about each other and about God—that is forgiveness. As I said earlier, forgiveness does not do anything—it *undoes*. It simply takes away what the ego has put there.

God has given us His Love as our true Identity. But we have covered it over with guilt, hatred, and fear. So we do not have to do anything about the Love of God within us—it is already there. But we do have to identify the interferences that we have placed between ourselves and love's presence in our minds, so that forgiveness can take them away. That is how we advance on our spiritual path.

So forgiveness allows us to accept these special gifts by helping us undo or take away all the ego thoughts that we have put in our minds to take the place of the thought of Love that God gave us. These special gifts, therefore, will be characteristic of all of us once we choose forgiveness. And, as we will see as we review them, for most of the characteristics to have one really implies all the others. All ten are really just different ways of talking about what automatically and inevitably must follow when we let go of our belief in sin and guilt. And forgiveness is the process by which that happens.

**(2:1-2) All differences among the Sons of God are temporary. Nevertheless, in time it can be said that the advanced teachers of God have the following characteristics:**

In the end, all differences will disappear. But as long as we are in time there will be those who are "advanced." Again there is a real danger in trying to identify who is advanced and who is not—it is always the ego that would do that, because the ego is always interested in differences. And if the ego is doing it, we know right from the start it is a mistake. When the ego does anything, it always judges based on form, never content. And that is one of the primary ways of distinguishing a special relationship from a holy one. A special relationship always evaluates love based on form—love for the ego is always quantitative rather than qualitative. It can be measured. Similarly, hatred is always based upon form—I hate something in you or I hate you. I do not recognize that what I hate in you is really what I hate in myself, which means that we are both the same.

All specialness—everything of the ego—is based upon differences. And all differences are evaluated based on form. So when we try to judge who is more or less spiritually advanced, we always use a set of criteria in our minds based on form to make our evaluation.

**Part II**
**What Are the Characteristics of God’s Teachers?
Trust (M-4.I)**

We will begin with trust, which, as the Course explains, is the most important characteristic, because all the others are based on it. As we go through the characteristics we will see that the Course almost always describes them in terms of denying or undoing a characteristic of the ego. In other words, the ten characteristics are not so much positive in and of themselves—rather they are the negation or the denial of what the ego has made real.

An important line in the text—which actually is a principle that helps to clarify the Course's whole thought system—says that "the task of the miracle worker... [is] to deny the denial of truth" (T-12.II.1:5). This extremely important idea is expressed in many different ways throughout the Course, but this is the clearest and most succinct statement of it—our task is to deny the denial of truth. Our task is not to affirm truth. As the Introduction says, the aim of the Course is not to teach or explain the meaning of love. It is to help us in "removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence" (T-in.1:6-7).

So our task is not to affirm truth. It is not to keep saying how wonderful we all are, like a mantra. The idea is to look at the ego's denial of truth, to understand the ego's thought system, and then to say, "This is not the truth." We look at the ego's denial of truth, then deny that its denial is the truth. The ego says its denial of the truth is true—it says that God is not love, but that God is hatred, God is vengeful, and God is to be feared. And that is the denial of truth.

Of course we all have accepted the ego's denial as reality. And that denial is what sets into motion, as I mentioned earlier, the making of the world. The whole world is made as a defense against, and therefore as an attack upon God's Love. So we want to look at the ego thought system, which denies that God is Love, denies that we are children of love, and denies that everyone else is a child of love, and then say that it makes no sense. We do not necessarily do this by confronting the seeming enormity of the ego thought system all at once. That enormity is reflected in each and every choice we make to be angry, to be guilty, to be fearful, to be anxious, to be sick. And so we can look at the denial of truth that the ego has made real in each of these instances and say, "There is another way of looking at this." And that is the whole process of A Course in Miracles.

For example, if I have murderous thoughts towards you because I believe you have treated me unfairly, that is the denial of truth. My ego might say, "It is true—you do deserve to be murdered because you are so sinful, etc." But another part of me might say, "Not only do you deserve to be murdered, but I do as well because I deserved what you did to me because I'm so terrible." So the idea is that we simply look at these thoughts and say, "This makes no sense." In other words, we do not take them seriously—and then they disappear.

So when the Course discusses these ten characteristics, very often it really talks about their opposite. A clear example later on is the section on gentleness (M-4.IV), which begins by talking about harmfulness. The truth is that God is gentle. The denial of truth is that God is harmful, that God is going to hurt us, and that we have to be harmful to protect ourselves. So we look at this line of thinking and we say, "This is silly." When we let go of the harmfulness of the ego, what is left is the gentleness of God. Basically, then, the ten characteristics are all the denial of the denial of truth.

The first and most basic characteristic is trust. Trust is the denial of the ego's denial of truth. The truth of course is that God can be trusted. The ego tells us, "Don't trust God. Don't go anywhere near Him because He will destroy you because of the terrible thing that you have done to Him." The ego has taught us not to trust in God's Love. And it has also taught us not to trust in the Holy Spirit’s presence in our minds, because, the ego tells us, "If you get too close to the Holy Spirit, He will bring you back to God, Who will destroy you." The ego continues, "Don't trust the Holy Spirit. He tells you He's your Friend. He tells you that He loves you. He tells you that the idea that God is angry and wants to destroy you is all made up. Don't believe Him." And we all have believed the ego. We have accepted the denial of truth as true—that God and the Holy Spirit are not to be trusted, but that we should trust the ego instead. So when we speak of trust, we are really talking about looking at what the ego has told us—that we cannot trust God. And then we say, "But that's not true. I can trust Him." That is what these paragraphs are going to address.

**(1:1) This is the foundation on which their ability to fulfill their function rests.**

"Their" of course refers to the advanced teachers of God.

**(1:2-3) Perception is the result of learning. In fact, perception *is* learning, because cause and effect are never separated.**

This principle of cause and effect is a key one in the Course, so let me say a little more about it. On the level of Heaven, God is the first Cause and we, as Christ, are His Effect. If cause and effect are never separated, then we have never left God. And if we have never left God, then the whole separation thought system is wrong. The ego has told us right from the beginning that we did indeed leave God—that the effect has left its cause—and therefore that the separation is real. And because our leaving God constituted an attack on Him, God is angry at us. The principle of the Atonement, which the presence of the Holy Spirit in our mind represents, states that the separation never happened. It is just a silly, mad idea that has had no effect whatsoever. And so, in effect, the Atonement principle says that cause and effect are always one—effect has never left its cause. The ego tells us just the opposite.

The same principle of cause and effect applies to the world. The Course says, "Projection makes perception." In fact, it is stated twice (T-13.V.3:5; T-21.in.1:1). It means that I first look within and establish what is real. From the ego's point of view, I look within and establish that separation and guilt are real, and then I project them out. And then I seem to perceive outside me what I really have first perceived inside me. So if I feel guilty and separated, I will look out on a world in which I judge everybody else as guilty—obviously I am seeing a world that is separate from me. But the problem is not what I am perceiving outside me—that is nothing more than the projection of what is within me.

Therefore, I do not want to change the outside. I want to change my mind—that is where the problem is. In others words, I want to change what I learn within myself, which really means I want to change the teacher I choose. That is why the Course says that the process is simple—there are only two teachers in our minds. And the only choice we ever have to make is which teacher we are going to choose to learn from—the ego or the Holy Spirit.

Our problem is that we cannot tell them apart. The whole thought system and the practice of the Course is learning how to tell these two teachers apart. Once I choose whom I am going to learn from, I will perceive and experience the world—that is really what the Course means by perceive—I will experience the world through the lens of my teacher. When I learn from the ego, I perceive and experience the world of separation and attack. When I learn from the Holy Spirit, I experience the world as a classroom in which everyone—victims and victimizers, good guys and bad guys—are here to learn the same lesson: how to awaken from this nightmare dream. And so that is what "perception is learning" means.

**(1:4-5) The teachers of God have trust in the world, because they have learned it is not governed by the laws the world made up. It is governed by a power that is in them but not of them.**

When the ego is my teacher, I believe in the power of the laws that the ego's world was made by. And these are always laws of separation, attack, loss, pain, guilt, and death. When the Holy Spirit is my teacher, I look through His eyes at a world operating under another set of laws—the laws of forgiveness. This means that although I am not in control of what you do or what the world does, I am in control of the way that I experience it. Therefore, if I choose to identify with the Holy Spirit, I will feel peaceful regardless of what happens. That is the law of the world as interpreted by the Holy Spirit: No matter what happens in the world, I am not a victim because I am only a victim of my own thoughts. I cannot change what the world does, but I can change how I think about what the world does.

The laws of the ego that made up the world are the laws of victims and victimizers. Under these laws, I am not responsible for how I feel, because somebody else has done it to me. The Holy Spirit's law—forgiveness, which is the correction for the ego's laws—says no one is a victim in this world unless one chooses to be. At this point, the problem is not what the world has done to me—rather it is the way that I have chosen to look at what has happened.

And I recognize that this power of God is in my mind, but it is not of my mind. It is not of my ego mind, not of my split mind—it comes from God. And the Holy Spirit is the Presence of that love in my mind.

**Part III**
**What Are the Characteristics of God’s Teachers?
Trust (M-4.I.) (cont.)**

**(M-4.I.1:6-7) It is this power that keeps all things safe. It is through this power that the teachers of God look on a forgiven world.**

Now according to the laws of the world—which are where we have put our trust—certain things in the world protect us and keep us safe. Defenses keep us safe. Attack keeps us safe. Specialness keeps us safe by insuring through its laws that manipulating, cajoling, seducing, and attacking others will get us what we want and need from them. We hold dear all these laws that work within the ego framework. I get what I want from you in this world by making you feel guilty so that you will give it to me. Thus I believe that what keeps me safe is knowing how to control the world around me.

When we identify with the Holy Spirit and with His Love, we do not concern ourselves with questions of safety in the world. That does not mean, however, that we do not do what everybody else does, but rather that our inner peace does not depend on anything that is external. If I keep my mind focused on God's Love, I am always safe because my perception of danger and threat have nothing to do with the outer world. I perceive threat in the world only because I feel guilty over my separation from God and from the Sonship. It is because of that guilt that I believe I should be punished—guilt always demands punishment. All my fear and sense of vulnerability come from my ego thought system, which teaches me that I am guilty. Because I am so guilty and terrible and inadequate and sinful and wretched, I deserve to be punished.

Further, if some aspect of my guilt comes from my attack thoughts against you, I must then believe that you are justified in attacking me in return. And once I believe you are going to attack me in return, then I must believe that I need a defense against your attack and that I am not safe unless I have one. But if I choose to identify with Who I really am as God's Child and as an extension of His Love, there is no guilt, which means there is no fear and no threat of punishment. And I know I am perfectly safe.

Jesus knew this on the cross. Despite what the world would have said was a tremendous threat, he knew he could not be harmed because he knew Who he was. Despite what was being done to his body, he knew he was not his body. He had no guilt in his mind that demanded that he be punished, and therefore he did not perceive the world as threatening and punitive, despite what the body's eyes were seeing. The whole idea is not to believe the body's eyes because, just as with a puppet, eyes simply see what the puppeteer, or the mind, tells them they should see.

Almost any of us in the situation in which Jesus found himself on the cross would say, "I'm in great danger." And underneath that thought is the thought, "I'm in great danger because of the great harm that I have done." Our mind—at that point a mind of fear and of guilt—would dictate that the body should react accordingly. In other words, the body should be fearful and guilty, it should attack and it should be sick and injured and die. Since Jesus' mind was identified only with thoughts of love, his mind gave his body only a message of love. And that is why he says in the Course that the message of the crucifixion is: "Teach only love, for that is what you are" (T-6.I.13:2). That is what he taught—there were no thoughts of guilt, attack, suffering, sickness, or death within his mind.

And so that is what trust means. Jesus trusted that the Holy Spirit's Love is the Love of God and that he was that Love. At that point then, he knew that anything else—any other thought—was a part of a dream that was unreal. In the Course he does not ask us to learn or to teach that lesson in the same form he did, but he does say we should take him as our model. We should learn from what he taught us about how to be defenseless, peaceful, and totally loving, and how to feel totally safe and secure in a situation that to the world appears to be overwhelmingly fearful and threatening.

Fear, thus, does not come from anything external—fear comes from our own guilt. And trust means I trust in the love within me, that it will not punish or crucify me, but that it will protect me simply by being what it is. Because of this power—God's Love, or the Holy Spirit, in my mind—I look on a world that is forgiven. There is no sin within my mind that I have the need to project onto anybody else. In this sense, Jesus had no need to forgive anyone from the cross—nothing in him was attacking anyone. Forgiveness is merely undoing. To look on a forgiven world is to see a world in which there are no thoughts of sin or attack. What we see outside us is simply the mirror of what is inside, in our minds. So if I see only love within, then I will see only love outside, in the form of the correction or the undoing of the ego's attack.

**(2:1) When this power has once been experienced, it is impossible to trust one's own petty strength again.**

Once we have had at least an inkling of the experience of God's Love within us, every other thought that we have is totally undone. Even if we have the experience for only an instant, that instant will be enough—we will nevermore, one hundred percent of the time, believe in the ego. With just one experience of God's Love, we truly know, even for an instant, that we have been forgiven. Then no matter how much we may try in the future to block or screen out that experience, the memory will always remain within us.

**(2:2) Who would attempt to fly with the tiny wings of a sparrow when the mighty power of an eagle has been given him?**

The "sparrow" obviously is the ego and "the mighty power of the eagle" refers to the Holy Spirit. Those same images are used in the text: "Ask not the sparrow how the eagle soars, for those with little wings have not accepted for themselves the power to share with you" (T-20.IV.4:7). In this world, we are always asking the ego to tell us about God and salvation and happiness and peace, instead of asking the Holy Spirit, the presence of God's Love in our minds. This is the same idea: once we begin to allow ourselves to have the experience of letting God's Love be our safety in the world, instead of all the little things the world tells us will make us safe, it will be very difficult to totally trust the things of the world ever again. That does not mean that we will not go back and forth between the ego and the Holy Spirit, or that we will not be tempted to rebuild our ego's life. But there will always be a part of our minds that has had the experience of God's Love that will be a reminder to us that when we let go of our investment in our egos, when we really let go of a grievance that we had been carrying around for years, we felt better. So when we are tempted in the future to hold on to a grievance, we at least now have a memory within us, within this lifetime, that tells us, "You know, I let go of a grievance one time and it worked."

**(2:3) And who would place his faith in the shabby offerings of the ego when the gifts of God are laid before him?**

A line in the text says that the Holy Spirit teaches through contrast (T-14.II.1:2-3). Any good teacher knows that contrast is always a helpful way to get a lesson across. And the Course, in one way or another, always uses the contrast between what the ego offers us and what the Holy Spirit offers us to make its point. Jesus' goal for us in the Course is that, with each situation that confronts us, we will be able to see the contrast in our minds more and more clearly over time so that we may recognize what the ego is really offering us. So if I really proceed with the tack that I am on—mainly that I am angry and I want vengeance—what will come from that is more guilt and fear, but certainly not peace, and no sense of safety.

But if I proceed—and this has nothing to do with the form, but rather with an attitude—without vengeance and without anger, and I am peaceful, then the Holy Spirit's offering to me will be peace. At that point, why would I choose the shabby gift of the ego, which would be discomfort, anxiety, fear, guilt, etc., when I can have the gift of God, which would be His peace? So the purpose of A Course in Miracles is to help us learn to differentiate between these two gifts all the time. And they are always the same—the gift of fear or the gift of love. And again, we are not talking about behavior, we are talking about an attitude.

So if we have an experience of this power and then feel that we are going back to trusting in our own petty strength, it would reflect a choice not to have the Love of God. It is extremely helpful, when we find ourselves tempted to be upset, angry, guilty, anxious, fearful, furious, sick, or whatever, to realize at that point we have devalued the Love of God and basically have said, "I don't want this." We have traded God's gift for the gift of the ego. This will manifest itself in our anger, guilt, fear, etc.—there are no exceptions to that. It is impossible to have a thought, an emotion, or a reaction that is not what we have chosen. Impossible, because no mind has the power to do anything to us, no body has the power to affect us in any way—unless we give that mind or that body the power. And that is the problem.

If I am upset, it is because I gave you my peace. Now most of the things that upset us are relatively trivial. If we could see that and then say, for example, "You know, I gave my peace of God away to this ten-year old kid who got me upset. That was the *peace of* *God* I gave away! I turned it *over* to him." That is nonsensical, but that is what we do. Or I am driving along the highway, blissfully sitting with God and feeling His Love, and all of a sudden I get annoyed at another driver. I have given up my experience of peace and love to that driver. Now if I could be really clear about what I have chosen to do, then it would be very difficult to justify blaming all the things in this world that I have held responsible for making me upset.

In a sense, we could boil the whole Course in Miracles down to just that teaching. We would do very, very well if we really understood that anytime we are upset, it is because we deliberately and resolutely—even though we may not be aware of it—made a decision that we no longer value God's Love and peace. We place more value on being angry or sick or anxious. But because we chose the ego, we can just as easily change our minds back again. And so that is the meaning of "Who would attempt to fly with the tiny wings of a sparrow when the mighty power of an eagle has been given him?"

**Part IV**
**What Are the Characteristics of God’s Teachers?
Honesty (M-4.II)**

We will skip the next section, "Development of Trust." It is an important section, but it would take us a little off track.

Let us turn now to the second of the characteristics, honesty. Honesty in the Course is not what we think it would be. It is not about behavior or words. It refers to the consistency of what we do or say with what we think. For example, from the world's perspective, visiting a funeral home and looking as if I am sad as I kneel by a coffin and pray for someone who is not even there is dishonest. But it is not dishonest if my behavior is consistent with the loving thought in my mind. My behavior is a way of joining in love with the others who are there grieving. And that is what makes my behavior consistent with the thought in my mind.

**(1:1-2) All other traits of God's teachers rest on trust. Once that has been achieved, the others cannot fail to follow.**

As we know, the whole ego thought system rests on our denying that God can be trusted. Acceptance of the Holy Spirit's thought system rests on denying the ego's denial. So once I really know I can trust the Holy Spirit, I have no need at that point to hold on to the tiny wings of a sparrow. The only reason I would hold on to fear, sin, guilt, separation, attack, and loneliness is that I am afraid of God's Love.

The ego thought system is purposive. Its function is to protect us from God's Love because our minds do not value it. At the beginning, in that original instant, we chose not to value the Holy Spirit's teaching that the ego and its effects were made up. Instead we said that we did not want the Holy Spirit's correction—we wanted the ego. But once we change our minds and say that we do not value the ego anymore, and that we value only God's Love as all we want and are not afraid of it, then everything that the ego has taught us no longer has a purpose for us. We simply let it go, and all the other characteristics automatically follow.

**(1:3) Only the trusting can afford honesty, for only they can see its value.**

The whole ego thought system is based on a lie. Just as in the Adam and Eve story, which is really a wonderful way of symbolizing the birth of the ego, the devil or the serpent lies. The entire ego thought system is based upon a dishonest thought, namely, that we have indeed separated from God and God is angry at us. God does not even know about us, so how could He be angry?

In other words, right from the beginning, when we chose the ego we valued dishonesty. We became afraid and did not value honesty. So when we now say "I trust the Holy Spirit and not the ego," we are placing value on honesty or the truth.

**(1:4-6) Honesty does not apply only to what you say. The term actually means consistency. There is nothing you say that contradicts what you think or do; no thought opposes any other thought; no act belies your word; and no word lacks agreement with another.**

Right at the beginning the ego thought opposed the Holy Spirit's thought, so that the split mind became a battlefield, a place of opposition. From the ego's point of view, it is at war with God, it is opposing God. And the ego tells one lie after another, first by making up a God Who is angry, and then by making up a world that the ego tells us will make us safe and protect us from God's wrath. But then it becomes apparent that the world is not a safe place, because everyone in the world suffers pain and everyone dies. This world is hardly safe.

So the ego lies all the way down the line, right from the beginning. It makes up a world out of a lie, the lie being that the world will defend and protect us—the body will protect us. Well, the body is a hell of a thing to protect us—it is always breaking down and eventually it is going to die. From the beginning, one inconsistency follows after another.

**(1:7-9) Such are the truly honest. At no level are they in conflict with themselves. Therefore it is impossible for them to be in conflict with anyone or anything.**

That is what enables me, then, to go to a funeral parlor and join with everyone by appearing to be upset. There is only love within me and love only joins. The only thing that is important is my joining with everyone else. I join with all the people in the funeral home—all my family and friends who believe they have suffered loss and that something terrible has happened, which reminds them of the original loss that they believe they suffered.

But if I come in speaking the words of A Course in Miracles, I am separating myself from them. I am telling them that their perception of separation and loss is correct because I am demonstrating that separation is real. They are all joined in grief. My coming there, holding high the banner of "truth" and "love," etc., is not joining with them. It is separating from them. So I want to join with them on a level they can accept and understand—that is honest. My honesty is not in speaking the truth of A Course in Miracles. My honesty comes in first joining with the love within my mind that then directs me and guides me to join with people on the level of form.

Let me read something from the text that makes this point clear. This passage is helpful whenever we are tempted to fall into the trap of preaching truth in a way that is really an attack. The context of this section is the use of magic, or medicine. It is saying that the use of magic or medicine is not sinful, and in fact very often is loving because we are joining with people on the level where they are.

The value of the Atonement does not lie in the manner in which it is expressed [the level of form]. In fact, if it is used truly, it will inevitably be expressed in whatever way is most helpful to the receiver. [So if the most helpful thing for someone who is mourning the death of a loved one is to join with them there, then that is what we do.] This means that a miracle, to attain its full efficacy, must be expressed in a language that the recipient can understand without fear (T-2.IV.5:1-3).

If I come into the funeral home, believing I am this symbol of God's perfect Love and mouthing all these perfectly wonderful truths, the other people almost certainly would experience that as rather threatening. It therefore would not be helpful because it would only increase their fear.

This does not necessarily mean that this is the highest level of communication of which he is capable. It does mean, however, that it is the highest level of communication of which he is capable *now*. The whole aim of the miracle is to raise the level of communication, not to lower it by increasing fear (T-2.IV.5:4-6).

. . . . . . .

What is honest is not the form. It is not the form that is true but the love that inspires it. And the love will always lead to an expression of joining. We do not want to get trapped in the idea that to be the perfect Course in Miracles teacher, etc., we have to look and act like a holy, spiritual person—that is an ego idea.

**(2:1-2) The peace of mind which the advanced teachers of God experience is largely due to their perfect honesty. It is only the wish to deceive that makes for war.**

The reason I am not at peace has nothing to do with anything outside me. I am not at peace because I have chosen notto be at peace—I have seen myself at war with God. And when I make my war with God real within my mind, that thought must then be projected out and make a world that believes it is at war as well. So everybody's experience is that the world is a battlefield—I have to take care of myself and I have to see to it that other people don't hurt me. Thus, I am not at peace because I believe I am living in a battle zone.

But if I could be perfectly honest—which means that I identify with the honesty of God and the Holy Spirit's truth—I would know there is no war. And if there is no battlefield in my mind, I won't perceive the world as a battlefield. Then no matter what goes on around me, I will be at peace.

**(2:3) No one at one with himself can even conceive of conflict.**

That basically is a tautology. If I am at one with myself, then my mind is not split and there can be no conflict.

**(2:4) Conflict is the inevitable result of self-deception, and self-deception is dishonesty.**

Conflict arises because I have deceived myself about who I am. I have listened to the ego's voice, which is the dishonest voice, and have blocked out the Holy Spirit's Voice, which is the Voice of honesty. Once I have chosen against myself, I must be in conflict. I must be in a state of dishonesty, which means I will value dishonesty and I will not value honesty or truth. Once I believe that I am in conflict or at war with myself, I also must believe that I am at war with everyone else, and everyone in the world is in conflict with me.

I am not only deceiving myself about who I am as a child of God, but I am also deceiving myself about who you are as my brother or sister in Christ. Since we are all part of the same self, I am not only in conflict about the self that I am experiencing as myself, but I am also in conflict with the larger, collective self. I am seeing everyone within this greater self or mind at odds with everyone else. So everything in the world seems to be in conflict, and everything therefore must be a deception, because conflict is not the truth. The truth is that we are all one.

**(2:5-6) There is no challenge to a teacher of God. Challenge implies doubt, and the trust on which God's teachers rest secure makes doubt impossible.**

Our society always values people who overcome great challenges and adversity. These are the heroes—people who possess great courage. From the Course's point of view, these are all aspects of the ego's attempt to triumph and prove that it is greater than God.

Consider Jesus as an example—he was not a brave man. He had no courage whatsoever. He simply was who he was. There was nothing he had to overcome, nothing he had to be brave about. Bravery, courage, etc., are attributes of the ego. The ego has made up a world that has to be overcome, and then spends a tremendous amount of time and energy trying to overcome those obstacles that it itself has made. Their purpose is to distract us from the only thing we ever have to remember: Who we are. That requires no bravery, no courage, no effort. Everything else that we have put between ourselves and God simply has to be undone. So there is no challenge.

But once we are dishonest, we have separated ourselves from the honesty of God. And so we make up a dishonest world as a dishonest answer to a dishonest question. Our great challenge in life then is to overcome all of the obstacles. But the whole thing is made up. There is no challenge. Once we remember Who we are, all doubt disappears, all obstacles disappear, and all need to triumph disappears. Remember, the ego thought system begins with the premise that it has triumphed over God, that it has overcome its enemy. It has broken free at last from the tyranny of perfect love and has set up its opposite world, its world of opposition. From that moment, everything the ego does will involve some kind of triumph. And so in this world we are always trying to triumph over each other, over adversity, over others who are trying to attack us, and so on. The popular expression, "Love triumphs over all" implies that something out there has to be overcome. However, once we accept God's honesty and the Holy Spirit's truth as our own, God becomes Someone Whom we trust. There is no doubt of Him or His Love, and no doubt of our true Identity. Therefore there is no challenge.

**(2:7) Therefore they can only succeed.**

This does not necessarily mean that God's teachers will succeed in the world. But neither will they necessarily fail. It is irrelevant whether they succeed or fail in the world. When we strive after anything in the world—seeking to overcome, to succeed, to avoid failure—obviously we are making the world out there real. And the world was made simply as a defense against our true nature as God's Son. The world is a giant smokescreen. Once we believe something out there has to be changed, overcome, or triumphed over, we have fallen into the ego trap.

**(2:8-12) In this, as in all things, they are honest. They can only succeed, because they never do their will alone. They choose for all mankind; for all the world and all things in it; for the unchanging and unchangeable beyond appearances; and for the Son of God and his Creator. How could they not succeed? They choose in perfect honesty, sure of their choice as of themselves.**

The line "they never do their will alone" means, as we mentioned earlier, that they do not believe in separate interests. They recognize that their will is one with the will of the Sonship as well as with the Will of God. So, in choosing to be at peace, I must be choosing that everyone else be at peace as well. If we are all children of the one God, part of the one Mind and the one Son, then it cannot be that I can have a will different from anyone else's, including my Creator. The belief that I do have a will separate from God's was the original ego thought. That thought was then protected and defended by making up a world in which separate interests appear to be the law.

What follows then is that I do not care about what happens to you or your family or your religion or your country. I only care about what happens to me, my family, my religion, my country, and all the groups with whom I identify. But when I recognize that we are all one and that I cannot hold any separating or attacking thoughts and be peaceful, then I also recognize that it is within my decision-making power to choose differently.

The choice "for the unchanging and unchangeable beyond appearances" is the choice for the Christ that is in all of us. Despite all the seeming differences that keep us separate in this world, what unites us is that we all have the same Source, we all have the same Mind. The world was made to give witness to the lie, namely, that we are all different. So my allegiance is not to the world as a group of separate bodies, nor to the planet as a living organism in and of itself, as many people speak of it today. My allegiance and my fidelity is to the truth beyond all appearances—to the Christ that we all share.

What we will find as we go through each of these characteristics is that we will be saying the same thing over and over again—just as we find in every paragraph in the Course. Different words, perhaps, and different forms, but the content is always the same.

**Part V
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Tolerance (M-4.III)**

This characteristic of the teacher of God, tolerance, is not tolerance as the world usually speaks of it, but rather the absence of judgment. The world's meaning is really a mask for attack—that I tolerate you, or that I am a tolerant person. The Course is talking about something totally opposite to that—a perception or a vision that sees no differences or, in other words, that sees only the unchanging and the unchangeable.

Now certainly to the body's eyes everyone is different. When the Course says not to judge, it does not mean that we deny the differences that exist on the physical plane. It means that we do not make the differences into a big deal. When the Course says not to judge, it really means not to attack. Everybody here had to make a judgment to be at this workshop. Everybody had to make a judgment to study the Course. Those are judgments. We cannot study every form of spirituality in the world, so we have to make a judgment. The Course is not against making judgments. It simply asks us not to make them on our own.

But above all, when it says not to judge, the Course means not to condemn. Similarly, when the Course says not to see our brother as a body, it does not mean to deny that there is a physical organism in front of us. That is silly and the Course is not silly. It is simple, but it is not simple-minded. When we are asked not to see our brother as a body, the Course means not to judge him as a body, and not to see the body as the ego does—always as a means of attack and separation and of proving that God is an illusion.

We are not being asked to deny the body in front of us or the body that we experience as ourselves. We are being asked not to share in the ego's interpretation of the body as a means for attack—as something to attack with and to be attacked.

**(1:1-2) God's teachers do not judge. To judge is to be dishonest, for to judge is to assume a position you do not have.**

The Course repeats this theme many times in the manual as well as in other places. The only One Who can judge fairly and openly and with great wisdom is the Holy Spirit. We are insane to believe we can make any reasonable judgment about what is in anybody's, including our own, best interest—that we can in any way know what would be best in any circumstance. To do that, as the Course explains in another passage (M-10.3:3-7), would involve a knowledge of everything that has gone on in the past, everything that will happen in the future, and how this particular judgment will affect all the people who are involved in any way with it. And obviously no one in this world has that kind of perspective.

So it is dishonest to presume that we can be in that kind of position. But that position is exactly what the ego has assumed right from the beginning—kicking God off the throne and supplanting Him, usurping His position and then asserting that it is now God. Whenever we believe that we know what is best, we are once again reflecting that original ego idea and that original instant when we bumped God off and took His place.

Let's just turn to the end of the manual and read another passage about this idea:

There is another advantage,—and a very important one,—in referring decisions to the Holy Spirit with increasing frequency. Perhaps you have not thought of this aspect, but its centrality is obvious. To follow the Holy Spirit's guidance is to let yourself be absolved of guilt. It is the essence of the Atonement. It is the core of the curriculum. The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear. The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so, making fear inevitable. To return the function to the One to Whom it belongs is thus the escape from fear. And it is this that lets the memory of love return to you. Do not, then, think that following the Holy Spirit's guidance is necessary merely because of your own inadequacies [the ego in us always takes that as a personal insult]. It is the way out of hell for you (M-29.3).

Right at the beginning we took God's place—that is the source of guilt. The essence of the Atonement then is the undoing of the insane belief that we can attack and kill God, take His place, and actually be God. The essence of the Atonement is recognizing that none of this ever happened. The Love of God is still what it has always been; and we, as an extension of that Love, also are still what we have always been. Asking for the Holy Spirit's help, thus, is an expression of our recognition that the presence of Love, to Whom we can turn and on Whom we are dependent, is there in our minds.

So the ego's mistake has been to believe that it is independent and can function on its own. We can only barely approximate the amount of terror that is involved if we consider how a small child feels when it temporarily gets lost and feels it is all alone. That is just a very mild expression of the overriding terror within each of us over the belief that we have actually pulled this off—that we have kicked God out and are now totally on our own.

The whole world, then, has become the screen that protects us from our terror over taking God's place. As the passage we just read says, "The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear. The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so . . ." So my learning to trust in the Holy Spirit really is my acknowledging that I cannot undo my ego on my own and that I do not want to do this on my own. That, then, is what Jesus means by the dishonesty of our judgment in assuming a position that we do not have. Our thought is also dishonest because judgment implies something to choose from or to choose between, which can only be true in a world of separation and duality. In Heaven there is no judgment because there are no choices to be made.

So the belief that our judgment is important and makes a difference is the ego's attempt to convince us that the world and the ego are real and important. We want to recognize that it does not matter what we choose at the level of the world. What does matter is which teacher we choose. Recognizing that is a helpful part of the process of returning home.

**(1:3-5) Judgment without self-deception is impossible. Judgment implies that you have been deceived in your brothers. How, then, could you not have been deceived in yourself?**

Judging against you implies that there must have been some kind of attack—either you have attacked me or I have attacked you. Of course, in my own mind it will usually be both. And once I believe that separation and attack are real, I have not only been deceived in you, but I have been deceived in myself as well. For how I perceive you will be exactly how I perceive myself—there will be no difference.

**(1:6-7) Judgment implies a lack of trust, and trust remains the bedrock of the teacher of God's whole thought system. Let this be lost, and all his learning goes.**

If I don't trust in the Holy Spirit but trust rather in the ego, I have already made a judgment—against myself. The reason I don't trust in the Holy Spirit is that I have already accused myself of being guilty of sinning against God. And so I fear God's punishment and become afraid of the Holy Spirit's loving, gentle presence in my mind, believing instead that it is a hostile presence that will destroy me.

So I have already made a judgment against myself. I have made a judgment that says there is a battlefield in my mind, as I said earlier. That judgment, that thought system of a battlefield in my mind, becomes projected out, giving rise to a world that is a battlefield. And I can trust no one in the world because my self-hatred demands that I be punished for my attack on God. I then make judgments in terms of what is safe and what is not safe. And when I make a judgment that some situation I am in is not safe, then I make a judgment about what will protect me. I attempt to determine who I can manipulate to guard and protect me from danger. And I need to find protection because of my prior judgment against myself; namely, that I have sinned against God and deserve to be punished.

**(1:8) Without judgment are all things equally acceptable, for who could judge otherwise?**

When I let go of judgment, which means I let go of my distrust of God, I remember who I am and can identify with that presence of Love within my mind. And that Love is unity. There is no separation or division there. That Love then extends through me and I see all things in this world as embraced by that Love. And I do not see differences—I am not deceived by the superficial differences that my body's eyes perceive. All that I see—as the Course says, the only judgment that the Holy Spirit makes in the world—is either an expression of love or a call for love. There is no other possibility.

That makes my response extremely simple. If you are my brother or sister in Christ and you extend and express love to me, then obviously I will express it back to you. If you are my brother or sister in Christ and you are calling for love, not believing that you are worthy of it, then as your brother or sister in Christ, I will extend love to you. So it makes no difference. And that is the only judgment that the Holy Spirit makes—a judgment that calls for the exact same response.

**(1:9-11) Without judgment are all men brothers, for who is there who stands apart? Judgment destroys honesty and shatters trust. No teacher of God can judge and hope to learn.**

Jesus is referring here to judgments of attack and condemnation against others. He does not mean we should not make any judgments in this world—we must. But we should not make judgment into a big deal—we do not have to ask the Holy Spirit every time we are going to do something, as it explains in that section we just read from (M-29.5:4-8). In other words, when I get up in the morning I don't have to make a big deal about what color slacks or shirt to wear, unless, for whatever reason, that kind of choice has become a major symbol of fear or guilt for me. For example, if I find myself thinking that I'm going to see so-and-so today and that person likes blue, I will wear blue because that's going to help me manipulate that person into giving me what I want. At that point my judgment about wearing blue is an attack. That's when I should turn to the Holy Spirit. Not that the color I wear matters, but the motivation for my choice does.

We do not have to ask the Holy Spirit every time we want to do something. We simply want to be reasonably attentive to when our judgments have ego thoughts associated with them. At that point we should ask for the Holy Spirit's help, not with the specifics of the choice, such as what color to wear, but rather with letting go of any attack thoughts or fear thoughts, etc., associated with the decision.

Consider another example—voting in an election. We should simply vote for whoever we think would be the best president, prime minister or whatever, without any investment. In other words, we make a judgment just as we would decide whether to have coffee or tea, or to wear a white dress or a pink dress, or to turn left or right. Or to come here to a class or do something else. The point is that we not make a big deal about it. And since one of our roles is being a citizen of our country, then we do what citizens in our country do when we vote.

Unless we are very specifically guided otherwise—and we should be very cautious about such guidance—we should always remain within the roles that we have accepted—wife, mother, child, daughter, sister, friend, citizen, etc. And we should do what the role says we should do because that is the classroom that we have chosen. We might as well obey the rules of the classroom, unless we are very clear that we have been guided otherwise. So when it comes to voting, vote for the Republican or the Democrat, or whatever political parties are involved, but don't make it into a big deal.

**Part VI
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Gentleness (M-4.IV)**

The first paragraph of this section does not actually talk about gentleness. It talks about harm. The reason for this is that the undoing of the negative is what establishes something as positive. The Course says that love in this world is impossible because the whole world was made as a defense against love and an attack upon love. It also says that "what is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). It follows thus that everything in this world is murder. The closest we can get to love in this world is to undo the barriers to love. And what undoes the barriers to love is forgiveness. The workbook also says that forgiveness is this world's equivalent of Heaven's Love (W-pI.60.1:4-5). Forgiveness undoes the harmfulness that is at the core of the ego's thought system: the belief that we harmed God, which is an absolutely insane and arrogant belief. We then project harmfulness onto God, and now we believe God is going to harm us. Next, we deny this whole massive thought system of terror (the thought, however, still remains deep within us) and project it outside our minds, so that we now live in a world of harm. Remember, "what is not love is murder," and no love is possible in this world.

**(1:1) Harm is impossible for God's teachers.**

"God's teachers" here refers to advanced teachers—those who have already advanced to complete trust in the Love of God within all of us. They trust because they know that power within us makes all of us safe. They are not misled by the ego's claim that the power of God will destroy us. Once we recognize that, we have undone the belief in sin, which is the belief that we have attacked God and destroyed the Love of Heaven. And once those thoughts are gone, we can no longer project what is no longer within our minds. If hate is in my mind, then hate is exactly what will be projected onto my world. If only love is in my mind, then only love will be projected out.

**(1:2) They can neither harm nor be harmed.**

In the eyes of the world, Jesus was harmed on the cross. And so Christianity for two thousand years has built itself up on the misperception that Jesus was harmed—that he suffered and died on the cross. As he explains in the text, however, all of that resulted from a basic misinterpretation coming from the apostles' fear (T-6.I.14:2-3). If there is no body and the body is only a lifeless puppet, the body does not suffer pain, the body does not die. The mind chooses to suffer and then projects that thought onto the body, which follows accordingly. Since Jesus had no thoughts of suffering, or guilt, or fear, and he knew who he was, he had nothing in his mind to project onto his body except love. But the fear and the guilt of those around him caused them to perceive him as suffering and to perceive God as a wrathful God, Who demanded vengeance for our sins against Him and demanded that His only Son be sacrificed. So again, Jesus' body was not harmed. It looked as if it could be. Actually, we could say that his body was harmed, but he was not harmed because he knew he was not his body.

**(1:3-4) Harm is the outcome of judgment. It is a dishonest act that follows a dishonest thought.**

The original judgment and the original dishonesty is that I have attacked God and taken His place—that I actually have done it. I not only have thought of accomplishing it, but I have accomplished it. And the world seems to attest to the fact that I have indeed pulled it off, because this is a place, as the workbook says, where God cannot enter (W-pII.3.2:4). That is why the world was made. God is in our minds (represented there by the Holy Spirit), and the world was made as a defense against the mind. We are all like puppets whose arms and legs and bodies, etc., are manipulated by a puppeteer above the stage. But none of us is aware of the puppeteer. And our whole purpose in setting up everything in this way has been to keep the true power and function of the mind out of our awareness. So it appears to us as if our bodies and brains act on their own, independently of anything else. That is the magic trick that the ego has pulled on us. The original judgment that I have attacked God and sinned against Him continues to be projected over and over again.

**(1:5) It is a verdict of guilt upon a brother, and therefore on oneself.**

So if I attack you, which is what harm is, I am saying you are the guilty one, not me. However, I first attacked myself when I said that I am guilty and sinful. But I cannot bear to look at the extent of my self-hatred, and therefore I push it down in my mind so that I don't see it. Then I project it out onto you, saying that you are the guilty one, the one responsible for how terrible I feel about myself. It's not my fault. You have done it to me. And so I have transferred my guilt onto your body and, in so doing, have attacked you.

**(1:6-7) It is the end of peace and the denial of learning. It demonstrates the absence of God's curriculum, and its replacement by insanity.**

Harm or attack is obviously the end of peace—none of us could maintain that we are peaceful when we are attacking. And if I am not peaceful, I cannot learn, because the only real learning is the learning that comes from listening to the Holy Spirit. The Course says in many places that the ego cannot learn. What can learn, though, is the part of the mind that listens to the Holy Spirit. But once I attack and make attack real, I blot out the Holy Spirit's presence from my awareness. At that point, I cannot learn anymore, because I have already judged what reality and truth are, which means I have closed the door on any other kind of learning. I have already said that attack, separation, and guilt are reality and the truth. At that point, my mind is closed and I cannot hear any other voice. I have denied the curriculum of the Holy Spirit: the Atonement, or forgiveness.

**(1:8) No teacher of God but must learn,—and fairly early in his training,—that harmfulness completely obliterates his function from his awareness.**

In the manual for teachers, a section on the peace of God talks about how we lose the peace of God when we get angry (M-20.3:3-4). It is as if a curtain drops. The peace of God can come only from the Holy Spirit, Who is the Voice of love and unity. Attack, obviously, is a voice of disunity. No one would believe that he is joined with someone he has just hit over the head! All of us must be afraid of God's peace if we identify with the ego. So if we do not want God's peace, we give it away by attacking someone. But then we deny that we are the ones who gave peace away, and we accuse another person of stealing it from us. And that justifies our attack.

**(1:9-12) It** [harmfulness] **will make him confused, fearful, angry and suspicious. It will make the Holy Spirit's lessons impossible to learn. Nor can God's Teacher** [the Holy Spirit] **be heard at all, except by those who realize that harm can actually achieve nothing. No gain can come of it.**

This is another way of understanding the central lesson of the Course, which is that I must recognize that attacking someone else does not pay for me. Jesus is rather clever in the Course, you know. He does not tell us to do what he says because he says we should do it. He says rather, "Do what I say because it will make you feel better." And he tells us as well that we do not understand what will make us feel better. We confuse pain with joy, and imprisonment with freedom—we always get it upside down. And so it could be said that the purpose of the Course is to help us discern the difference between what will make us really joyful and what will give us pain, because we don't understand. As he explains in the text, we believe there is a difference between pleasure and pain, which he uses to show us how insane we are (T-19.IV-B.12). What we believe will give us pleasure really does the opposite, because it is an attempt to deny its opposite, which is pain.

If I believe anything in this world has the power to give me pleasure or make me happy, I am making the world real. And if I make the world real, I am making separation real. If I make separation real, I am making my guilt real. And my guilt is the source of all my pain. So whether I say something is pleasurable or painful, it is opposite sides of the same mistake. Both are predicated on the premise that the world is real.

A derivative of this is the belief that attack will get me what I want, so attack is pleasurable. And I will avoid the pain of my self-hatred by attacking you—by making you responsible for my pain. That is why everyone gets angry. Anger is not a basic human emotion in the sense that it is something we cannot control. Anger is the basic emotion of the ego. It is anger that keeps the ego thought system alive.

One of the purposes of the Course is to help us realize that anger will not make us feel good, it will not get us what we want. We think anger gets us off the hook and allows us to avoid confronting our own guilt because we have put it onto someone else. We are not aware that when we attack someone else, it makes us feel even guiltier. The very guilt we are trying to remove by projecting it onto someone else through attack makes us feel guiltier. That is a vicious circle, a cycle that just keeps repeating over and over again.

The manual says that sickness will disappear when we are able to say we have no further need of it (M-5.II). The same thing is true of anger. Anger, as a problem for me, will disappear when I can recognize that I have no need of it, that it really will not get me what I want. What I really want is the peace of God, and I cannot have it when I get angry or when I attack someone. When that is clear to me, then I will have no trouble making the decision.

There is a wonderful line that closes Chapter 23 that says, "Who with the Love of God upholding him could find the choice of miracles or murder hard to make?" (T-23.IV.9:8). The problem is that we do not know that there is a difference. And so with the Love of God, with the Love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit next to us, we could look very clearly at the choice we have between forgiveness, which is the miracle, and a grievance or attack, which is murder. We could see both of these choices clearly and understand their effects. And then we would have no trouble making the choice. But the ego keeps the clarity of that choice obscure and hidden from us so we don't see it. And then we believe that getting angry is okay. We may say that physically murdering others is not okay, but thinking it is okay, or yelling and screaming at others is okay. We don't understand, as we discussed earlier, that it makes no difference whether I actually physically kill you or I simply think about killing you. The guilt will still remain. I cannot think of attack or war and be peaceful, because they are mutually exclusive states.

And even just wishing that someone were not around is the same thing. We are still saying that this person is a pain in the neck. This person is obnoxious. This person has interfered with our peace. It's no different. As the Course says, there is no difference between a slight twinge of annoyance and intense fury (W-pI.21.2:5). But the point is that Jesus fully expects us to be angry. We could say that the goal of the Course is not that we have no anger, although that would be the final goal, but rather that we not justify it. The Course never says, "Don't get angry." But it does say anger is never justified, and there is a big, big difference. Otherwise we get caught in the trap of saying, "I've been a student of A Course in Miracles for seven and a half days (weeks, years, or seven and a half decades) and I'm still getting angry. What am I doing wrong? I'm failing the Course!"

We are failing the Course if we make a big deal about it. Our reaction to our anger should simply be to say, "Oh, I got angry. What else is new?" So the idea is not to be without our anger or our attack thoughts, but rather not to make a big deal about them, not to take them seriously. And above all, not to justify them.

As we practice the Course, we will become more aware of our murderous thoughts, and so on one level, it will seem that we have only gotten worse. But those murderous thoughts were always there—we just had them covered over. And so we start uncovering them—it's like peeling off the layers of an onion. And then we are horrified at what we see. That is why one of the Course's essential points, in terms of its practice, is that we not do this on our own. We do it with the love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit beside us. Then when we look at the awful mess inside us that is in everyone's mind, we are not quite as horrified.

When we start getting in touch with those deeper levels of guilt, attack, and murder within our minds, it is a good sign. But that is when the going can get rough because we are looking at what we have pledged never to look at, as the Course says in the text (T-19.IV-D.6:1-3). And it is not a pretty sight. The Course means it literally: "What is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). If we consider that the whole world was made as an attack on love, then we are left with the inevitable conclusion that this world is really a place of murder.

**(2:1-2) Therefore** [when we let go of harm]**,** **God's teachers are wholly gentle. They need the strength of gentleness, for it is in this that the function of salvation becomes easy.**

It becomes easy because we don't do anything. So what does it mean to be a teacher of God? It means that we don't do anything. Life becomes very, very easy because everything is done through us. The work comes in undoing all the barriers to that easy flow of love through us.

Jesus' life was very easy—he didn't do anything. There was no strain in what he did. It didn't matter to him whether he took a nice walk in the morning or was crucified. If we say that there is a difference—as obviously we would be tempted to say—it is because we think there is a difference. If we think there is a difference, we are making the world and the body real. But there is no difference. When we really learn this lesson, life becomes very, very easy.

**(2:3-5) To those who would do harm, it** [the function of salvation—to forgive] **is impossible. To those to whom harm has no meaning, it is merely natural. What choice but this has meaning to the sane?**

The choice, namely, is to be harmful or to be gentle. That is all it is. It is the same as saying that the only choice is to listen to the ego or to the Holy Spirit, "to be hostage to the ego or host to God," as the Course says (T-11.II.7:1; T-15.III.5:1).

**(2:6) Who chooses hell when he perceives a way to Heaven?**

Of course the problem is that we don't perceive forgiveness as the way to Heaven. We don't perceive that the problem has nothing to do with the world. The problem has to do with how we think about the world. Forgiveness does not do anything in the world, but it does undo the guilt and the fear in our mind.

**(2:7) And who would choose the weakness that must come from harm in place of the unfailing, all-encompassing and limitless strength of gentleness?**

Obviously the world does not look at it that way. The world always gets weakness and strength upside down. To believe that our own strength, physical and/or mental, is what will protect us and is needed to protect us in the world, is really to reaffirm our own weakness as an ego. Only an ego would believe that it has to be protected in the world, which was the lesson of the crucifixion. In the eyes of the world, Jesus looked weak because he did not defend himself and ended up in a denigrating death. But the world was looking at everything upside down.

Strength comes from the quiet acceptance of the Love of God within us. When we are identified with that Love, we are perfectly safe. From that position, the body and the world are seen for exactly what they are: flimsy veils that are attempting to keep the light of truth away from us.

**(2:8) The might of God's teachers lies in their gentleness, for they have understood their evil thoughts came neither from God's Son nor his Creator.**

Our question then is, "From where did they come?" They came from a nonexistent mind. The only truth, the only reality is the Mind of Christ and the Mind of God. Within that Mind there cannot be a separation thought or an attack thought. So that means those thoughts came from a nonexistent mind. And once it is clear that there are no evil thoughts in me—there is just a belief that there are evil thoughts in me—then there is no sin, no guilt, and no fear. And therefore there is no need to defend myself by building up a fortress, which is what the world and the body are.

**(2:9-10) Thus did they join their thoughts with Him Who is their Source. And so their will, which always was His Own, is free to be itself.**

When the Course speaks of "freedom" or "free will," there are two ways of understanding it. On the level of the world, there is free will, or freedom of choice—the choice between God and the ego. Once we have made up a world of duality, with something to choose between, then we have freedom of choice to choose between the Holy Spirit's thought system and the ego's thought system.

But in Heaven there is no free will in the sense of choosing, because there is nothing to choose between. The state of Heaven is a state of perfect unity and perfect oneness. At this level, freedom of will means that God's Will is free despite all the ego's attempts to imprison it—the ego thought system is an attempt to imprison God's Will and therefore to imprison our own will as well.

The Atonement principle teaches that we cannot be in prison. Therefore we cannot be freed from prison, because nothing has happened. I just believe my will has been imprisoned. And when I awaken from the dream, I will realize that being in prison was just a dream. "And so their will, which always was His Own, is free to be itself." My will is simply allowed to be what it always was and is. It has been totally unaffected by the ego's thoughts of attack.

**Part VII**
**What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Joy (M-4.V)**

The next trait is joy. When the Course talks about joy, as with everything else, it is not talking about the world's meaning of joy. Joy in this world is how we feel when we get what we want. From the Course's point of view, joy would be the denial of the negative. So the only real joy in this world is when we truly experience the reality of our being forgiven—that is joy. We are all laboring under this tremendous burden of self-hatred and guilt, believing that we do not deserve to be forgiven, that we do not deserve to be children of God, if there is a God. We all carry that tremendous burden with us.

When we truly recognize that we literally made all that up, that God has never stopped loving us, and that we are forgiven for what we never did, that is joy. It is the total denial and absence and undoing of the ego's thought system of guilt, attack, blame, etc. That is joy—it has nothing to do with anything external.

**(1:1-2) Joy is the inevitable result of gentleness. Gentleness means that fear is now impossible, and what could come to interfere with joy?**

Joy, then, is the natural state of our minds, equated with the presence of God's Love in us. If there is no harm and no attack in my mind, there is no guilt. And there is no need to feel that I have to be punished. Once I let go of attack, the gentleness of the Holy Spirit remains. And my acceptance of that gentleness allows me to feel His joy.

The Course helps us distinguish between pain and joy, because we confuse the two (T-7.X). And part of our confusion arises from our belief that pleasure is different from pain. Jesus is trying to teach us that pleasure and pain are the same illusion (T-19.IV-B.12). But on another level, the Course says that "all real pleasure comes from doing God's Will" (T-1.VII.1:4). In the first statement, where pleasure and pain are opposite sides of the same illusion, Jesus is speaking of the pleasure and pain that are associated with the body: Thus, I experience pleasure when my body gets what it wants and pain when it doesn't. And the world's definition of joy is the same as pleasure: Joy refers to getting what I want, and pain to not getting it. On that level, both pain and joy are the same illusion.

In contrast, "real pleasure" has nothing to do with the ego's pleasure and pain. It refers to the pleasure of accepting God's Will, which is really the undoing of the ego. And this pleasure is the same as the joy we are discussing here—the joy of getting beyond the bondage of pleasure and pain, or joy and pain, on the ego's level. In other words, real joy, real pleasure, has nothing to do with getting what I want, or avoiding what I don't want in the world. Joy refers to the state of my mind in that instant when it knows it has been absolved of all guilt and guilt just disappears.

This does not mean we should not enjoy things in the world. It just means that when we enjoy them, we would not make a big deal about them. If we do, we are stuck, because they won't last. For example, everybody enjoys a beautiful day—the Course would never say it is sinful to enjoy a beautiful day. But what do I do if it rains for five days in a row? Does that mean that I am stuck without the peace of God, absolutely miserable? That is a trap. What we want to do is to enjoy it, but not become attached to it, believing that salvation consists of having beautiful weather. That would be to set ourselves up.

We should not feel guilty because we enjoy certain things or do not enjoy other things, such as certain foods. The point, again, is not to make a big deal about it. Eat what you like and don't eat what you don't like. Live in a climate that makes you happy and avoid a climate that doesn't make you happy. Just don't make it into a big deal. Once we make it into a big deal, we are believing that something in this world is our salvation or damnation. Then we are making it real and we are stuck. Again,

**(1:2) Gentleness means that fear is now impossible, and what could come to interfere with joy?**

In other words, the interferences have been removed. Attack, harm, guilt, etc., are the interferences to joy. When I have chosen the gentleness of the Holy Spirit, I cannot be afraid. If I am with the Holy Spirit's Love, then I cannot be afraid of His Love. I have accepted His Love, so that fear now is impossible—there are no more barriers that would interfere with this joy.

**(1:3) The open hands of gentleness are always filled.**

This is an important line. Its "opposite" would be that the hands of harmfulness are closed. The ego has told us that our minds are filled with darkness, evil, sin, and guilt. And we are horrified. So when the ego tells me my hands hold evil, darkness, and sin, I quickly close them up, saying that I will nevermore look at this, because if I do, I'll be struck dead by the wrathful, vengeful God I have attacked. And if my hands are closed, how can I take the hand of Jesus or the Holy Spirit? My hands are closed to protect my self-hatred, my hatred of God, my judgment of everyone, and my fear. That is the harmfulness.

The Course helps us realize that we are protecting absolutely nothing. When we finally reach the point where we can open our hands, we realize there is absolutely nothing in there—the whole thing was made up. I first close my hands on the guilt, self-hatred, and murder. I believe that I have murdered God and Christ, and then say that I will never open them again because if I do I will be destroyed. Then I build a world like a fortress around this locked vault so that I will not get anywhere near it. My ego tells me if I do I will be destroyed. My ego doesn't tell me that if I ever look within, I will find nothing.

An extremely important section in the text, called "The Fear to Look Within" (T-21.IV), describes how the ego counsels us not to look within our minds, because if we do, our eyes will light on sin and we will be struck blind—a mild way of saying that God will destroy us. So we all say, "Oh my God. I don't want to do that." And we quickly close up and don't look within so we don't have to see the horror that is there. But in the next paragraph the Course asks, "What if you looked within and saw no sin?" (T-21.IV.3:1) or, in other words, what if we opened our hands and saw that there is no sin. That is the ego's fear. The ego knows that if we look within and realize there is nothing there, we will no longer believe in the ego. We will listen to the Holy Spirit; we will awaken from the dream, and the ego will be gone. So striving to protect itself, the ego makes up this big story—which we all believe—that there is something awful in our minds. As a result, we have to lock our minds tight, like a closed or locked vault, or a "darkened tomb" (T-28.V.7:5). Then, so we will not go anywhere near it, we build a fortress around it: the world and the body.

What enables me to begin the process of letting it go is to begin to question the validity of my ego thought system. The ego has never allowed me to do that, and if I identify with my ego, I never will question it. Instead, I say that, yes, it is absolutely true—I am a wretched, despicable, awful person and God is a wrathful, vengeful Creator. I am not going to touch any of this with a ten-foot pole. And from that point on, I never do. I close my fist tight and I never look at it. I make up a world to distract me from my closed fist, and then I make all my problems in the world very real. And I never question it, yet the whole thing is made up.

Forgiveness, then, is the process whereby we begin to question what the ego has told us we must never question. Some of the premises that we begin to question in our everyday lives are that attack is justified, that pain and loss are real, that problems and their solutions are real in the world, etc. So the Course is presenting us with this immense thought system that ends up being incredibly simple. It says, "What is false is false, and what is true has never changed" (W-pII.10.1:1). The truth that has never changed is God's Love, and what is false is the ego's thought system. As I begin to change my perceptions about you, no longer seeing you as this terrible villain, I am slowly beginning to change my perceptions of myself, because the way I perceive you is the way I perceive myself. And that is how forgiveness slowly begins to undo the ego thought system.

So again, that is what this line, "The open hands of gentleness are always filled," means. And what my hands are filled with when I open them up is the Love of God. When they are filled with His Love, there can be no fear, no guilt, no attack, no harm. And there can be no pain, only joy.

**(1:4-7) The gentle have no pain. They cannot suffer. Why would they not be joyous? They are sure they are beloved and must be safe.**

All pain comes from the belief that I deserve to suffer and to be in pain, which means all pain comes from guilt or from unforgiveness. That is all it is. So as long as my hands are clenched tight, the source of pain will always be there. The source of pain is what I believe is within my mind—the unforgiveness that comes from believing I have attacked God.

When I open up my fist and the darkness disappears—it was never there in the first place, it was just hidden from the light—then there is no more source of pain, because there is no more guilt or unforgiveness that demands punishment. And so the whole thing is gone.

**(1:8) Joy goes with gentleness as surely as grief attends attack.**

Grief must attend attack because, when I attack, I must believe you are going to attack me back, and therefore I am going to be frightened. When I attack, it can only be because I am trying to protect this thought system of being separate from God. One of the best ways of seeing to it that I never open this closed fist—this locked vault in my mind—is to attack. When I attack you I am saying that I am upset because of what you have done to me and not because of what I am protecting in my fist, in my mind. So I am holding this thought system intact in my mind and I never question it. I never let it go.

Within this thought system, where there is this terrible sense of sinfulness, self-hatred, and fear, lies the core thought that I am sinful, guilty, and fearful because I have attacked God and thrown Heaven away. That is my grief. A line in the "Psychotherapy" pamphlet says, "And who could weep but for his innocence?" (P-2.IV.1:7). The only source of true sadness and grief in this world is the belief that we have thrown away the innocence of Christ, the innocence of Who we are, and we will never get it back. That is why all of us are sad. That is what depression is—what grief is—what loneliness is—what sorrow is—what mourning is. That is where everything negative in this world is coming from.

If I can just open up my hand and look within, I will see I did nothing. I have not thrown away the innocence of Heaven. The Holy Spirit has simply held it for me in my memory. The whole idea of lost innocence was just a made-up story. And so if I look within, the ego thought system "will disappear into the nothingness out of which... [it] was made" (T-10.IV.1:9). But if I don't look at it, I will continue to believe it is in there and it is real, and the door to my mind will remain locked. That is where the grief and pain are coming from.

The whole purpose of the Course is to have us realize that we are protecting nothing—literally nothing. And forgiveness is that gentle, step-by-step process of helping us realize it. But once I get caught in the world, believing that anything in the world means something, I am saying that there is a fortress that is real that is necessary to protect me from this fear in my mind. A line in the section on the anti-Christ (T-29.VIII)—which of course is the ego or an idol—speaks of the anti-Christ as "the strange idea there is a power past omnipotence" (T-29.VIII.6:2). It is the thought that there is another power in this world beyond the omnipotence of God. And that is the devil or the anti-Christ or an idol. From the Course's perspective, the ego is attempting to glorify itself by saying that there is a reality outside God. And in truth, the devil is nothing more than the ego thought projected outward so we don't have to look within our closed minds. The mind is still kept tightly shut inside because we insist that the evil is outside. So we never have to look at the evil that we believe is really within ourselves.

**(1:9-10) God's teachers trust in Him. And they are sure His Teacher** [the Holy Spirit] **goes before them, making sure no harm can come to them.**

There are a number of passages throughout the Course itself that seem to suggest that the Holy Spirit does things for us in the world. One passage in the text, based on the famous verse in Isaiah about making straight our path, seems to suggest that the Holy Spirit removes the obstacles in the world from our path so that our way is easy (T-20.IV.8:4-8). That is not literally what the Course is saying—it is just a metaphor.

The Holy Spirit cannot remove obstacles in the world from our path because there is no world, let alone any obstacles in it! He removes the obstacles of guilt and fear in our minds—the obstacles to peace. And even that He does not do in an active way. His presence in our minds is like a lighthouse that simply shines out a beacon of love that doesn't do anything. When we bring the darkness of our own guilt and fear to Him by opening up our clenched minds, His light automatically shines it away.

In other words, when I close my fist, when I close my mind, imprisoning what my ego tells me is my guilt and fear in there, the Holy Spirit's light is all around me because His light is in my mind. So when I open up my mind and I look at it—which is what it means to bring the darkness to the light or the illusion to the truth—then the light simply shines away what was never there in the first place.

And so the effects of that guilt will disappear as well. But it will have nothing to do with any intervention by the Holy Spirit. So, for example, if I were about to have an accident and the thought in back of the accident was guilt or harmfulness, if I turned to the Holy Spirit and released my guilt to Him, I would experience no harm. There is a danger, however, in judging everything by form. Perhaps something might happen to me when I get into an accident that would be a wonderful way of teaching and learning. For example, Jesus had a "very bad accident": his crucifixion. But the "accident" was not caused by his harmful thoughts. It was caused by his love as a way of providing us a teaching lesson.

In principle, if the cause of an accident or of a sickness is guilt or attack, and there is no guilt or attack in my mind, then I cannot have an accident and I cannot have a sickness. But it is possible—even though the Course does not address this because its focus is on the ego causes of sickness—that a form that the world would judge to be negative really may be caused by a loving thought because of its teaching and learning example.

So, again, the Holy Spirit does not remove the obstacles—He doesn't do anything. His light is just there. I remove my obstacles by bringing them to Him. Now our experience in the world is that He takes them from us, which is why the Course speaks to us that way. As we said earlier, Jesus talks to us on the pre-nursery-school level because that is where we are. He addresses us at the level of our experience. And our experience is that the Holy Spirit does things to me or for me—He takes something away or He gives me something. That is how we experience it, being little children. But in reality, He doesn't do anything. He simply is.

The Course says, "We say 'God is,' and then we cease to speak" (W-pI.169.5:4). Well, the Holy Spirit is the presence of God's Love in our split mind. And He simply is—He doesn't do anything. We are the ones who do, because we are the ones who did in the first place—we ran away from Heaven. Heaven simply stands there. And so we have to return to Heaven—we are the ones who do all that.

His Love, again, is like a lighthouse, shining out on a dark ocean, showing us a place of refuge and of safety, saying, "I am here." We will see as we continue that, similarly, the teacher of God does nothing. He simply says, not necessarily by his words, but by his loving presence, "I am here." And the "I" is no longer the personal "I" of the teacher of God. It is the "I" of God's Love speaking through him. So that is all a teacher of God does, and that is all the Holy Spirit does.

But our experience is that the Holy Spirit takes things away, just as our experience is that the sun rises and sets. We all see the sun rise and set but everybody knows intellectually that the sun is not really moving across the sky. The earth is moving—rotating. But our experience is that the sun rises and sets, which is a wonderful way of showing how the body's eyes lie. Similarly, it appears as if the world is flat, but we know that it is not.

So the body's eyes lie. In fact, the body in general lies. The brain lies because it is given its false messages by the ego, which is inherently a lie. That is the dishonest thought. So, by the same token, our experience is that the Holy Spirit moves around us—He does things for us. In reality, we are the ones who move. We are the ones who bring our illusions to His truth so that His truth can shine them away.

**(1:11-15) They hold His gifts and follow in His way, because God's Voice directs them in all things. Joy is their song of thanks. And Christ looks down on them in thanks as well. His need of them is just as great as theirs of Him. How joyous it is to share the purpose of salvation!**

This speaks of Christ's need. Christ's need of us is certainly not on the same level as our need. This really is talking about Christ's need that we simply extend His Love. It has nothing to do with any human need. As we discussed earlier, when the Course speaks of God as weeping (T-5.VII.4:5) and as incomplete without us (T-9.VII.8:2; T-9.VIII.9:8), it is simply using metaphors for His Love for us. So, likewise, when the Course talks here about Christ's need for us, it is simply saying that, in order for salvation to be complete, we all have to accept Christ's truth—it is not that Christ has a personal need.

**Part VIII
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Defenselessness (M-4.VI)**

To be defenseless obviously means to be without defenses. Remember, this started with the ego telling me my mind is filled with darkness, evil, and sin, and so it must be closed up tightly to protect it because it is so awful. And then I build a defense around it—the world—so that I never look at it again. The ego tells me I am not there anymore. I have escaped from my mind out into the world, which is the fortress around my mind. That is the defense. And as long as I believe I am guilty and sinful, I will be afraid of God's punishment, which means I will need a defense against it. When I can begin to let go of my investment in guilt as a way of keeping God's Love away, I will have less guilt and therefore less need for a defense against it. Then I will be able to begin the process of letting go of my defenses. Jesus was a perfect example of someone who could live in the world totally without any defense, because he had no guilt that had to be protected. Another definition of "defenselessness," then, could be "to be without attack," because defenses are attacks.

**(1:1) God's teachers have learned how to be simple.**

The ego's thought system is anything but simple—that is why the Course appears to be so complicated. But when we get to the bottom of what it is saying, the Course is really very simple. It seems to be complicated because the ego is so complicated. As the Course says, "Complexity is of the ego" (T-15.IV.6:2). It is the unraveling of the ego's complexity that appears to make the Course so difficult to understand. When it is crystal clear that everything about this world is the same illusion, then what the Course is saying is also very clear and very, very simple. The ego took a very simple truth—God is Love—and covered it over with darkness and sin. The ego then quickly complicated things by making up a world as a defense. And this world is very complicated.

From the dawn of our existence as homo sapiens, as we began to develop brains that could observe, we have tried to unravel the mysteries of life, biologically, physically, chemically, socially, psychologically, politically, economically. All we can do is try to understand this incredibly complex physical world and universe that we made. And by doing this, we fell headlong into the trap again, trying to analyze something that is not there—that makes absolutely no sense. The Course repeatedly tells us that what we are doing makes no sense. We are analyzing something that was made to trap and confuse us, to complicate everything. Truth is very simple. "We say 'God is', and then we cease to speak" (W-pI.169.5:4), because there is nothing else. The ego says, "There is something else. And I'm going to protect it. I'm going to make a world that comes from this something else. And I'm going to spend the rest of time—eons and eons—trying to understand and unravel the ultimate mystery of what life is all about." And, of course, we will never do it. In studying the origin of the universe, scientists claim that they can get back to the split second in which the universe appeared. But they can never get beyond that split second, because that split second is guilt, located in a mind of which they know nothing.

Again, "God's teachers have learned how to be simple." Only defenses against the simplicity of God's truth are very complicated. The Course repeatedly says how simple it is. The last chapter of the text begins with a section called, "The Simplicity of Salvation" (T-31.I). It is very simple to say that only God is real, that only the Holy Spirit's presence in our mind is real. Everything else is made up—that is simple. And so the choice is always between illusion and truth, regardless of the myriad number of forms that illusion appears to take.

**(1:2) They have no dreams that need defense against the truth.**

The dream that needs a defense against the truth is the dream of sin, guilt, and fear. That is the original dream of being separate that has been locked in our minds and protected by the world as a defense.

**(1:3) They do not try to make themselves.**

That, of course, is what the ego always does. Our being here in a body, with a personal self—physically, emotionally, psychologically—is the ego making itself.

**(1:4) Their joy comes from their understanding Who created them.**

And we can add, from not being afraid of Who created them. It was not the ego who created me. It was God.

**(1:5) And does what God created need defense?**

Obviously, the answer is no. That is what Jesus demonstrated, as a workbook lesson says, "*the Son of God needs no defense against the truth of his reality*" (W-pI.135.26:8). That lesson was written at Easter time. It obviously is a reference to Jesus. But it also refers to all of us, since we are all the Son of God. We need no defense to protect us from Who we are.

**(1:6) No one can become an advanced teacher of God until he fully understands that defenses are but foolish guardians of mad illusions.**

The original mad illusion is that I separated from God—that is the ego's "truth" that I hide in my mind. From that point I have to be protected, for otherwise God will come crashing into my mind, where my sin is, and destroy me. So the ego very cleverly takes me elsewhere, into the world, which is now separate from the mind. And the world then becomes a defense where God cannot enter (W-pII.3.2:4).

**(1:7) The more grotesque the dream, the fiercer and more powerful its defenses seem to be.**

If we think of the original grotesque dream of having attacked and murdered God and Christ, setting ourselves up on the throne of creation, that is pretty horrid. So we need a fierce and more powerful defense, which is what this world is. Now hatred and murder are out there in the world, and not within my mind. That is the ego's defense. The horror of the battlefield in my mind dictates that it is either my blood or God's. A passage we will read later in the manual talks about "kill or be killed" (M-17.7:11). So rather than see that battle within my mind, I close it up like a steel trap and I make up a world where all the blood now spills. But it is no longer within me—I am not responsible for it.

**(1:8) Yet when the teacher of God finally agrees to look past them, he finds that nothing was there.**

The Course refers to the world as clouds of guilt (T-19.II.6). The clouds of guilt are really meant to obscure from us the light of God's Love and truth. When we finally agree to go past all the defenses of the world and realize they are all smokescreens, we will look within our minds and find that nothing is there.

**(1:9) Slowly at first he lets himself be undeceived.**

So this is a process—we do it step-by-step. The ego has told us that if we look within our minds, we will be struck dead. God is not to be trusted, the ego tells us. So we have to do it gradually, step-by-step, unlearning our fear of God's Love. Gradually we begin to build up trust that God and the Holy Spirit are our friends and we can turn to them for help. That is the value of asking for the Holy Spirit's help in the world even if it is something as limited and specific as getting parking spaces. The Holy Spirit does not literally get us parking spaces, for all the reasons that we have already discussed. But at least at the beginning stages, His seeming answers to our limited requests are helpful for breaking down our fear that God does not care about us, that God hates us. So we can at least begin to have the idea that the Holy Spirit does help us. Not that He is the one who finds us parking spaces. But the illusion that He finds us parking spaces is much more helpful than the illusion that He doesn't give a damn about us, that, in fact, He is going to damn us.

As "The Song of Prayer" pamphlet describes, "asking-out-of-need" is the lowest level of the ladder (S-1.II.2-3). Asking the Holy Spirit to do things for us in the world is the bottom rung, but we have to start someplace. And that is a helpful place to start—not because of the form of believing He finds us parking spaces, but because of the content, which is that we now are beginning to doubt what the ego has told us, that we cannot trust the Holy Spirit. So we are beginning to build up a relationship of trust that He will help us. And He will help us because He loves us. But because of our fear, we do this gradually.

**(1:10) But he learns faster as his trust increases.**

As I learn more and more that I can trust the Holy Spirit and God's Love, I become less afraid of going back home, which means I now go much more quickly.

**(1:11) It is not danger that comes when defenses are laid down.**

The ego tells me that if I lay down the world as a defense, along with all the defenses I have made real in the world, God will destroy me because I have returned to the mind where the danger is, where God's wrath is. So my learning process lets me see that as I let go of my defenses, I am not destroyed. Psychologists, for years, have played into the ego's fear, asserting that if we let go of our defenses, we will become psychotic.

In truth, when we lay down our defenses, we become sane—not psychotic. But if we do it too quickly, our ego screeches: "Don't get too close, because if you come without any of your defenses, God will destroy you." So we have to do it gradually.

**(1:11-15) It is not danger that comes when defenses are laid down. It is safety. It is peace. It is joy. And it is God.**

That is what we find when we finally open up our hand—not all the darkened thoughts of sin the ego told us we would find, not the bloodied battlefield on which God will destroy us. All we find is the peace and the Love of God. As we will see repeatedly, as we identify with and experience that peace and Love of God within us, it automatically extends through us. That is what is meant by saying that a teacher of God does absolutely nothing. As we let go of all the barriers and veils, the gentle Love of God simply extends through us.

**Part IX
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Generosity (M-4.VII)**

The major theme of this characteristic is the important idea in the Course that giving and receiving are the same. In the world's terms, of course, when I give something I no longer have it. In the Course's understanding of giving, the only way I can truly give is to give through the Holy Spirit, which means that I give love. And the more that I give love, the more I am sharing love and making love real, which means the more I accept love. So giving and receiving are the same.

Giving and receiving are also the same with regard to the ego, although with totally opposite content. The more that I give guilt away by projecting it onto others and attacking them, the guiltier I feel and therefore the more I receive guilt.

**(1:1-2) The term generosity has special meaning to the teacher of God. It is not the usual meaning of the word; in fact, it is a meaning that must be learned and learned very carefully.**

This theme—that when we give we do not lose—is highlighted over and over again in the text, workbook, and teachers' manual. In fact, from the Course's perspective, rather than losing what we give, the exact opposite is true: giving is how we receive. Similar to our earlier discussion that the characteristics of a teacher of God are not defined in positive terms, we really would not call a teacher of God "generous" as the world defines that term; i.e., someone who has a lot of money or time and gives it to a charity or devotes it to others.

From the Course's point of view that is sacrifice. True giving is simply giving of yourself and receiving of yourself. It has nothing to do with anything material or measurable.

So a teacher of God is not generous according to the usual definition of the word. A teacher of God is generous in the sense that what is being given is also being received, which has nothing to do with anything tangible or material. We simply let the Love of God and the love of our real Self extend through us to others—that is what we are giving. And, of course, there is no loss at that point.

**(1:3) Like all the other attributes of God's teachers this one rests ultimately on trust, for without trust no one can be generous in the true sense.**

I really cannot give unless I give from the Love of God within me, which means I must trust that the Love of God is my friend rather than, as the ego tells me, my enemy. Thus, as it says throughout this whole section, all the characteristics rest on trust. Once we trust in God's Love, all the rest follows.

**(1:4-8) To the world, generosity means "giving away" in the sense of "giving up." To the teachers of God, it means giving away in order to keep. This has been emphasized throughout the text and the workbook, but it is perhaps more alien to the thinking of the world than many other ideas in our curriculum. Its greater strangeness lies merely in the obviousness of its reversal of the world's thinking. In the clearest way possible, and at the simplest of levels, the word means the exact opposite to the teachers of God and to the world.**

What makes the striking difference between the Course's and the world's understanding of giving and receiving clear is that the world believes that the world is real and that everything is material and quantifiable. Thus, for example, I cannot be in two places at the same time, I cannot love two people at the same time, I cannot give something and expect to have it still. This all makes perfect sense if we believe in the reality of the material world. When we recognize that the material world is simply an expression of thought and thoughts are qualitative, not quantitative, and that they can be shared, then the whole meaning of the term shifts. Then what I give is what I keep, because I am only giving to myself—there is nothing outside me anyway.

**(2:1-2) The teacher of God is generous out of Self interest. This does not refer, however, to the self of which the world speaks.**

The "Self" here is the Christ in us.

**(2:3) The teacher of God does not want anything he cannot give away, because he realizes it would be valueless to him by definition.**

In other words, if I want anything to keep for myself then I am making it real. And if I have it, that means you do not have it, which, again, is true of the world, but not of God. If I value anything of the world, I am using it as a substitute for God, and so it becomes an idol or a special-love object—something that I want and need. And if you have it, that means that I do not. And therefore I have to take it from you. But all that I really have and need and want is the Love of God. And if you do not have it, that means I do not have it because love is total. All the children of God must share in this same love. So it is not anything that I would want to keep for myself.

The original separation occurred when the Son of God perceived that he and God were different: God was the first and prime Creator and the Son was the created. The Son evaluated that difference and decided it was not fair: "God has something I don't have and I want it." And so the Son stole it from God, usurping His place. That is what is known as sin. But when we realize that God is only Love, which is what we are as well, and that there is no difference between us on that level, then there no longer is anything that we need or lack or feel we have to steal. But while I believe there is something I must steal, then I have to protect it to prevent your stealing it back from me.

These ideas about giving and receiving ultimately cannot be understood without recognizing their metaphysical basis.

**(2:4-7) What would he want it for? He could only lose because of it. He could not gain. Therefore he does not seek what only he could keep, because that is a guarantee of loss.**

In other words, what would he want to keep anything for? A teacher of God does not seek for what would be only his and no one else's. If I cannot share what I have and what I am with all of creation, it is not worth having. This is the exact opposite of what the world teaches.

**(2:8-9) He does not want to suffer. Why should he ensure himself pain?**

I would suffer and I would be ensuring myself pain if I were grasping at something and saying, "This is salvation for me." I would be excluding the Love of God, the only thing that can save me. And so from that point on, I would be reinforcing the ego's thought system, which is based on suffering, pain, and guilt.

**(2:10-12) But he does want to keep for himself all things that are of God, and therefore for His Son. These are the things that belong to him. These he can give away in true generosity, protecting them forever for himself.**

The term "protect" is not meant here as the ego uses it. Rather, it means that I ensure that I will always remember that I am a child of love by allowing that love to extend through me. When we get angry and attack, we clearly are giving up our love and peace. My anger at myself, my self-hatred—which is my guilt—is what I try to give away by getting angry at you, magically hoping that by giving you my anger and guilt I will be free of it.

It may be helpful to distinguish between what the Course means by giving away and what has been attributed to Jesus in the gospels. In one gospel account, Jesus tells a young man who has come to him that he should sell everything he has and give it to the poor. The common interpretation has been that Jesus meant material things. Now we do not know what Jesus really said or did not say in the gospels, but if we want to assume he did say something like this, then he could not have been referring to anything material. He really means we should give our ego away and follow him.

Jesus also supposedly said that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter Heaven. I think these words have been attributed to Jesus because poor people probably wrote the gospels, and I am not being funny about that. That would have to be the case. And, unfortunately, that passage has led to a tremendous separation between the rich and the poor, where the rich are seen as evil and the poor are seen as hopeless victims. This makes the world very real, and material wealth or its absence very, very real.

Embracing poverty is the same mistake as embracing materiality. When the Course talks about poverty and abundance, it is not talking about material things. Poverty is the ego state in which we have deprived ourselves of the riches of God. And abundance has nothing to do with the size of our bank account. Abundance refers to the Love of God that we have accepted as ours.

**Part X
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Patience (M-4.VIII)**

Patience is one of the more important characteristics of God's teachers simply because we all tend to be so impatient. Having made time, we then make ourselves slaves to it.

**(1:1) Those who are certain of the outcome can afford to wait, and wait without anxiety.**

This is telling us that when we find ourselves impatient about something, it is really because we do not trust in the outcome. Always. So we come back to the idea of trust again. If I am impatient, it is because I am afraid that if something I want does not happen right when I want it to happen, then it will not happen at all, or it will happen differently from how I want it to happen. And that is because I do not trust. I also believe that if something does not occur within the time frame that I have established for it, then something terrible will happen. I will be a victim of a person's coming late or a job not being finished on time, etc. All of this, obviously, is a subtle way of making the error real, making the world real, and believing that my salvation and my peace and my happiness depend on something external.

If I can truly identify with the Love of God as my identity and remember that that Love is eternal, then what difference does anything make in the world? Now that does not mean that within my specific role I do not do whatever it is I am supposed to do, but I can do it without anxiety. And if it ends up that it just does not get done, or others do not do their part, or something does not happen in the allotted time, that does not mean that I suffer as a result. I trust, knowing that my center and my source is not of this world. On that level, nothing outside me matters, because nothing outside me has the power to take away the love and the peace within me.

**(1:2-3) Patience is natural to the teacher of God. All he sees is certain outcome, at a time perhaps unknown to him as yet, but not in doubt.**

Now the "certain outcome" has nothing to do with anything material. The certain outcome is that we will all return home. The text says, "The outcome is as certain as God" (T-2.III.3:10; T-4.II.5:8), the outcome being our getting beyond our egos, awakening from the dream, and returning to the home that we have never left. That is certain, and what else matters but that? Coming late for an appointment, missing a deadline—how relevant are they to awakening from the dream and being back home with God? Only that is important. And that outcome is already certain—the Holy Spirit is already present and we have never separated from God.

The idea is to monitor our minds when we find ourselves getting impatient—impatient towards persons who do not learn as quickly as we think they should, or who are not working fast enough, etc. At that point, we want to realize that we once again have devalued the certainty of God and the peace of Heaven, giving our peace to whomever we are feeling impatient towards. I am not upset because you are dilly-dallying. I am upset because I have not valued the Love and the peace of God—I have given it away and then blamed you for it.

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**(1:4-6) The time will be as right as is the answer. And this is true for everything that happens now or in the future. The past as well held no mistakes; nothing that did not serve to benefit the world, as well as him to whom it seemed to happen.**

Now this does not mean that people always make the most loving choices. As is obvious, the world demonstrates to us that this is not the case. But even the mistakes we make turn into learning opportunities, at which point they are not mistakes in a negative way. We all make mistakes. Being in this world is a mistake, a cosmic mistake—that is extremely important to keep in mind. So therefore we should not be upset because of mistakes. The fact that we are here, seemingly alive and breathing, is a mistake.

The Course is not saying that we should deny that we are here, alive and breathing. It is referring to an attitude that involves looking at things we have done "wrong" and realizing that was our fear speaking. But the Holy Spirit, the presence of Love, is still there within our minds, along with our fear, and He can help us look at our mistakes differently. It does not matter whether we are talking about something major, on the scale of the Holocaust, or something trivial, such as getting mildly annoyed at someone—everything has the same potential of teaching us that the ego's way of looking at the world is not correct. If we look at each situation properly, through the eyes of the Holy Spirit, then everything changes for us. And therefore there are no mistakes in the usual sense—they all simply become part of my learning process.

And that is what patience means. I realize that each and every moment holds salvation within it if I choose to look at it with the Holy Spirit rather than with the ego. And the form makes no difference. I may be in the process of getting really upset about something, doing all the things that upset people do—yelling and screaming and carrying on about all the horrible things going on around me. And in the midst of my upset, I still have the power within my mind to choose differently. At that instant when I do, everything disappears—everything that I was doing five minutes earlier no longer exists. So my mistake in taking an occurrence in the world seriously, and seeing victimization all around me becomes the classroom in which I am able to say, "This is what I am doing, but I want something else." My mistake then becomes holy, because it becomes an opportunity for me to learn something different. That is what this passage is talking about.

Patience then is understanding that, regardless of what is going on in the world-at-large or in my personal world, the lesson can be learned now and awaits only my deciding that I do want to learn forgiveness now instead of anger. And at that moment the whole past disappears. And so, since there is no time, the whole idea of impatience becomes irrelevant.

Sometimes people say that if the Course teaches that the whole Sonship has to return as one, then what about Jesus? He is stuck somewhere, waiting for all the rest of us. He is going to have to wait millions of years until we all change our minds. But Jesus is not in time, so there is no time in which he is waiting. Since he is identified only with the Love and the certainty of God, there is nothing to be impatient about. There is nothing even to wait for. Within a world of time, words like "impatient" and "wait" have great meaning, but that is within the ego's world of time. Within eternity they are meaningless. And so as we grow in accepting the eternal presence of Love in our minds, we are enabled to become increasingly patient with ourselves and with everyone else.

Impatience can be understood in another way as well. If I am impatient either with myself or with someone else for not learning the process of forgiveness quickly enough, or for any other reason, I am really being confronted with the tremendous pain of my own unworthiness, my own failure, and my own guilt, and I do not want to look at it. And so my impatience is saying that I just want to get this over with as quickly as possible because the pain is too great. It is like sitting in a dentist's chair and, as the pain of the drilling is becoming too much, I just want it to be over as quickly as possible. And so the impatience I may feel about anything is really coming from my intolerance for looking at my ego, which obviously makes it very real.

Therefore, the way to get past my ego is to learn to look at it without being intolerant of it or impatient with myself. I want to be able to look at my ego without taking it seriously, to look at all the ugliness within myself—all the murderous thoughts towards myself and others—and just say, "Well, that's my ego, but I don't have to be afraid of it because there is another, gentle Voice inside me." That is the beginning of patience. I learn not to be afraid of the ugliness I think is real inside me, as I gradually build up the faith and the trust that beauty and love are inside me as well. And all I have to do is choose.

**(1:7) Perhaps it was not understood at the time.**

That is probably a mild understatement. That the past held no mistakes was most likely not understood at the time because I thought something terrible had happened. But the "something terrible" is simply my ego, alive and kicking, and making itself very painfully felt. But now I know that there is another presence in my mind that makes itself joyfully felt. And I can look through the Holy Spirit's or Jesus' eyes so that what I thought was so terrible is now seen as a helpful classroom.

**(1:8) Even so, the teacher of God is willing to reconsider all his past decisions, if they are causing pain to anyone.**

In other words, I am aware of having done something in the past that has reinforced another's guilt—that is what it means to be causing pain to anyone—or it remains a source of deep guilt within me because I am still making it real for myself right now until I change my mind. There is no past or future. It is all a made-up trick within my mind. So I always have the choice within the present moment whether to continue to hold on to my guilt, my sins of the past, and my fear of the future. And if I am holding on to them, then I must look at that choice, because that is a classroom that I have made real for myself. So I look at my past mistake—which the ego has called sin—with the love of Jesus next to me, and now it will look totally different to me.

**(1:9-10) Patience is natural to those who trust. Sure of the ultimate interpretation of all things in time, no outcome already seen or yet to come can cause them fear.**

The "ultimate interpretation of all things in time" is the Holy Spirit's. As the workbook lesson says, "All things are lessons God would have me learn" (W-pI.193)—that is the ultimate interpretation. Everything is a learning opportunity. Whether we are talking about Nazi Germany or a minor thing that happened to me yesterday does not matter. That is the ultimate interpretation, and I am sure of it because I am sure of the Holy Spirit's presence within me. But if I am not sure of the Holy Spirit's presence inside me, that is a lack of trust. And if I do not trust His Love and His peace, I am choosing the ego, which locks me into the ego's interpretation of events.

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In other words, when I am sure of the outcome and I have no doubts that I am a child of God and have never left my Father's house, then absolutely nothing in this world can upset me. So then I perceive what seems to be going on in the world—whether it is my world or the world-at-large—as simply a part of the classroom that will teach me the lesson that at another level I have already learned. At that point any anxiety, impatience, or fear become irrelevant.

The key in this, as I have been repeatedly saying, is not to delude ourselves or to deny the fact that we are still learning this. In other words, simply to take this statement and use it to push down all of our anxiety and fear is not helpful. Our goal is really to know that nothing has any meaning other than as a classroom in which I learn again what I have already learned, but have not yet accepted. That principle then makes it easier to get through difficult situations. But I do not want to deny all the learning that I still have to do—I do not want to skip over steps by spiritualizing away feelings of anger, disappointment, anxiety, guilt, or any other feelings I may be experiencing.

**Part XI
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Faithfulness (M-4.IX)**

This section is basically about generalization—having faith that the Course's teachings work in all situations. This, of course, must be true because all situations are the same. The ego teaches that everything is different—each problem is unique and different and has to be addressed differently based on its own special circumstances. But in truth, all problems are one problem. Every problem is just another expression of separation, which means that all problems have one solution: the Holy Spirit's forgiveness or joining.

So faithfulness means knowing that we only have to shift the way that we are looking at a problem, and the Love of God will solve it for us. Not on the level of form, of course. The Love of God will simply be the content that filters through our minds, and any way that we approach the specific problem at that point will be peaceful and loving, and it will work. Again, not necessarily in form. But it will work in the sense that we will be peaceful. Our only problem is that we are not at peace. So when we are at peace again, the problem has been solved. And that is what faithfulness is about as it is presented in this section.

**(1:1) The extent of the teacher of God's faithfulness is the measure of his advancement in the curriculum.**

The "curriculum" is learning that all problems are one problem, and therefore all solutions are one solution. So the extent of our being faithful—of having faith that all our problems will be solved—is the measure of how far we have come. This is really implying that the spiritual path, the path of becoming an advanced teacher of God through practicing this Course, is a process.

**(1:2) Does he still select some aspects of his life to bring to his learning, while keeping others apart?**

We all, of course, do this. We allow the process to work in some areas of our lives, but not in all. So for example, we will let the Holy Spirit help us to forgive this person in this situation, but not that person in that situation. Or He can help us deal with this particular form of pain and suffering, but not with another one that we have decided is too big. All we are doing is saying that there are differences in this world. And once we say that, we obviously are making the world real.

The very powerful section "The Laws of Chaos" (T-23.II) in Chapter 23 describes the ego's five laws. The first law is that there is a hierarchy of illusions. Some illusions are better, some illusions are worse than others. Some illusions are holy, some are not. These judgments are all based upon form. Everyone in the world thinks in terms of form. Thus we can solve certain problems more easily than other problems. Now, in the world of form, this is undoubtedly true. But remember the whole world of form is part of the dream. And when we recognize that the only problem is that we believe the dream is real—and that is the problem—then everything is simple. So within the dream it does appear as if there are differences. But when we recognize that all the differences come from the same, basic thought of separation—which is illusory—then they are all the same.

**(1:3) If so, his advancement is limited, and his trust not yet firmly established.**

In other words, we still withhold certain problems from the Holy Spirit, which basically means that we still believe certain things that go on in the world have the power to keep us from being peaceful and from feeling God's Love. We are saying that there are certain sources of pain or sickness, or certain conditions in the world, or certain things that people do that have the power to keep the peace of God away from us. That is what we are all saying when we do not generalize the lesson of forgiveness to all situations. The truth is that, regardless of what is going on around us, we can still be at peace and know that God's Love is within us. Not knowing that is the only problem, and accepting it is the only solution.

**(1:4) Faithfulness is the teacher of God's trust in the Word of God to set all things right; not some, but all.**

As used in the Course, the phrase "the Word of God" is almost always some expression of God's Answer, the Holy Spirit's Atonement principle. Sometimes it is used as a synonym for the Holy Spirit, sometimes for the Atonement principle, sometimes for the plan of the Atonement, sometimes for forgiveness, etc.

So faithfulness is knowing that, regardless of the source of our distress, the Holy Spirit's Love in our minds can set all things right. This does not mean that the Holy Spirit's Love will fix everything in the world. Think of Jesus: his life was not fixed up at the end. Not externally, certainly. Or think of people in the concentration camps who went to their deaths there. Their lives were not set straight, as the world would judge it. All things are set right in our experience or perception of them so that, regardless of what is going on around us, without exception, we are filled with the Love and the peace of God. Once we make exceptions, we are saying there is a hierarchy of illusions and the world of separation and the ego's thought system of separation are real. And we are trapped.

**(1:5) Generally, his faithfulness begins by resting on just some problems, remaining carefully limited for a time.**

At the beginning, that would be natural for us.

**(1:6-8) To give up all problems to one Answer is to reverse the thinking of the world entirely. And that alone is faithfulness. Nothing but that really deserves the name.**

Again, that is what makes the Course so incredibly simple. And this cannot be understood, let alone deeply experienced, without really knowing—experientially as well as intellectually—that the entire world is made up and that, in fact, there is no world. The whole thing is a silly dream whose only purpose is to keep us from awakening. Without exception, the entire world is that. As that idea grows in us, first intellectually and then as part of our experience, we begin to understand why there is only one problem and one answer, and why there is no order of difficulty in miracles.

The only problem is that I think there is a problem—that is the problem! And so again, the problem is not the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God. The problem is making it into a problem, taking it as something serious—that is the problem. And we replicate that basic mistake over and over and over again. We get upset about something that is not there. Recall we talked earlier about the closed fist as a metaphor for the closed mind—we really believe something terrible is in the closed fist. So we never go anywhere near it. But it is a made-up problem. When we reach the point where we can look at it and see there is nothing in there, it all disappears. All the anxiety, concern, and guilt disappear.

Everything in this world is like that. And so that is what it means to be a teacher of God: recognizing that there is nothing that has to be taught and nothing that has to be learned. We simply accept the truth that is already present in us. That means we look with honesty at the ego thought system and all its manifestations—all the things that upset and concern us. We look at them and say, "This is not the problem—this is not what it appears to be." So growing in A Course in Miracles means recognizing that there is nothing out there that has to be forgiven or corrected. There is nothing or no one out there that has to be helped or healed. What has to be helped and healed is my mind that perceives something out there to be helped and healed.

This does not mean that our bodies do not do anything, or that our bodies do not take the form of helping other people. But I do not experience myself as doing the helping. I experience myself as being the instrument through which the help comes. In a lovely passage in the workbook, Jesus says, "For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands, through which I save the world" (W-pI.rV.9:2-3). What is particularly important about this passage is that Jesus says he is the one who saves the world, not us, but that he cannot save it except through us—just as he could not give this message unless he had Helen's body to speak through.

So again, this does not mean that we turn our backs on what goes on in the world. It simply means we turn our mindsover to the One Who really knows what is going on in the world. And then His Love works through us, guiding our bodies to do whatever we do. When we do it right, we no longer experience ourselves as doing it. And so we have no investment in people being healed or getting well or getting fed, and no investment in there being peace in the world, or anything like that. Once we have an investment in anything, we obviously are making it real. We want to have an investment in having our minds healed by bringing all our thoughts of separation, guilt, fear, and attack to the presence of Love in our minds. When we rejoin with Jesus' love, his love then works through us.

Now although we just read that faithfulness has no exceptions (it means giving all our problems to the one Answer), Jesus then says:

**(1:9-10) Yet each degree, however small, is worth achieving. Readiness, as the text notes, is not mastery.**

In other words, Jesus is saying that the ideal and the goal is to be able to apply this principle to all situations, all problems, and all relationships, without exception. But he is also telling us that we are not going to do this right away. And so we take small steps, and every small step is worth it. He is saying that at any given moment, when we are able to turn a problem over to him, we have made progress. And we are ready to do that, even if we have not mastered the whole principle. Even if we are not perfect, we can still walk along the road to becoming perfect.

What is helpful about this—and we find this throughout the three books—is Jesus' gentleness and patience, if we can use such a word for him. He is not expecting us to be perfect. We may be tempted to say, "Well, I can't do this because I keep getting angry, or I keep getting sick, or I keep getting depressed, and then I feel so guilty." But the goal of the Course is not to be finished with all this—one, two, three. The goal rather is to provide a means whereby, step by step, we take all the small steps along a longer path, which will eventually lead us beyond all of our ego thoughts. But it is a process. It is not something that happens overnight.

So another way of understanding patience, then, is having patience with ourselves, knowing that we do not have to be perfect. We can be ready to learn the Course and practice it without having mastered it. Because if we have mastered it, then we do not need it. So the purpose of the Course is to address our need for something that helps us undo all of our anger, guilt, anxieties, etc.

**(2:1) True faithfulness, however, does not deviate.**

So now he is going back to the ultimate sense. In other words, when we are truly faithful, there is no going back and forth.

**(2:2-12) Being consistent, it is wholly honest. Being unswerving, it is full of trust. Being based on fearlessness, it is gentle. Being certain, it is joyous. And being confident, it is tolerant. Faithfulness, then, combines in itself the other attributes of God's teachers. It implies acceptance of the Word of God and His definition of His Son. It is to Them** [God and His Son] **that faithfulness in the true sense is always directed. Toward Them it looks, seeking until it finds. Defenselessness attends it naturally and joy is its condition. And having found, it rests in quiet certainty on that alone to which all faithfulness is due** [which of course is God].

To summarize: *Faith* is another of those terms that the Course uses in a way that is different from common usage. The Course is not talking about faith in God the way people usually talk about faith in God. In the Course, and especially in this context, it means having trust in the process, of which the Holy Spirit obviously is in charge. And in our faith and trust in the process, we also recognize that our egos have no power. So despite all the ego's attempts to trick us and others, we are able to look beyond the ego—our own and everyone else's—and trust and have faith that the light of Christ is still shining within our minds. Despite all the murderous thoughts that the world holds—that made and sustain the world—the Love of God and the peace of Heaven have not been touched at all. And I live that faith in my everyday life by trusting that, no matter how upset I get, there is still an unswerving, unyielding, and constant presence of love in my mind that is always there for me. And not only is it always there for me, but it is in everyone else as well. I have trust that I am on the right path, and that love is guiding me and love is the goal. And I will achieve it. When I do does not matter. All that matters is the certainty that I will make it home. That is faith.

**Part XII
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Open-Mindedness (M-4.X)**

The final characteristic is open-mindedness. Basically, open-mindedness means that my mind is not closed to anything or anyone or any part of the Sonship. It is open-minded in the sense that "all things are lessons God would have me learn" (W-pI.193), without exception. All that I perceive outside me is part of the same Sonship of Christ that I am. So my mind is not closed to any forgiveness lesson, and it is not closed to any part of the Sonship.

**(1:1-2) The centrality of open-mindedness, perhaps the last of the attributes the teacher of God acquires, is easily understood when its relation to forgiveness is recognized. Open-mindedness comes with lack of judgment.**

And that, of course, is what forgiveness does. It undoes judgment.

**(1:3) As judgment shuts the mind against God's Teacher**[the Holy Spirit]**, so open-mindedness invites Him to come in.**

My original shutting of my mind against the Holy Spirit was my judgment that I have sinned. I first made a judgment against the Son of God: he is a sinner and he is guilty. I then made a judgment against God: He is wrathful and vengeful, and therefore He is no longer a Being of perfect Love. From that judgment came my next judgment: the ego and not the Holy Spirit is my friend. And from all those original judgments the world came, along with all the judgments that go on here in the world.

**(1:4) As condemnation judges the Son of God as evil, so open-mindedness permits him to be judged by the Voice for God on His behalf.**

The original judgment was that the Son of God is evil and sinful because of what he did. And open-mindedness is like opening up my fist that I closed when I placed evil and sin in it. That was the judgment against myself. Open-mindedness is opening up to the judgment of the Holy Spirit, which simply says, "Nothing has happened. The innocence that you had as God's Son is still yours, and it has never been taken from you."

**(1:5-6) As the projection of guilt upon him would send him to hell, so open-mindedness lets Christ's image be extended to him. Only the open-minded can be at peace, for they alone see reason for it.**

When I project my guilt onto you as a symbol of the separated Son of God, my projection is damning you to hell. I am saying, "You're a miserable sinner and you deserve to be punished." On the other hand, when I let go of all judgment of myself, then the image of Christ—an image of perfect love and innocence—extends through me to you.

**(2:1-2) How do the open-minded forgive? They have let go all things that would prevent forgiveness.**

This is another of those very clear statements of what the whole process of the Course is, of what forgiveness is. Forgiveness does not do anything. It undoes or lets go of what the ego has put there. The purpose of the Course is to remove the interferences to the awareness of love's presence. There are a few lines in one of the sections on special relationships that say the same thing: "Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false" (T-16.IV.6:1-2). So we do not have to worry about finding God or the Holy Spirit or truth and love. They are already there. If we seek for Them, we are saying They are not there, and we have to find Them. That is what the ego tells us. So we do not seek for God or the Holy Spirit or truth. We seek for the interferences within our minds that prevent us from accepting the love that is already there. Our task is to seek and find the barriers we have built against love.

We forgive by simply looking at all the things that have stood in the way of forgiveness, things like judgment, attack, guilt, etc. And then we let them go by opening up that closed fist and saying, "I don't want to protect these anymore. I don't want to be afraid of them anymore. I don't want to feel guilty about them anymore." And then the light of truth shines them away.

**(2:3) They have in truth abandoned the world, and let it be restored to them in newness and in joy so glorious they could never have conceived of such a change.**

This is referring to the real world. It does not mean that the world will disappear. The world that disappears is a world of sinfulness, guilt, and suffering. That is what we abandon. And then the world is restored to us in a newness and a glorious joy. This does not mean that the world has changed physically. What has changed is that we now look at this world through eyes of light, love, and peace, rather than eyes of darkness, attack, condemnation, and suffering. So the real world is not a change in the world. It is a change in the mind of someone who is looking at the world. If we think of Jesus on the cross, his world did not change, the physical world around him did not change. But there was only light within his mind and so that is what he perceived.

**(2:4-5) Nothing is now as it was formerly. Nothing but sparkles now which seemed so dull and lifeless before.**

It was dull and lifeless because guilt is dull and lifeless, and guilt is really death.

**(2:6) And above all are all things welcoming, for threat is gone.**

All things are welcome because everything is seen as a classroom. So I do not say, "This is a terrible thing that's going to happen; therefore, I have to stop it." Nothing in the world is seen as a threat because I realize there is nothing in the world. How can I be hurt by something that does not exist? I can only be hurt by my belief that there is something that can hurt me, but believing that does not make it true. So, in a sense, this is another way of stating the Atonement principle: I am free to believe I separated from God, but I am not free to have made it happen.

**(2:7-8) No clouds remain to hide the face of Christ. Now is the goal achieved.**

The "face of Christ" is used in the Course as a symbol for forgiveness. It is not something that we actually see. We don't see the face of Jesus in someone. We don't see the other person's physical face change. What changes is the way that I look at your face. To see the face of Christ in my brother is really an expression of forgiveness. It means that I look at you through the eyes of innocence, and I no longer see you as guilty or sinful. And so you shine and radiate and look beautiful, not because of anything physical about you, but simply because I now see you without all the projections of hatred, guilt, and attack that I had placed there.

The "clouds," as I mentioned earlier, are frequently used in the Course as a symbol of the ego's illusions, and often specifically of guilt, as the "cloud of guilt" (e.g., T-13.IX.h) that hides the light of the Holy Spirit.

**(2:9) Forgiveness is the final goal of the curriculum.**

The final goal of A Course in Miracles is not God or Heaven. The final goal is peace. And forgiveness is the means of attaining that peace. So the curriculum of the Course is quite specific—it is a curriculum in undoing. Forgiveness undoes. The miracle undoes. And when we undo all the things that the ego has placed in our mind, only the Love of God is left.

The Course has a kind of basic formula: I see the face of Christ in my brother and then I remember God. To see the face of Christ in my brother is to forgive. That is the whole process. When it has occurred and is complete, the Course has completed its purpose. What remains is the memory of God, which now dawns on our minds. The memory of God is held in our minds by the Holy Spirit. In fact the Holy Spirit is the memory of God's Love in our separated minds within the dream. So when we have totally undone the ego's dreams, all that is left is the memory of God.

**(2:10) It paves the way for what goes far beyond all learning.**

And that is the Love of God.

**(2:11-13) The curriculum makes no effort to exceed its legitimate goal. Forgiveness is its single aim, at which all learning ultimately converges. It is indeed enough.**

The Course does not talk about love or teach love. That is not its goal. That is beyond what can be taught. What can be taught is how to undo what we have taught ourselves. We have taught ourselves the whole ego thought system, a thought system based on attack, separation, sickness, etc. And so we need another thought system that undoes that, that teaches us something different. Forgiveness does that. When forgiveness is complete and we have undone all that the ego has taught, then all learning disappears. Learning has now fulfilled its purpose, and what remains is the memory of God.

This completes our discussion of open-mindedness. The remaining part of this subsection is like a summary of the whole section.

**(3:1-3) You may have noticed that the list of attributes of God's teachers does not include things that are the Son of God's inheritance. Terms like love, sinlessness, perfection, knowledge and eternal truth do not appear in this context. They would be most inappropriate here.**

The focus here is on the undoing of the ego's thought system. And so the characteristics are really not the characteristics of Heaven. They are what characterizes living in this world in the absence of the ego's thought system. When the Holy Spirit's thought system has totally corrected and undone the ego's thought system, all that remains are the attributes of Christ. But the attainment of those attributes is not the goal of the Course. Again, the goal of the Course is to attain what it calls right-minded thinking, which embodies the characteristics of the teacher of God. In other words, the goal is to teach and to learn forgiveness. When that process is complete, it wipes the slate clean and what is left are the characteristics of Christ: love, sinlessness, perfection, etc.

**(3:4) What God has given is so far beyond our curriculum that learning but disappears in its presence.**

What God has given is His Love, His Self, which is what we are as Christ. Once we have completed our learning and we see the face of Christ, everything of the split mind disappears. And what dawns on our mind is the memory of God. At that point everything else disappears.

**(3:5) Yet while its presence is obscured, the focus properly belongs on the curriculum.**

In other words, while the presence of God is obscured, while we are still afraid of the perfect love that we are, we still have to learn the undoing of fear. And that, again, is what forgiveness does, which is the whole thrust of the Course.

**(3:6) It is the function of God's teachers to bring true learning to the world.**

But it is not we, as God's teachers, who bring the true learning to the world. It is brought to the world through us. Our split minds, and therefore our bodies, simply become the instruments through which this perfect love extends itself.

**(3:7) Properly speaking it is unlearning that they bring, for that is "true learning" in the world.**

Again, this whole Course is a course in unlearning and undoing—removing what the ego has placed in our minds. Now the Course says, "The ego always speaks first" (T-6.IV.1:2), but it is wrong. And the Holy Spirit is the Answer that cancels out the ego's statement.

**(3:8-9) It is given to the teachers of God to bring the glad tidings of complete forgiveness to the world. Blessed indeed are they, for they are the bringers of salvation.**

Again, we are not the ones who bring this message. We are the ones who are the instruments through which it comes. We are not the ones who do it. Our job is simply to get ourselves out of the way. As we will see later when we discuss healing, we are not the ones who heal. A teacher of God does not heal. He simply lets the healing extend through him.

**Part XIII
What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?
Concluding Discussion**

**1. Living A Course in Miracles**

What makes the Course so challenging to live is that it says we should remain in the world and do what one typically does in the world, but with a different attitude. So, for example, if I am in the role of a supervisor with responsibilities anyone in a similar situation would have, then that is what I would do. The difference is that there is a part of me that does not lose its peace because members of the staff have not done their job right. I would still do what every other boss does. But if I am doing it right, I do it with the awareness that my workplace is a classroom in which I follow all of the rules and procedures of the classroom, at the same time recognizing that they do not really matter. That is very difficult to do. It involves being in the world yet not of it, to use the biblical line that the Course frequently paraphrases and adapts (T-7.XI.1:3; T-26.VII.4:5). It is much easier, as people on spiritual paths have done for eons, to separate oneself out from the world and just meditate on the eternal truths. That is one spiritual path, but it is not that of the Course.

The Course's path, with very rare exceptions, asks us as its students to remain just where we are within our roles—whether parent, teacher, supervisor or whatever—and to do what the role calls for, because that is the role we have chosen. That is our classroom. But we do it while learning the lesson that, in reality, it does not matter. Then we can do whatever our roles call for and still be peaceful. I can raise my voice and still be peaceful. I can fire someone and still be peaceful. I can not fire someone and still be peaceful. None of it makes any difference.

What makes the process clear is the experience of peace, and this experience deepens over a period of time through realizing that the lesson consists in learning to see no one as a victim—myself or anyone else. As another example, let us say that I am running a large kitchen, and there are many people who all have to be fed at a certain time. But some of the kitchen staff are not doing their jobs. As a result, although the food is supposed to be ready by half past six, it is already twenty-five after six, the food is not ready, and it obviously will not be ready for at least another twenty minutes. So if I am sitting there impatiently waiting for all this to happen, thinking, "Oh, my God, these people are not going to be fed on time," I am trapped. I am saying the people to be fed are the victims, and the staff who have not done their job are the victimizers. At that point, no matter what I do, it will be wrong.

But if I recognize that my lesson is to realize that no one is a victim, that people make mistakes, but no one is a victim and no one is a victimizer—and I really want to learn that—then that will always bring me back to the central issue and the central goal. So when I start to get upset about all the people who are not going to get their food on time, I want to say to myself, "I've fallen into the trap—I've made the error real. I believe that there are going to be victims, which means there are people who have sinned against them who deserve my anger." Then I step back and say, "I've chosen the wrong teacher, because that's the ego talking about sin." It takes a lot of practice to be able to do this without falling into denial about my reactions.

We want to be careful that we are not trying to make ourselves perfect by doing the "spiritual" thing. We want to learn the lesson so that we will feel more peaceful, so we will feel God's Love much more present to us. We want to see each situation as a means for achieving the goal of learning what forgiveness is, which is the theme of the section "Setting the Goal" (T-17.VI). And specifically this means learning that this is not a world of victims and victimizers. It is helpful to see that whatever is upsetting me always has something to do with victimization—without exception! Either I am a victim, or I identify other people out there as victims. What really helps me move along my path of forgiveness is realizing that there is another way of looking at every situation, while still functioning within it.

As I have said, the problem is not the tiny, mad idea of separation. The problem is taking it seriously. The problem is not the people who are not going to get their food on time. The problem is that I am making the situation into a big deal. I am making it into a sin, a whole replay of a victimization scenario. And if I change my mind about that scenario, then a different way of seeing it becomes possible.

Thus the first step is at least to recognize that there is a different way of looking at the situation and to understand what that different way is. Living the different way obviously takes a lot of practice. It is crucial that we not abdicate our responsibility to our role as the world sees it. We do what the role is asking of us, as lovingly as we can. But we know that the role is now serving a different purpose, and that makes it different. That enables us, over time, in many situations, to be even more effective and efficient in what we are doing, because we are more peaceful. There is less interference, less anxiety, less tension, less impatience, and less of a need to demand that others do what we want them to do.

**2. The Holy Spirit's "Plan"**

In light of our discussion of these characteristics, and particularly with regard to patience, it may be helpful to look at a sentence from the workbook that is frequently misunderstood: "What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good?" (W-pI.135.18:1). It is important always to keep in mind that the basic approach of the Course is to correct the ego's misperceptions. The context of this lesson is found in the earlier lines: "A healed mind does not plan. It carries out the plans that it receives through listening to wisdom that is not its own" (W-pI.135.11:1-2).

The Course repeatedly discusses the Holy Spirit's plan of the Atonement, contrasting it with the ego's plan, which is always to attack God and His Son. The Course also sometimes speaks as if the Holy Spirit has consciously drawn up a plan that includes one for each of us individually, with everything in our life planned. The Course speaks to us at this level because Jesus knows we think like little children and are comforted by words that reassure us that God plans for us, that He loves us and takes care of us.

As we have seen, however, God does not do anything. God simply is. If He did anything, then He would be acting in the world as if it were real. And in fact, when we plan, we are obviously talking about time. But there is no time for God, so God cannot plan. This passage is really talking about a process in which, when the separation seemed to occur, all of time also occurred within that one instant and, in fact, is still occurring within that instant—what the Course calls the "tiny tick of time" in the section in the text called "The Little Hindrance." And all the mistakes, it explains, occurred within the first mistake (T-26.V.3).

The original mistake is the thought of being separate from God. That thought fragmented out into billions and billions of pieces, which spread out over time. It was as if the tiny tick of time were smashed down on a long table and it spread out. And the spreading out is what we call the beginning of the world and the eventual end of the world, with the whole process of evolution in between. But all of time occurred within that one instant. All the different forms in which we manifest our belief in separation—all of our special relationships—occurred within that one instant.

That is what the Course means when it says that "the script is written" (W-pI.158.4:3) and it has already happened. That is the script—that one mistake blown up or exploded into billions and billions of fragments. Each of us, as a separate self, is a part of that fragmentation process. And all of our experiences are part of it—all the different expressions of the ego thought system. But side by side with the ego thought in the split mind is the Holy Spirit's correction thought—what the Course calls the Atonement principle or the memory of God's Love. That thought was also in our mind as it fragmented out. So the Holy Spirit's thought of Love is the answer or the correction for the ego's mistaken thought of fear—there is a one-to-one correspondence between the two. As the ego thought of fear fragments out, writing a script with billions and billions of ways of expressing fear, guilt, and attack, correspondingly there is the Holy Spirit's correction script for each of the ego's thoughts.

In other words, each and every fragmentary ego thought of specialness, attack, separation, and guilt in our minds has a corresponding thought of forgiveness and joining from the Holy Spirit. That is the correction, corresponding one-to-one to each special relationship. That is the Holy Spirit's script, referred to in the workbook as salvation's script (W-pI.169.9:3). Now the Holy Spirit did not write the original script. In fact, the Holy Spirit's script is nothing more than the ego's script, but now with the Holy Spirit's content of correction or forgiveness. So that is the plan being referred to in the sentence quoted. It is not a plan that the Holy Spirit got together with Jesus or God and worked out for each of us. Rather, it is the inevitable and automatic undoing of the ego's script or thought system.

So then everything the ego has made to attack us becomes a classroom in which the Holy Spirit teaches us how to look at it differently. The ego writes the basic script and the Holy Spirit gives it a different content or interpretation. Understanding this leads to patience because we realize the outcome is as certain as God—for it has already happened. In other words, the Holy Spirit has undone the whole ego thought system and that undoing, which is the acceptance of the Atonement for ourselves, is already in our minds. All we have to do is choose it—that is the acceptance referred to.

The Atonement has already occurred. Jesus says at the end of the Course that we were with him when he arose (C-6.5:5). In other words, when he awakened from the dream we were with him because minds are joined. The problem is that we take that thought of resurrection, of awakening from the dream of death in our minds, and we put it aside and silence it, so it gets locked away, and we never look at it. But it is there and it only requires our acceptance of it. Patience comes from the certainty of knowing that this dream has already ended. So then why would I be upset or impatient about anything that occurs within the dream, if I know that it is already over?

When I know that, I am like what dream researchers refer to as a lucid dreamer—someone who, while asleep and dreaming at night, is aware within the dream that it is a dream. So I am observing myself having a dream. Training my mind to be a lucid dreamer can be very helpful, especially if I am having a bad dream or a nightmare. Within the dream then I can tell myself, "Oh, this is only a dream. Nothing's really happening."

In a sense that is what the Course is training us to do. In the Course's language, to be a lucid dreamer is to be living in the real world. So I am living within the dream, but I am aware it is a dream. That is why I do not get upset. And that is why I can be patient—I know there is nothing to be upset or impatient about. I know there is a part of my mind that is already finished with all of this and has awakened from it. But if I am not quite ready to accept that reality yet—to be in the real world—well, then I am not quite ready to accept it yet. But it is there when I am ready—it is not going anywhere.

Our impatience with situations in our lives may also carry a feeling that if something doesn't happen right now, it will never happen. And this is just a shadow of the underlying ego thought that I will never get back home—I am banished from Heaven, I have thrown it away, and I will never get it back. And so my impatience is really the fear that if I do not have it right now, I will never have it. So patience comes from recognizing that I have not thrown Heaven away. I have misplaced it in my mind, but the Holy Spirit is still holding it for me—it is not lost. I cannot see it at the moment, but that does not mean it is not there.

When we find ourselves acting in these seemingly little impatient ways in the world, they are just a cover-up, a smokescreen, for the deeper ego judgment against ourselves. Everything in the world is a smokescreen—everything. It is helpful to remember that there is no time and that everything is happening simultaneously. So whether we are considering the original ego thought or a thought I am having right now, it is all the same. There are only two possible alternatives. What I am thinking and doing is a reflection either of my ego thought system—which I will know when I am not at peace—or the Holy Spirit's thought system. And if it is of my ego, it is a smokescreen. I may think I am upset because I do not like the way somebody is dressing or what somebody has said or what is happening around me, but each situation is a smokescreen to keep me unaware of what I am really upset about. As the Course says early in the workbook, "I am never upset for the reason I think" (W-pI.5).

**Part XIV
How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day? (M-16)**

We will look now at the section, "How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?" (M-16); and we will focus on the latter part of this section, which talks specifically about magic. But first I want to summarize the earlier part, which discusses how a teacher of God should spend his day. It says that, to an advanced teacher of God, the question makes no sense, because the advanced teacher would simply spend the day the way the Holy Spirit guides him or her. What is being addressed here is the idea of rituals, and so I would like to spend some time on that theme.

Most people who have grown up in the Western world, whether as Jews or as Christians, have grown up in a religion of rituals. As A Course in Miracles discusses in the context of special relationships, this is a confusion of form with content. We believe that the acts of obeying certain laws, following certain rituals, and praying in certain ways will, in and of themselves, find pleasure with God, and therefore be salvation for us. By believing this, we are basically saying that we do not have to change our minds—we just need to change our behavior. We ritualize our lives, control our behavior, and do all the things we are supposed to do. And we believe that if we do all this, at some point God will forgive us and welcome us back into His Kingdom. What happens all too often, of course, is that the rituals themselves become substitutes for God. They become substitutes for the experience and for the process of changing our minds. They become idols. That is why Jesus says that "formal religion has no place in psychotherapy, but it also has no real place in religion" (P-2.II.2:1)—that is the point.

The workbook, however, is extremely organized with highly structured exercises. We are told exactly how much time each day we should spend thinking about God, when and how we should do so, what words we should use, etc. It is important to keep in mind that the workbook is a one-year training program, and that it begins with the premise that all of us are spiritually very immature—that our minds are undisciplined. Statements like these are made in the workbook itself (e.g., W-pI.20.2:6; W-pI.44.3:3-5). We need discipline. The workbook teaches us how to develop a certain amount of discipline that allows our minds to think differently—to think along the lines that the Course sets forth, rather than the lines that the ego sets forth. An essential part of that mind-training process is to shift our belief system from seeing the Holy Spirit as Someone Who will punish us and Whom we cannot trust, to seeing the Holy Spirit as Someone Whom we do trust.

The starting point of the one-year training program of the workbook is to have us realize that we do have control over our minds, that our minds are not simply running wild, obeying a power outside us. In other words, we are the ones who are controlling our minds, and it is really possible to change how we think. Teaching us that is one of the purposes of the workbook. And so, in order to do that, the workbook provides us very structured practice periods. As workbook Lesson 95 explains—and this is the only lesson that really does this—despite the fact that it is set up this way, the workbook is not meant to be a series of rituals that have to be done exactly as it says to do them (W-pI.95.4-9). So if we do not do the lessons as we are "supposed to"—for example, if we do not think of God six times an hour, every waking hour of my day—Jesus is not up there in Heaven with a score card marking down all of our failures, intending at some point to hurl down a thunder bolt and destroy us for our sins. The purpose of the workbook is to train our minds to want to think along the lines of the workbook—we want our minds to think of God all day long.

Quite clearly Jesus is not expecting us to do that because he has given us three hundred and sixty-five lessons, not just one lesson. It is true that if we do any one lesson perfectly, we have done them all, because, as he says, "each [lesson] contains the whole curriculum" (W-pI.rVI.in.2:2). But, again, clearly he does not expect us to do that. And at the end of this one-year training program, he says that "this Course is a beginning, not an end" (W-pII.ep.1:1).

So structure is extremely helpful for most people, because it is a way of helping us begin to discipline our minds so that we can begin to get in touch with our thoughts of wanting to attack God, ourselves, and each other. But there is a built-in danger in structure, which is why Jesus says what he does about it in workbook Lesson 95. And he cautions us further in this section of the manual that "routines as such are dangerous, because they easily become gods in their own right, threatening the very goals for which they were set up" (M-16.2:5). He is saying that we should use all the structured practice periods and other routines that he gives us as a means to achieve an end, but we should not mistake them for the end itself. The purpose of the structured periods is to lead us beyond all need to have structure. Then our whole day is simply placed under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We then no longer believe that the only way we can feel peace, the only way we can change our minds from attack to love, is to sit quietly by ourselves at a certain time of the day, in a certain posture, reading a certain thing, etc. Doing that is helpful at the beginning stages of the correction process, but it is not helpful if the "routines... become gods in their own right."

A Course in Miracles repeatedly says that its purpose is to be practical. And it is not very practical if I can only find peace by sitting quietly in a corner. What do I do if I am in the middle of a traffic jam on the highway? Or what do I do as a therapist if I am with a patient and I suddenly become very anxious, very guilty, very fearful, or very upset? I can't excuse myself for fifteen minutes and go off into another room and meditate. So the purpose of the Course is to help us train our minds so that, no matter where we are, we can quickly go back to the presence of the Holy Spirit in our minds and ask for help. Physically, nothing changes. I am still perfectly present to you, but a part of my mind goes back to that place of peace and says, "Help. I must have chosen against You because I am not feeling peaceful. I am feeling guilty, anxious, and fearful."

In order for me to reach the point where I can do that very quickly all the time, I need a period of structured learning, just as I would not sit down at the piano for the first time and play a Bach fugue perfectly. I would have to practice for many long hours—very structured practicing—until I am able to sit down and freely play a Bach fugue or a Beethoven sonata. We need structured practice periods. As an artist, my goal would be to reach the point when I no longer would be bound to the structure or to the form. The inspiration, then, would just come through me. My playing, then, becomes more than just keeping metronome markings—I can play with the same kind of freedom and love that went into the composing of the music.

The same thing is true of living daily, minute by minute, with the Holy Spirit. We do not want to be bound by the rigidity of structure. We want His Love to flow freely through us. That is why this section says that anadvanced teacher of Goddoes not have a set structure (M-16.1). Yet we do not want to fall into the trap of thinking, "Well, I'm an advanced teacher because I just spent one year with the workbook. Therefore, I don't have to meditate, I don't have to practice, etc." There is nothing wrong with having structured periods. We just don't want to make them into gods in their own right. The real goal of the Course is to have our entire twenty-four-hour day be a meditation and a prayer. So no matter where I am, no matter whom I am with, there is a part of my mind that always remembers that it is in touch with the Holy Spirit or with Jesus. Then when I get upset, I can go back to that quiet place in my mind
. . . . . . .

When we are tied to ritual, the notion of a punishing God can often become more prominent in our thinking. So then we need to remind ourselves that God does not care about form. God is formless. He does not know about form. Love is formless. But because we have so trained our minds to deny the formless and to make form into reality, we need to begin with form. Not because form is real, but because form can now serve a different content. And that content is the Holy Spirit's pathway, which leads us through form, beyond form, and into formlessness. In contrast, the ego's use of form roots us further into form.

A line in the Course says that we "cannot even think of God without a body" (T-18.VIII.1:7), which we would realize is true if we paid attention to our thoughts about God. All of our notions of God—even most of the notions expressed in the Course about God as a loving Father—are rooted in a concept of the body. Because we cannot even think of God without a body or some form, we need a form and a concept of God as a body, which at least begins the process of undoing the ego's use of God as a body—as a vengeful Father, for example.

So if I go a few days without reading the Course and then begin to feel a little out of sorts and blame it on my not reading the material, I could be denying that living Presence within my mind. On the other hand, it could also be that my decision not to read the Course was coming from a prior thought in my mind that said, "I'm not going to remember God. I'm going to attack myself." In that context, reading the Course might be helpful, because I am now using the form for a different purpose. We always have to be careful because we cannot evaluate every situation in the same way. The thought is always what gives meaning to the action or the form. The purpose gives it its meaning, not the thing itself.

**Part XV**
**How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day? (M-16) (cont.)**

Let us turn now to "How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?" which will address the issue of magic. We will start with paragraph eight.

**(8:1) Yet there will be temptations along the way the teacher of God has yet to travel, and he has need of reminding himself throughout the day of his protection.**

"His protection," of course, is the Holy Spirit's presence. There is nothing in the world that is needed for our protection and nothing in the world from which we have to be protected. Protection comes from the peace within our own minds. What we believe protects us in the world is what the Course means by magic. We first believe that there is a problem outside our minds that has to be solved—whether the problem is in our own body, in other bodies, or someplace in the world. And we believe we know the solution, which we use to fix the problem we have defined. The solution then is what the Course calls magic.

For example, if I have a headache, which is a problem I experience in my body, and I say that aspirin will take care of the headache, the aspirin then is a form of magic. Calling it magic does not mean that the aspirin or any other form of medication or intervention does not work. It does work on the level of the dream. But it does not undo the cause of the headache, which is the unforgiveness or the guilt in my mind. The only way to "cure" the unforgiveness in my mind is for me to forgive.

The Course frequently contrasts magic with the miracle. The miracle involves recognizing that the problem—guilt—is in my mind and it is there that forgiveness can let it go. That is real problem solving. That is the miracle. And magic is everything but that. Magic keeps my attention rooted in my body and the world, and away from my mind where both the problem of guilt and its solution are found. Magic says my problem is outside my mind, in my body, or out there in the world, and I know how to solve it. So magic attempts to solve a problem without ever really solving it. And that is why the Course says that the ego's rule or maxim is: "Seek but do not find" (e.g., T-12.IV.1:4; T-16.V.6:5; W-pI.71.4:2). We are always seeking to find solutions to problems that do not exist. And, of course, we never find the solutions because the problems are not outside us. The only problem is our belief in being separate and guilty, and that belief is in our minds. Therefore, the only way of solving the problem is to bring it back into our minds and then release it to the Holy Spirit.

So again, magic says the problem and its solution are both outside. The problem is something in the world that is threatening me. And therefore, what will protect me is some expression of magic.

**(8:2) How can he do this, particularly during the time when his mind is occupied with external things?**

In other words, how can I remind myself throughout the day of what truly protects me? How can I remind myself that the solution to what concerns me is within my mind if I am continually preoccupied with what is outside?

**(8:3-4) He can but try, and his success depends on his conviction that he will succeed. He must be sure success is not of him, but will be given him at any time, in any place and circumstance he calls for it.**

Regardless of what is concerning me, I know that at any given moment I can find the help of God. I only have to ask for it and accept it. Magic says: "I don't need God. I know what the problem is and I can do it on my own." That thought is what gave birth to the ego in the first place: "I don't need God. I can do it on my own." So magic is a way of defending against the problem of guilt in my mind by shifting the problem outside my mind and trying to solve it there. We could then say, in a larger sense, that the making up of the world was the ego's magical attempt to solve the problem of itself!

As we saw earlier, the ego says that guilt is real and it is in our minds. We lock it in our minds so that it is shut tight, and then we project the problem outside and say the problem is outside our minds. The problem is all around in the world. That is the ego's way of magically solving the problem of guilt. And then we spend the rest of our lives trying to solve all the problems of the world, forgetting that there are no problems in the world because there is no world. The only problem is simply the belief that there is a world, and that there is a need for a world because that is what protects us from looking within our minds. The miracle brings the problem back within the mind and magic continually throws it back outside.

**(8:5) There are times his certainty will waver, and the instant this occurs he will return to earlier attempts to place reliance on himself alone.**

Myself alone, independent of the Holy Spirit, does not mean that my ego may not have me "join" with you—its own version of joining—and say: "You tell me what to do." But I am still the one who is setting the whole thing up.

**(8:6-7) Forget not this is magic, and magic is a sorry substitute for true assistance. It is not good enough for God's teacher, because it is not enough for God's Son.**

"True assistance" can only be of the Holy Spirit. Nothing in this world can ever take the place of God. The whole ego thought system began with the belief that it *can* take the place of God.

**(9:1-2) The avoidance of magic is the avoidance of temptation. For all temptation is nothing more than the attempt to substitute another will for God's.**

The original temptation occurred when the Son of God chose to listen to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. In the context of the Adam and Eve myth, Adam and Eve were tempted by the serpent to believe that a voice other than God's speaks in our minds, and even more to the point, that that other voice actually is our friend and God is not.

**(9:3) These attempts may indeed seem frightening, but they are merely pathetic.**

Things in the world appear frightening, but everything in the world is only a form of magic. Even a threat on the scope of nuclear war is nothing more than magic. It is an ego attempt to tell the Son what will save him: "Don't look at the battlefield within your own mind because that will destroy you. Rather, look at the battlefield out here in the world. And we'll make it a really good battle so that you'll be preoccupied with it." That is magic because it is the ego's way of telling the Son, "Look outside and you'll be protected because you won't have to get in touch with the horror and the terror of the battlefield within yourself."

Preoccupation with anything of the world is magic: preoccupation to save the planet, to save the world, to make the earth pure, to rid the world of cancer, AIDS, polio, starvation, famine, etc. All these are magical attempts to solve a problem that will never be solved. The whole history of the world as we know it is just a progression from one war to another, from one disease to another, and another, and another. And it will never ever change.

These are all ego smokescreens so that we never look where the problem really is. That is magic. The ego is saying to us: "There is no way you can deal with this awful terror and guilt within your mind. So we just won't address it. We will just lock it away and never go anywhere near it. We will magically solve the problem by seeing it outside and then solving it there." That is temptation.

**(9:4) They can have no effects; neither good nor bad, neither rewarding nor demanding sacrifice, healing nor destructive, quieting nor fearful.**

These are all the things that we do in the world, all of our magical attempts. Jesus is again saying that there is absolutely nothing in the world. There is nothing good, there is nothing bad. Nobody gets sick; nobody gets healed. Nobody is born; nobody dies. It is all made up. And we are just choosing among different puppets, saying: "This is a nice puppet. This is not a nice puppet."

And all of this is just a continuation of the ego's attempt to replicate God's power. In contrast, in the real world we look at everything and simply say, "It's all the same." There are no various manifestations of sickness or disease in the real world, because the real world is not the world. It is an attitude, a state of mind. And when everybody shares that state of mind, the world simply disappears. The goal of the Course is not to rid the world of famine and pestilence and disease and war—that would be ridding nothing of nothing.

People have been trying for centuries to have a perfect world, a utopia. But the world cannot be made perfect because it was made from an imperfect thought. The Course says in the section "The Special Function" that in this world, which is not perfect, we can yet do one perfect thing, which is to forgive (T-25.VI.5:1-3). The idea is not to conceive of a perfect world; that is not the point. The Course's approach is to look at the imperfection in the world and smile at it. And then it disappears.

**(9:5) When all magic is recognized as merely nothing, the teacher of God has reached the most advanced state.**

All magic, which is all of the solutions to all of the issues in the world, is neither good nor bad. It is nothing. Once we place a value on any of the solutions, we are obviously giving them a reality they do not have. They are neither good nor bad. They are nothing. The only "bad" and "good" are the ego's and the Holy Spirit's thought systems in our minds. And they have nothing to do with the world.

**(9:6-9) All intermediate lessons will but lead to this, and bring this goal nearer to recognition. For magic of any kind, in all its forms, simply does nothing. Its powerlessness is the reason it can be so easily escaped. What has no effects can hardly terrify.**

One of the recurring symbols in the Course that I mentioned earlier is that of children's toys. Jesus talks about toys being frightening to a child because a child does not recognize that they are simply toys. And when the child realizes that they are toys, they are no longer frightening (T-30.IV.2-3). Similarly, the Course is trying to help us realize that all the things of this world are simply toys, and they are not frightening. How could we be frightened of something that is not alive? We need to realize that everything is simply part of a puppet show and the puppets are absolutely lifeless. The action is all occurring on the level of the mind.

It is our ego mind that tells us that we should be afraid and that fear is real. When we realize that, then nothing in this world, without exception, will cause us any anxiety or pain at all. The goal is to realize that nothing in this world has any power over us. It may have power over the body. As the Course says: "Are thoughts, then, dangerous? To bodies, yes!" (T-21.VIII.1:1-2). But if we recognize that we are not bodies, then they can have no effect on us. Now we don't just jump from the ego thought system right into this realization. It is a step-by-step process: the "intermediate lessons" Jesus refers to here. And that is why there is a strong emphasis on this being a process.

What helps us move along in our process much more speedily—at least on an intellectual level, even if we are not ready yet to experience it—is understanding that there is literally nothing here. I am upset about the purpose that I have given to this lifeless puppet that I call myself, or that I call this planet, or this nation of people. My reaction has absolutely nothing to do with anything that is here. It is simply a projection of a thought in my mind that my ego tells me will magically protect me from my real problem, which is God's vengeance. And when I begin to see that everything here is an expression of God's vengeance from my ego's point of view, I realize it is insane. My realization may begin as an intellectual process, but very rapidly it can become an experience, as I begin to apply these principles to the things in my life that are making me anxious, upset, angry, guilty, and fearful. I begin to see that I really can look at things differently. I am not upset because of what is out there. I am merely upset because of what I believe is real within my mind. I cannot change what is out there, but I can certainly change what is within me. No matter what is going on around me, I can be peaceful. That again is what it means to be a teacher of God.

**Part XVI**
**How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day? (M-16) (conclusion)**

**(10:1-2) There is no substitute for the Will of God. In simple statement, it is to this fact that the teacher of God devotes his day.**

The ego, of course, says there is a substitute, and magic is a major witness for its assertion. So as a teacher of God, as someone who is following A Course in Miracles as a spiritual path, I go through my day having a kind of double vision, regardless of what happens. One part of my mind is paying attention to the world outside and the various roles and classrooms that I have chosen for myself. But another part of my mind remains joined with the Holy Spirit. And so, in a sense, I am looking out, but I am also looking in. And the looking out is an extension of what I have seen when I have looked within. That means that I pay attention to everything in the world, just as everybody else does, but I recognize that nothing is really out there. And what appears to be out there is simply my classroom. My function then as a teacher of God, which is another term for miracle worker or healer, is simply to be a reminder to everyone, including myself, that what is out there is not the issue. The only issue is what is within my mind. And that is all a teacher of God does.

As my mind is healed, the Love of the Holy Spirit works through me and guides me in everything that I do. Once we get the general idea, practicing this Course is very simple. We become increasingly sensitive to when we are becoming upset, anxious, guilty, angry, annoyed, fearful, etc., recognizing our ego as quickly as possible. How quickly we can recognize it is a measure of how we are advancing in the curriculum. Almost as quickly as the upset begins, I want to remember that I am upset because I have forgotten Who my real Teacher is, choosing the ego rather than the Holy Spirit. So then the problem is never what I believe I am upset about. The problem is that I have forgotten. When I remember to go back within my mind and identify with that place of love and peace within, then once my attention is focused outside again, I will be peaceful. And then, whatever in my world needs attention will be attended to without effort, anxiety, or tension, and with total love.

**(10:3-4) Each substitute he may accept as real can but deceive him. But he is safe from all deception if he so decides.**

Everything the world offers to us as important, holy, pleasurable, etc., will deceive us. Nothing in this world lasts. Everything in this world was made literally to be a substitute for God. So to invest energy in anything of the world, whether to acquire it because I judge it as desirable or to avoid it because I judge it as painful, is really to direct myself away from God and, in fact, against God. Therefore each substitute will become a symbol of sin and guilt.

**(10:5-6) Perhaps he needs to remember, "God is with me. I cannot be deceived."**

In other words, the reason I am deceived by anything of the world (being deceived means that I believe acquiring it will bring me pleasure or Heaven, or avoiding it will bring me peace) is that I have forgotten about God. And so when I remember who I am as a child of God, then nothing in this world can deceive me, because I will not seek in the world for a substitute for God. When my mind is focused on the Love of the Holy Spirit, then everything in the world is seen as exactly the same: not as an object that I covet or crave or want to avoid, but rather as a learning opportunity and a classroom.

**(10:7) Perhaps he prefers other words, or only one, or none at all.**

It does not matter what I say in my mind or what my individual process is, so long as the content remains the same: namely, I do not take anything in this world as real or as having any importance for me, other than serving as a vehicle to help me awaken from the dream.

**(10:8) Yet each temptation to accept magic as true must be abandoned through his recognition, not that it is fearful, not that it is sinful, not that it is dangerous, but merely that it is meaningless.**

We saw the same idea in the previous paragraph. Any time anything in this world captures our attention, we have made it meaningful. Otherwise, we would not invest our attention in it. If anything in this world upsets or concerns us, that is a trap. We have forgotten that everything in this world, without exception, is equally meaningless. The purpose of the early lessons in the workbook, which seem very simple-minded but are quite the opposite, is to begin the process of alerting us to the fact that everything in this world lacks meaning. We are the ones who have given meaning to everything, and that meaning is to be a weapon against God.

Everything in this world can have meaning when the Holy Spirit assigns the meaning. The meaning that everything would have then is simply to be a classroom for us. But in and of itself, nothing in this world has any meaning. In and of itself, everything in this world is nothing, being made simply to be a veil drawn over the guilt and sin in our minds, which in turn is a cover to hide the Love of God from our awareness. This point has come up over and over again in this workshop, as it also does in the Course.

Magic is thus anything in this world that we believe will give us pleasure, happiness, peace, freedom from pain, etc. Anything in the world that we value becomes a form of magic. However, in the larger sense, everything in this world is a form of magic because it is part of the ego's magical defense against God. From a metaphysical point of view, the entire physical world is a magical solution to a nonexistent problem. It is the ego's solution to the made-up problem of God's vengeance. The ego tells us the world is going to protect us from that vengeance. On the other hand, the miracle—the Holy Spirit's solution to the problem of God's vengeance—involves looking at the problem. When we look at it, we realize the whole thing is preposterous and so it disappears. The ego, as we have seen, makes the problem real, puts it in a vault in the mind, shuts it tight, and says, "We must never go near there. And to ensure that we do not, we'll build a fortress around it. And that will solve the problem of God's vengeance." So the fortress—the world—is magic.

In other words, magic is an attempt to solve a problem without really solving it. The whole world was made to be that, at the metaphysical or the cosmic level. On an individual level the world is neutral; it has no value whatsoever. The ego then projects value into the world, and that is magic. So I look to the world to make me happy. God can't make me happy, but the world can! God can't take away my pain, but this pain-killer can! That is magic. The Holy Spirit extends His purpose into the world and it then serves the purpose of the miracle. The world becomes a classroom in which I learn that my guilt is not out there, my problem is not out there. It is back within my mind.

**(10:9-10) Rooted in sacrifice and separation, two aspects of one error and no more, he merely chooses to give up all that he never had. And for this "sacrifice" is Heaven restored to his awareness.**

In other words, both sacrifice and separation are forms of the same mistake. The big problem, the ego tells us, is if we let go of our investment in the things of this world, if we let go of our thought system of attack and sacrifice, then we will have nothing. We will just disappear into oblivion. Part of the Course process then is to systematically break down our fear of really looking at the ego thought system, so that eventually we will be able to realize that suffering, sacrifice, and attachment to the things of the world are not going to bring us peace. And so we let go of the illusion that these things are meaningful, that these things will bring us Heaven. Basically, we end up letting go of nothing.

A wonderful line in the text, in the section "The Bridge to the Real World" (T-16.VI), says that when we cross over the bridge and are in the real world, "you will think, in glad astonishment, that for all this you gave up nothing!" (T-16.VI.11:4). But when we are still on this side of the bridge it looks as if we are being asked to give up everything. And so we still hold on to our ego thought system. A part of our mind still believes what the ego told us right at the beginning: We need the world as a defense against God's wrath. As long as a part of us still believes God will punish us, then we still believe that we need this world and all that comes with it—pain, suffering, sacrifice, attack, etc. And so we hold on to all our silly suffering, because we believe the pain that we are undergoing is better than the pain we will experience later on when God destroys us.

**(11:1-2) Is not this an exchange that you would want? The world would gladly make it, if it knew it could be made.**

We hold on to our insanity of believing that sacrifice and suffering will bring us happiness, because we do not believe there is any other choice. So one of the Course's major purposes is to help us realize there is another choice. It painstakingly draws out in great detail what the ego thought system is, so we can really understand how insane it is. Then it is set side by side with the Holy Spirit's thought system, and Jesus basically says, "Now look at both of these, open-eyed, with honesty, with me next to you. Is the choice difficult?" But the choice is not only difficult, it is impossible if we are not aware we have a choice.

**(11:3-4) It is God's teachers who must teach it that it can. And so it is their function to make sure that they have learned it.**

So as God's teachers, we want to teach the world that there is a choice. And we do not teach it by our words or our actions. We teach it by letting go of the interferences to the Holy Spirit's teaching it. He is the Teacher. We are the instrument and He is the Teacher. We are the form. He is the content. Our only function is to get our egos out of the way, which is another way of saying that our only function is to accept the Atonement for ourselves. There is nothing else.

**(11:5) No risk is possible throughout the day except to put your trust in magic, for it is only this that leads to pain.**

There is no danger, no threat, no risk in the day, if I am focused on God, Jesus is my teacher, and I am identified with his love. I can never be afraid. The risk, the danger, the threat, the pain come when I forget about him. I choose to put him aside, and I put my faith in some kind of magic. That is the cause of the pain. All pain then, without exception, comes because I have chosen to put Jesus away in my mind. It is as if I have locked him up in a closet, and I say: "I'm going to do it my way." That is the cause of the pain, and the pain will be instantaneous.

I may not experience the pain instantaneously, but it will surely follow, except I will not remember where it has come from. I will believe the pain must be coming from something in my body, or from what another person has done to me, or from anything else in the world. I will forget that the pain has come because, on another level that I have now successfully denied, I have chosen to put distance between myself and the Holy Spirit or Jesus. That is the pain. This is what the Course calls the "little gap," a symbol or reflection of the original gap, the gap I placed between myself and God. As the Course says, the seeds of sickness are held and grow in that gap (T-28.III.4:2-5; 5:5). The gap is the separation of my ego self from my true Self. The mind is where it is experienced, and that is the only place it can be healed.

But the ego's defensive system is so clever that we do not come anywhere near our minds, and the whole dynamic gets denied and projected out, as it is displaced onto everything else. So I think I am upset because of all the things in the world. And of course, all the sources of pain are seen, in one way or another, as related to the body, whether it is my body or another person's body. But the problem has nothing to do with the body at all, as we have been seeing over and over again. It is in that little gap in my mind where I have told Jesus and the Holy Spirit, "Get lost. I'm going to do it myself." That is the pain.

The miracle brings the pain from the world back within, to that little gap. I can do something about the pain because now I am back to the point where I made the choice. Magic says, "The problem is not in your mind. It's out there in the world. We're going to fix it up, and here's a band-aid. We'll use this and we'll use that, and that will take care of it." And, of course, nothing ever actually gets healed that way.

It is my function as a teacher of God to point to that little gap. Not by anything I say or do, but simply by the love that comes through me, which acts as a reminder and shines like a light into the darkness in your mind and says: "This is where the problem is." But I do not do it, I do not have to say or do anything. I may do what everybody else does, whatever the situation happens to be; but the love and peace and defenselessness within me is the teacher.

Jesus taught, not by what he said or did. The pure love that came through him is what taught. People were attracted, not to his words, not to his person, and not to his seeming healings—whatever he did or did not do. People were attracted to the purity of the love that came through him. That also is what people attacked. It is never what a person says or does or looks like that really attracts us or upsets us. It is something else, but none of us knows what the something else is because we screen it all out. We not only want to screen it out in others, we want to screen it out in ourselves. And that something else is the place of love in our minds.

**(11:6)**"**There is no will but God's.**"

This is another way of stating the Atonement principle. The ego says there is another will besides God's: mine! And my will is alive and well and very powerful. The Atonement principle says, "That's silly. How can there be anything other than God? Any other thought is simply a dream."

**(11:7) His teachers**[God's teachers]**know that this is so, and have learned that everything but this is magic.**

Everything else in the world is made up as an attempt to keep this single, simple truth from our awareness.

**(11:8) All belief in magic is maintained by just one simple-minded illusion;—that it works.**

We all believe that. Otherwise we would not be so invested in the world and the body. We believe magic works because it keeps the Love of God away from us. It is that pure and simple. And within the ego's world, obviously, it does.

**(11:9) All through their training, every day and every hour, and even every minute and second, must God's teachers learn to recognize the forms of magic and perceive their meaninglessness.**

As I come face to face with the various forms of magic in my life, whether it is a particular person or personal situation or something going on in the world at large, I must recognize they are all magic. If I find myself getting upset, anxious, guilty, feeling sorry for someone, etc., it is because I have forgotten that everything here is magic. This makes everything very, very simple.

While it should not be taken as a strict rule, several passages in the Course suggest that when we awaken in the morning, we should remember our goal for the day as soon as we can (e.g., T-30.I.1:5; M-16.4). When we are doing the workbook, that is easy because the workbook reminds us. But the idea is to generalize so that we do not need a book to remind us of our goal. And our goal is to learn to recognize all the forms of magic and not be taken in by them. And so, as soon as we can when we awaken, we want to remember that goal, so we can learn to recognize all the illusions, all the forms of magic in the world, and realize that they are not what we want to choose. To keep that in mind means—if we set that goal in the morning—we will then see everything that happens to us during the day as a way of helping us recognize that.

Let's say when I awaken in the morning I remember that I have an important meeting later in the day that I am very anxious about, for whatever reason. Or some situation is going to come up during the day that I am very frightened of or guilty about. If I remember my goal, then I can step back, look at the situation differently, and say, "Well, this is a way for me to learn that I don't have to be anxious. I don't have to be afraid, and I don't have to be in control." And then I can see that this very meeting or circumstance that I am feeling so anxious and upset about is nothing more than a classroom that I have chosen. And if I continue to be anxious, guilty, or fearful, it is because I have chosen the ego as my teacher. It is only the ego that teaches through anxiety, guilt, and fear.

But if I choose the Holy Spirit I will be peaceful and calm, and I will learn the lesson, regardless of the outcome. If I continue to feel anxious during the day as the meeting draws near, it is because I have chosen the wrong teacher. At that point I do not want to fight against my anxiety or my guilt. I just want to remember that I am anxious because I chose the wrong teacher, which means I am still afraid of being peaceful. And I want to be very clear within my mind what I am doing. That is all I have to do. So I can go into the meeting and feel guilty, and be anxious and angry, and stomp and throw a temper tantrum. I can do whatever I want to do, just as long as I am in touch with that part of my mind that knows that I am doing it to defend myself against God's Love and that at that particular moment I am choosing against God's Love and peace. That is not sinful. It is a little silly, but it is not sinful.

That is all that I do. I don't fight against it. I can let my ego go to town, but I will have a little part of my mind sitting back in the audience with Jesus, looking at my ego throwing a temper tantrum, or being terribly frightened or very guilt-ridden. I want to be aware of what I am making real and why I am making it real. Jesus is whispering to me: "This is a comedy. Let's laugh at it together." But I say, "No, it's not a comedy. It's very serious and I'm choosing to go against what you are telling me because I'm too afraid of what you are saying." We just want to be aware of it. And when we can do that:

**(11:10) Fear is withdrawn from them** [the forms of magic], **and so they go.**

This is saying that what holds the forms of magic as reality for us is our fear. If we can look at what we have made real, with Jesus next to us, then there is no fear and the forms disappear. In the text, Jesus says: "Watch carefully and see what it is you are really asking for. Be very honest with yourself in this, for we must hide nothing from each other" (T-4.III.8:1-2). He is asking us to be very honest as we look at our ego thoughts, and that we should look withhim: "Be very honest with yourself in this, for we must hide nothing from each other." And so this means that if I am fearful, anxious, angry, or whatever, I am excluding Jesus. But if I can join with him and look at my ego thoughts with him, that will take all of the wind out of the ego's sails. Jesus continues, "If you will really try to do this, you have taken the first step toward preparing your mind for the Holy One [God] to enter. We will prepare for this together, for once He has come, you will be ready to help me to make other minds ready for Him. [And that is what a teacher of God does.] How long will you deny Him His Kingdom?" (T-4.III.8:3-5). God is not denying us His Kingdom. We are denying ourselves His Kingdom because our ego has taught us not to value it. And so we have thrown away God's Kingdom, and in exchange have adopted the ego's kingdom as our home.

**(11:11) And thus the gate of Heaven is reopened, and its light can shine again on an untroubled mind.**

Once we open up the locked vault of our minds, the light of Heaven simply shines on it. All we are asked to do as a teacher of God, therefore, is to bring our minds in unity with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. That is all we do. Their Love will flow through us. Very often it may take the form of words or actions or behavior. But at that point our ego is not involved at all and we are not the one who is doing it. In the text, Jesus speaks of how we will see the miracles he has done through us and we will realize that we have not done them. But Something in us has done them (T-11.VI.9:3; T-16.II.2:4-8).

**Part XVII
How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17)**

This is an extremely important section and we will spend a good deal of time on it. A magic thought, as we have seen, is anything we do to solve a problem in such a way that it can never be solved. In other words, it is an attempt to solve an internal problem, which every problem is—the problem of guilt in the mind—by doing something outside the mind with the body. So everything we all do almost all the time is a form of magic thought.

This section addresses how I, as a teacher of God, should react to somebody else's magic thoughts. The first part explains how our temptation always is to make the magic thought real and to get angry at it. The second part addresses very graphically and powerfully why we get angry at others' magic thoughts. It is one of the most brilliant discussions in the Course, integrating the underlying metaphysics of what goes on in our minds—between ourselves and God—with what goes on, on a very practical level, in our daily experience here.

**(1:1-3) This is a crucial question both for teacher and pupil. If this issue is mishandled, the teacher of God has hurt himself and has also attacked his pupil. This strengthens fear, and makes the magic seem quite real to both of them.**

The issue will be mishandled if I, as a teacher of God—we are all teachers and students—see your magic thought and get upset about it. That means I am making it real, which is exactly what my ego did right at the beginning. This is the whole point of this section. The ego part of my mind looked at the tiny, mad idea and said, "This is pretty upsetting." In other words, it took it seriously.

So from the beginning, my mind has mishandled the thought of separation. If I had identified with the Holy Spirit, I would have simply smiled at it, realizing it was only a silly, magical thought that has had no effect at all, and it would have disappeared back into its own nothingness. But I mishandled it by making it real, by getting upset about it. From that point on, my ego and I were off and running. And that strengthens fear, because the magic thought is ultimately based on the belief that I have sinned against God, and God is angry. Therefore I should be afraid. If I make my magic thought real—which ultimately is always the thought of being separate from God—I must be afraid, because magic thoughts from the ego's point of view are equated with sin.

**(1:4-8) How to deal with magic thus becomes a major lesson for the teacher of God to master. His first responsibility in this is not to attack it. If a magic thought arouses anger in any form, God's teacher can be sure that he is strengthening his own belief in sin and has condemned himself. He can be sure as well that he has asked for depression, pain, fear and disaster to come to him. Let him remember, then, it is not this that he would teach, because it is not this that he would learn.**

Again, a magic thought is anything in this world that I believe is salvation. So if anything in the world upsets me, I have made the magic thought real. For example, I am a Course in Miracles student—devout, sincere, dedicated, holy, etc.—and you, who are in my Course in Miracles group, get a headache and take an aspirin, an obvious magic thought. I find myself getting upset and I say, "Well, aren't you a good Course in Miraclesstudent? Don't you know sickness is a defense against the truth? Don't you know it's in your mind? Don't you know that the aspirin is not going to help you?" And I go on and on with all this "loving" attention. Well, I have become as sick as you, my poor fellow Course in Miracles student. In fact, I may be even sicker because I am probably making it much more real than you are. I have attacked your magic thought.

Yes, absolutely, taking an aspirin is a magic thought. But why should that upset me? As we will see shortly, it is upsetting me because it is reminding me of my own feeble attempts at magic to protect myself against my own thought of sin. That is the only reason that it could upset me. This is just another expression of the basic dynamic of projection. I cannot look at my own sense of sin, my own guilt over my own magic thoughts. Therefore I project it onto you and attack you for it.

But this is true with anything in the world. Someone who rapes and kills fifteen women believes that by raping and killing fifteen women he will feel better. That is magic. Adolph Hitler's murdering thirteen million people is a magic thought. He believed that ridding the world of thirteen million people, whom he saw as filled with impurities, would preserve his innocence and the innocence of the German people. Well, that is silly. Now if we look at his actions from the point of view of the world, they are serious, not silly. But if we raise ourselves above the battleground and look down on it, the thought is incredible. And that is a magic thought. But it is no different in content from the magic thought of someone taking an aspirin. They seem different because the world orders everything, and everything in the world is quantifiable. And from the point of view of the world, there is a hierarchy of illusions. Some illusions are worse than others. Very few people would feel that murdering thirteen million people is the same as taking an aspirin. But remember the statement I have quoted already: "What is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). Few people would believe that murdering thirteen million people is loving. However most people would not think that taking an aspirin is not loving; but, of course, it is not. It is making the guilt and fear real in the mind by not paying attention to it, and saying instead, "The problem is in my body and I'll take a pill and I'll feel better." That is denying the presence and the power of love in my mind. In that sense it is not loving. And what is not love must be murder (T-23.IV.1:10). Thus the forms are different, but the content is the same.

This means then, as a teacher of God, I will become extremely sensitive over a period of time to anything in the world that either mildly annoys me or sends me into a state of intense fury. I will recognize they are exactly the same. And it really makes no difference whether we are talking about the actions of a so-called sane person or of someone who may be classified as mentally ill. They are all the same. What we call mental illness is just an extreme form of fear. That's all. It is all part of the same thought system. There is no difference between the thought system of someone whom we keep within a mental hospital and people living outside mental institutions. It is just a question of degree. The thought system that the Course is describing within each of us is basically that of a paranoid schizophrenic. We are all that. We all believe that we are victims of the world. We all believe that reality is illusory and that illusion is reality. Isn't that a definition of psychosis? So it is only a matter of degree. In this world we distinguish between people who are clinically insane and people who are spiritually insane. But there is no difference. Anybody who has ever worked in a mental hospital has had the awareness at some point that the only difference between the "ins" and the "outs" is that the outs have the keys. That is what establishes sanity. I am staff and I have the keys. It is only a question of degree; we all share the same insanity.

So these lines are saying that my only lesson as a student of the Course, if my desire is to be an advanced teacher of God growing in the process of forgiveness, is to learn to tell the difference between magic and a miracle. And so I want to be sensitive within myself to all my attack thoughts, all my concerns and upsets in relationship to all the forms of magic in the world, so I can learn to recognize when I have deceived myself. I want to recognize it as quickly as I can so I can turn to my Teacher within and say, "Please help. I've become angry or upset or annoyed by something. It must be because I have forgotten about You." That is the problem, because if I am identified with the Holy Spirit, I will see everything in the world as a classroom and as having no other value. If I exclude the Holy Spirit's Love, then I will see everything in this world as a form of magic that I believe in one way or another can solve my problems.

Let's skip to the third paragraph.

**(3:1-2) It is easiest to let error be corrected where it is most apparent, and errors can be recognized by their results. A lesson truly taught can lead to nothing but release for teacher and pupil, who have shared in one intent.**

Now the sharing in "one intent" does not necessarily mean that you are consciously aware of what I have chosen. Sometimes it happens that way; sometimes it does not. It does mean that in my mind I have joined with you so that we are now both joined. Whether you accept the joining or not is your decision. But in my mind I no longer see you as separate from me. And where the error must be corrected is where the error is, which is in the mind and not someplace else.

**(3:3-4) Attack can enter only if perception of separate goals has entered. And this must indeed have been the case if the result is anything but joy.**

If I believe that my salvation can be bought at your expense, we have separate goals. That must be an attack because I am seeing neither you nor myself as Christ. Christ is total unity. If I am feeling anything except peace or joy—this is not referring to the world's joy—I must have chosen the wrong teacher.

**(3:5) The single aim of the teacher turns the divided goal of the pupil into one direction, with the call for help becoming his one appeal.**

This has nothing to do with what may or may not be going on for you, but only with what is happening within my own mind. I have chosen one goal for myself, and therefore I have chosen it for you as well. You may still have a divided goal: God and the ego. A part of you wants to be free from pain, but another part is holding on to it. But if I make the choice that all I want is freedom from pain—and that comes from identifying with the Holy Spirit's Love—since our minds are joined I have made the same choice for you as well.

Again, you may choose in this moment to accept it or not, but a part of your mind must have accepted it because minds are joined. The same barrier that you have placed between yourself and the Holy Spirit you have also placed between yourself and me. But just as the Holy Spirit's Love is always present in your mind, now my love is also present in your mind.

**(3:6-7) This then is easily responded to with just one answer, and this answer will enter the teacher's mind unfailingly. From there it shines into his pupil's mind, making it one with his.**

Minds are joined. And the one answer is forgiveness—the recognition that what is going on is simply a form of magic. And magic cannot heal.

**Part XVIII**
**How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17) (cont.)**

**(4:1-2) Perhaps it will be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact. It is always an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions, regardless of their seeming justification by what appears as facts.**

This is another of those ideas that are extremely important to keep in mind. We are never angry at a fact, we are always angry at an interpretation. The tiny, mad idea of being separate from God is a fact, at least within the dream. We had the thought. The interpretation is: "This is horrible! This is sinful! This is terrible!" It is at that thought then that we get angry. Or the fact is that you are picking up a gun and are going to shoot me. That is a fact. The interpretation is that you are going to attack and victimize me. But that can only be true if I identify both you and myself as bodies.

In the biblical world, it is a fact that Jesus was crucified. People drove nails into his body and put him on a cross. The interpretation is that he was being attacked. The lesson, of course, is that a Son of God cannot be attacked because God cannot be attacked. Jesus' body was attacked, but he knew he was not being attacked because he knew he was not his body.

Anger always comes from an interpretation; it never comes simply from a fact. Interpretations always personalize, in one way or another, what has happened so that I see myself as a victim. For example, I am driving down a highway and another driver cuts me off. That is a fact. But the interpretation is that he did it to me. I am a victim of his insensitivity, his bad driving, his callousness, etc. If you come up to me and start to insult me and hit me, that is a fact. You are saying certain words and carrying out certain actions. That is a fact. The interpretation is that you are doing this tome, and that I am a victim of what you are saying and doing.

I cannot change a fact. I cannot change the fact that you are saying insulting things about me or to me. But I can certainly change the way that I am perceiving what you are saying and doing. That is the interpretation. The ego's interpretation is always, "You are doing this to me," because victimization is the principle and purpose of the world. If I am feeling unfairly treated or attacked, it is because I have chosen the wrong teacher. I am not upset because of what you are saying. I am upset because of the meaning I am giving it.

The problem is that I chose the ego as my teacher instead of Jesus. That is the issue. Once that is clear, I can easily shift my interpretation by saying, "I don't want to exclude Jesus' love or his peace. And it is with that love and peace that I wish to perceive you." Then I will see that what you are saying or doing is an expression of love or a call for love. And as we have seen, whether it is an expression of love or a call for love, my response will be the same. That makes being a teacher of God very simple. The learning process is not always easy, but the principle is very, very simple.

**(4:3) Regardless, too, of the intensity of the anger that is aroused.**

We are seeing the same thing here that is talked about in the workbook (W-pI.21.2:5).

**(4:4-6) It may be merely slight irritation, perhaps too mild to be even clearly recognized. Or it may also take the form of intense rage, accompanied by thoughts of violence, fantasied or apparently acted out. It does not matter.**

The reason Jesus says "apparently acted out" is that we really cannot act out anything, because a body does not do anything. Psychologists explore people's fantasies, and whether or not they are acted out. Often they will say it is much better to keep our fantasies to ourselves. But from the Course's point of view it does not make any difference, because the thoughts are always there. And it is not really my body that is acting out the fantasies. My mind simply gives my body orders.

**(4:7-11) All of these reactions are the same. They obscure the truth, and this can never be a matter of degree. Either truth is apparent, or it is not. It cannot be partially recognized. Who is unaware of truth must look upon illusions.**

You are either with the Holy Spirit or you are against Him, but there is no in between. It is one or the other. I have either the ego or the Holy Spirit as my teacher. Now in this world we often experience an in between of going back and forth between them. In reality, we choose either the Holy Spirit one hundred percent, or the ego one hundred percent. And we just go back and forth between them very quickly so that it does not feel like all or nothing. But in reality, it is all or nothing: one or the other.

Even if I am only mildly annoyed, I am still seeing myself as a victim. I am mildly annoyed because you did something. And if I am in an intense rage, I am seeing myself as a victim. In both cases the content is the same. So on that level it does not make any difference. Whether I act out my fantasy of murdering you or I simply have it as a fantasy within my mind does not make any difference. I am still perceiving myself as separate from you. I am still perceiving myself as your victim. And so on some level I am still believing that magic is going to help me.

The form of magic may be to deny the problem. As we will see a little later, defense mechanisms are forms of magic. I may act out behaviorally by shooting you, or excluding you from my life, or being nice to you so that you do not attack me anymore. Or I may use sleep as a way of denying or avoiding the problem. Sleep is a defense, obviously. I may be listening to something that I do not want to hear any more and I suddenly get bored and tired. But then I think I am sleepy because I did not have enough sleep last night, or because it is too hot in the room, or because what I am hearing is boring. However, it is really not for any of those reasons.

When Helen and I were editing the manuscript of the Course, we would usually sit on her living room couch. As we would be working together I would sometimes look over at her and find her yawning and sinking into the sofa. And yet otherwise she was always hyper alert. She had a lot of energy and never got tired except late at night. But here it would be three o'clock in the afternoon and Helen was slumping into her seat. She would yawn, go into a coughing jag, and laugh at herself, all at the same time, which is really a feat! So sleep is a very powerful defense. But anything that I do without looking at the real problem—seeing myself as a victim and you as a victimizer because I have chosen to listen to the wrong voice—is a form of magic.

The miracle tells me that the problem is not what either you or I have done. The problem is that I have chosen to screen out the light from my mind and I have chosen darkness instead. And so the miracle brings my mind's attention back to that choice point, and says, as the Course says over and over again, especially at the end, "My brother, choose again" (T-31.VIII.3:2). That is the fundamental message that we are given all the way through the Course. Jesus or the Holy Spirit are always saying to us: "My brother, choose again." And so the idea is that if I am upset, it is because I have chosen wrongly. It has nothing whatsoever to do with anything else. A teacher of God is always aware of that.

**(5:1-2) Anger in response to perceived magic thoughts is a basic cause of fear. Consider what this reaction means, and its centrality in the world's thought system becomes apparent.**

Anger leads to fear because, if I perceive your magic thoughts as sinful or bad, justifying my anger at you, then I am attacking you. I am seeing my sinfulness in you and I am denying it in myself. I am attacking you unjustifiably and falsely because, from my point of view, it is really me and not you who is sinful. So I am attacking you, knowing that I am attacking you falsely, which only makes me feel guilty. And when I feel guilty, I must believe that I deserve punishment because guilt demands punishment.

And I believe that I deserve punishment not only from God, but also from you, because I know I am attacking you falsely. So I will be afraid of your attack in response to my attack on you. And I will then need a defense against that attack, which is where the fear comes in. Now my reasoning may have absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with what is going on in your mind, because you may not be aware of my attack on you—it is in my mind. But in my own mind, if I have attacked you falsely—which all attack obviously is—I will feel guilty. And I will believe I deserve to be attacked in return for what I have done to you. And I will be afraid of your attack. That is what this is talking about.

**Part XIX
How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17) (cont.)**

This section is now going to describe, in effect, the entire thought system of the ego, from its origin. It is brilliant in the way that it goes from our individual experience of getting angry at others' magic thoughts to the origin of that anger in our relationship with God. And after exploring its origin, we will be taken right back to examining our reactions to the magic thoughts of others. This shifting is possible basically because the ego thought system is all one piece. What I believe I did to God in that original instant and my fear of what God will do to me in retaliation are always present in my mind—right at the bottom of my consciousness. And everything that I do as an individual, ego body-self is simply the radiation of that original, underlying thought. It simply radiates out through my mind and is expressed in my specific relationships.

Think of a funnel that has a narrow neck at the bottom and then opens up and spreads out. The neck of the funnel is the basic ego idea of what we have done with God. Everything else that has ever appeared to happen since then is simply the fragmentation of that original thought. It is similar to what happens when we place a drop of red dye in a glass of water: the whole glass of water becomes red. Our whole mind becomes infected, as it were, with the original thought of attack on God and the fear of counterattack that follows from it. Everything in the world is simply an expression of that basic thought. So now the Course is first going to shift down to the neck of the funnel and describe what takes place there.

**(5:3) A magic thought, by its mere presence, acknowledges a separation from God.**

The very fact that I am involved in any kind of magic in the world must mean that I believe the world is real. Then that belief must come from the original premise that I am separate from God, because the world is a place of separation. My involvement in magic is an attempt to substitute for God. I am saying that it is not God Who will make me happy. It is not God Who will free me from this terrible pain. It is this magic out here. So my use of magic becomes a symbol of my attack on God, my separation from God.

**(5:4) It** [the magic thought] **states, in the clearest form possible, that the mind which believes it has a separate will that can oppose the Will of God, also believes it can succeed.**

The fact is that there is a world that I believe in. And the world that I am using as a substitute for God is the witness to the fact that deep down within my mind I believe I not only have a separate will that can oppose the Will of God, but that I have actually opposed it. I have usurped God's place, and I am sitting on His throne saying I am God, and the real God now is impotent. He can't help me, but I can help me. My own god can; my own mind can. That is magic. And of course that is what special relationships are; they are our way of thumbing our nose at God and saying what You couldn't do for me, this wonderful person can, or this wonderful drug can. You can't bring me peace or freedom from my anxiety, but this bottle of alcohol or this medication can. You have no power in this situation, but these wonderful things in the world do.

**(5:5-6) That this can hardly be a fact is obvious. Yet that it can be believed as fact is equally obvious.**

In other words, how can there be a world separate from God? But the fact that we are all here says that, yes, we do believe it is a fact that we can separate ourselves from God.

**(5:7) And herein lies the birthplace of guilt.**

The belief that we are separate from God is sin. And that is the birthplace of guilt. I feel guilty because I believe I have usurped God's place. I have kicked Him off the throne, and now I am the one who is in charge. And the guilt over that, as we have discussed, is enormous. In fact, there are no words that can express the enormity of the self-hatred, the guilt, and the fear that are involved in that belief. And here is where the fear enters in:

**(5:8) Who usurps the place of God and takes it for himself now has a deadly "enemy."**

"Enemy" is put in quotes because obviously God is not an enemy; this is the ego's image of Him. And God is my enemy because I believe I have attacked Him. I must believe God is now justified in attacking me back. This is God we are talking about; He is going to destroy me.

**(5:9) And he must stand alone in his protection, and make himself a shield to keep him safe from fury that can never be abated, and vengeance that can never be satisfied.**

That is the ego, the belief that I am on my own. And the "shield" is the fortress that we have been talking about, the world. This "shield" will supposedly, according to the ego, keep me safe from God's fury that will "never be abated"; it will never go away. It is a vengeance that can never, ever be satisfied. God's thirst for my blood will never be satisfied. He will never get enough of it. That is the image that we all have of God. And so when religious people talk about the Love of God and how wonderfully kind and gentle and loving He is, they are covering over this thought. This explains why most religions of the world end up being murderous and justifying murder. The hatred underneath surfaces, but we never know where it is coming from. People then engage in "holy" wars and write "holy" books and espouse teachings that say it is the Will of God that we punish the infidels, pagans, heretics, etc.

These actions make no sense unless we understand the underlying dynamics, that deep within our minds we all feel that God is a blood-thirsty murderer. This thought is so horrible and so absolutely painful that we cover it over and very quickly make religions that say that God is all loving and God is wonderful. But the hatred slips through; we see it in the Bible. It also slips through when people begin practicing the religions of God. We displace our terror of God's wrath for our sinfulness and our guilt onto others, saying that other people are sinful and guilty, and now we will act on God's behalf and kill them.

**(6:1-2) How can this unfair battle be resolved? Its ending is inevitable, for its outcome must be death.**

The "unfair battle" is in the mind of the separated Son, the split mind that has become a battlefield in which the ego believes it is at war with God. Obviously the odds are heavily in God's favor; the ego is no match, so the ending is inevitable. So the ego asks, "Well, what do we do about it?"

**(6:3) How, then, can one believe in one's defenses?**

In other words, I made up a world, I made up a shield behind which I am going to hide from God. But at any moment I know God is going to come crashing down on me, like the sky in the Chicken Little fable. In that tale, Chicken Little is afraid that at any moment the heavens and the skies are going to come crashing down on her head. And that is really an expression of this fear, that at some point God is going to come crashing through the shield we made up and destroy us all.

So the question is, how can I believe in my defenses? My ego has told me that I defend myself from God by making this shield that will protect me. Yet obviously it is not going to work, because the guilt that says that I deserve to be punished is still in my mind. All of this has absolutely nothing whatsoever to do with reality or with God. It has only to do with the ego's distorted thinking. So I believe I have made up a world as a shield, but it is not going to help. So now what do I do?

**(6:4-6) Magic again must help. Forget the battle. Accept it as a fact, and then forget it.**

This is the psychological defense mechanism of repression or denial. The battle raging in my mind is overwhelming and the terror is absolutely impossible to tolerate, so I just cover it all over. That is magic. It is an attempt to solve a problem by not solving it. The right way to solve a problem, if we listen to the Holy Spirit, is to look at it with His Love beside us, and say, "This is all made up. God doesn't do this. This is silly." But we do not look at it. Instead we close our eyes and cover the battlefield over so it remains, but we do not see it, like the ostrich sticking its head in the sand.

I accept it as a fact; I have made the error real. I accept that my mind is a battlefield, and that God is furious with me because I've usurped His role. Now He's going to try to seize it back and destroy me. But then I say, "I don't see it," except there is a part of my mind that is still experiencing it. And that is the source of all the terror, all the tension, all the conflict, all the pain that we feel.

**(6:7-8) Do not remember the impossible odds against you. Do not remember the immensity of the "enemy," and do not think about your frailty in comparison.**

In other words, I forget the whole battle; except I really do not forget it. It is still lurking deep within my mind.

**(6:9) Accept your separation, but do not remember how it came about.**

So the ego has me accept as fact that it is right; we have indeed separated from God. God is still a liar, and the Holy Spirit still does not tell me the truth. This is all very real. I accept the separation as real because it is something that I have done. But I am going to forget how it happened. So I live in this world, which obviously is a world of separation, but with no memory of how it came about.

We talked earlier about scientists looking at the Big Bang and investigating the origins of the physical universe. They have not been able to get back to that ancient moment when the whole thing began. It began with our thought of guilt and our need to defend against God's wrath by making a world. That is what we have forgotten, and we never get back to that point. Scientists go back to the point when the world was made, but never to the thought that underlay it, the need to defend ourselves against God's wrath.

So that is how successful denial is as a defense. It is the most primitive of all defenses, but it is by far the most powerful because it keeps the world going. If we could ever remember how and why the world came about, we would say, "This whole thing is made up. It only exists in my mind. It's just like a bad dream." But we forget how it came about, and so now it seems very real, very present, and very insoluble as a problem. It is obvious that solving the problems of the world just gets more and more complicated.

**(6:10) Believe that you have won it** [the separation]**, but do not retain the slightest memory of Who your great "opponent" really is.**

I believe my opponent is out there in the world: all the awful, terrible people in my life who do terrible things to me. Or my body is my great opponent. Or the world is my great opponent. Something out there is my great opponent. And I forget Who the real great opponent is in my ego mind: namely, God.

**(6:11) Projecting your "forgetting" onto Him, it seems to you He has forgotten, too.**

That is the height of magic. Not only do I want to forget about this, but I am hoping and praying—although, of course, I am not praying to anybody—that God has forgotten also. Because if God can remember, then I am finished.

Now the section shifts back to our everyday experiences: when I find myself getting upset at somebody else's magic thought. For example, we get upset because a Course in Miracles student sneezes. Course in Miraclesstudents are not supposed to sneeze because they are not supposed to be getting sick! Or we find ourselves getting upset because of something that we read about in the newspapers. We find ourselves getting upset by a politician who steals: they are not supposed to do that! That is a magic thought: anything that upsets us.

**(7:1-2) But what will now be your reaction to all magic thoughts? They can but reawaken sleeping guilt, which you have hidden but have not let go.**

When you do something that is magic and I get upset about it, I am upset because your magic thought is a reminder of my magic thoughts. But not simply my everyday magic thoughts; they are also a symbolic reminder of the original magic thought that I can only escape from God's wrath by forgetting about it, using the defense mechanism of denial. So if I find myself getting angry at your use of defenses—which is what magic is—it is because they are a reminder of my own use of magic. And why do I use magic? To keep my guilt out of my awareness so I don't have to contemplate the awful thing I did to God and the terrible catastrophe that is inevitable: God's punishment for my sin against Him, which my guilt demands.

My magic thought was an attempt to keep all this deeply buried in my mind so I never have to look at it. Your use of magic, then, becomes a reminder of my use of magic. And my use of magic, when I become aware of it, even dimly, is the reminder of my "sleeping guilt," what my defense is supposed to protect me from. So, as we read, it but reawakens sleeping guilt, which I had hidden, but obviously have never let go. The miracle enables me to let it go. If I look at my guilt with the Holy Spirit's Love next to me, it disappears. Magic makes it real, but pushes it down and covers it over.

**(7:3-4) Each one** [each magic thought] **says clearly to your frightened mind, "You have usurped the place of God. Think not He has forgotten."**

That is my real fear. Each magic thought reminds me that I have stolen from God. I have usurped His place. I have sinned against Him and obviously He can never forget. He must always seek to punish me for what I have done. I had thought I could successfully screen all that out, but your magic thought is a reminder of my magic thought, which is a reminder of my guilt, which is a reminder that God is going to destroy me.

**(7:5-6) Here we have the fear of God most starkly represented. For in that thought has guilt already raised madness to the throne of God Himself.**

My guilt, which demands God's punishment and God's vengeance, has made God as insane as I am; it has enshrined madness on God's throne. God is insane and furious about my sin against Him, which obviously in reality never even happened. And so God must destroy me for what I never really did. The ego has taken God's Love, truth, and sanity and turned everything upside down. Now God is insane, God is furious, and God is anything but loving.

**(7:7-11) And now there is no hope. Except to kill. Here is salvation now. An angry father pursues his guilty son. Kill or be killed, for here alone is choice.**

The battlefield is out in the open now and this is the only choice that exists in this world: it is either you or me. The entire physical world is based on it. Think for just a moment. What keeps us physically alive is eating something else, which is a form of killing. The only way our physical bodies can survive is by killing something else and consuming it, whether it is an animal, vegetable, or anything else. Even in the act of breathing we are destroying hundreds of thousands of microorganisms. The only way a physical organism can survive in this world is to feed off, or kill something else. So the very basic, gross physical facts of our existence in this world are expressions of kill or be killed. And this is not even talking at all about anything psychological.

The anger that we feel is an expression of "kill or be killed." Either I am going to be killed by this wrathful God Who is going to punish me for my guilt, or I am going to project my guilt onto you and believe that God will kill you for your sin. The sin I do not want to look at in myself I will see in you. I am trying somehow to get God on your neck instead of mine. That is the only choice in this world: it is either you or me.

**(7:12) Beyond this** [choice] **there is none, for what was done cannot be done without.**

Sin now is real; there is no way of changing it. That is a fact in the ego world. And so one cannot just pretend it is not there. The only question now is: who is the sinner? Of course, deep down in my mind I know that **I**am, but I cannot look at that. So I say, "I'm not the sinner. You are. And you deserve to be killed instead of me." There is no question God is going to kill somebody. My hope is that it will not be me. It will be you. We see that in the history of Christianity. The Christians will be saved and the pagans, infidels, and nonbelievers will be killed. Magically I hope I can get myself off the hook because I have now gotten God on their neck. Of course, the whole thing is totally made up.

**(7:13) The stain of blood can never be removed** [that reference, of course, is from Lady Macbeth]**, and anyone who bears this stain on him must meet with death.**

The stain of blood when I killed God and usurped His place is on my hands. And I want to transfer it quickly onto your hands. So with the stain now on you, you will be killed instead of me, since of course there is no way that I can kill God. That is the situation of the world. And the only way that I can cope with it is through magic, the magic of denying this whole terrible battlefield, this whole terrible script, by just pushing it down. Then I push it out of my mind by projecting it onto the world, saying, "All the evil people, all the victimizers, are out there. All the rapists, all the killers, all the crooks are out there and not in me." Then I want to make a bargain quickly with God and join His side, so that I can feel that I am justified, I am good, and I am holy; and so He will hate all the other people out there. Magic makes all of this happen for me psychologically. I deny it in myself and project it out onto you so that you are the sinful person who will be punished.

Thus, I get upset over your magic thoughts because they remind me of my own sin and guilt. As a teacher of God, my lesson is to be aware continually that even a mild twinge of annoyance represents my desire to see the sin, not in me, but in you because of your use of magic. The next step is to recognize that I really do believe the sin is in me and that is why I have gotten upset. It reminds me that I believe the sin within me must be punished. And within this system there is no way out.

**Part XX
How Do God's Teachers Deal with Magic Thoughts? (M-17) (conclusion)**

**(8:1) Into this hopeless situation God sends His teachers.**

This refers to all of us. We are the hope of the world.

**(8:2-4) They bring the light of hope from God Himself. There is a way in which escape is possible. It can be learned and taught, but it requires patience and abundant willingness.**

This is one of the few places in the Course that speaks not of "a little willingness" but of "abundant willingness." We become instruments of hope and teachers of God by remaining fully present to the darkness of the world around us—all the magic running wild and rampant in the world—but we do not take it seriously. If I do not take the magic out there seriously, it must be because, on another level, I am no longer taking it so seriously within myself. This is the beginning of the process of looking at the "tiny, mad idea" and seeing a glimmer of light in it. And the glimmer of light is that this is silly. It is a light of laughter instead of the darkness of saying, "This is a serious sin." So by learning not to take your "sins" so seriously, I am really learning the same lesson within myself. I can say, "This is not a terrible sin. It's just a silly mistake. I listened to the wrong voice. And just as I listened to the wrong voice, the power of my mind can now choose to listen to the right Voice."

But it is a lesson that I do not learn overnight. And I do not want to learn it just because this section says it. It is a lesson that requires a great deal of patience—I must learn to be patient with my fear—and abundant willingness to learn continually and to practice repeatedly.

**(8:5) Given that, the lesson's manifest simplicity stands out like an intense white light against a black horizon, for such it is.**

When I am in the midst of some form of darkness—whether it is a loved one who is very sick, a seeming catastrophe at work or within my family, or some crisis or disaster in the world at large—that is the "black horizon" of the ego's thought system. If I do not take it seriously—or I at least begin the process of questioning the validity of my justification for taking it seriously—then the light begins to shine. And as I do this more and more, the light becomes clearer and increasingly intense.

I do not have to do anything. We are not talking about behavior—we are talking about a choice that occurs within the mind. And then my clenched fist—that locked vault in my mind—begins to open and light begins to stream in. What I believed was darkness now becomes increasingly light. And as it becomes increasingly light within my mind, that light extends out and I look out and see light. Even if I am looking out at thirteen million people being killed in concentration camps, I will still see light. The light is not out there in the world or in the specific situation. It is within my mind.

**(8:6) If anger comes from an interpretation and not a fact, it is never justified.**

I am not really angry at the fact that thirteen million people were killed. I am angry at the interpretation I give this fact, namely, that it is evil and sinful and I identify with the victims. So my anger is not justified because I am the one who gave it that interpretation. I am not angry at what you have done. I am angry at my perception of what you have done. My anger is not really at you, but rather at the way I am looking at you.

**(8:7-9) Once this is even dimly grasped, the way is open. Now it is possible to take the next step. The interpretation can be changed at last.**

Jesus says, "Once this is even dimly grasped"—in other words, we do not have to do it one hundred percent. We do not have to do it perfectly. This is something that we grow into. But once we at least begin opening up the door by saying, "Well, maybe my ego just possibly is wrong," that starts the process. And the whole purpose of the Course is to convince us that our ego is wrong.

A wonderful line in the text says, "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" (T-29.VII.1:9). Everyone in this world wants to be right. And we all have thousands upon thousands, even millions, of witnesses who prove that our perception of the world is right. But we are not aware that wanting to be right is a choice against being happy. Going against the Holy Spirit will never make us happy, but that is its purpose. So once we can begin the process of questioning the validity of our interpretations, we are allowing ourselves to be led home. There is absolutely no fact in the world which justifies anger, no fact at all. The Course says at one point, "God is not symbolic; He is Fact" (T-3.I.8:2). Everything else is made up.

So "the interpretation can be changed at last." Finally a light is streaming into the tunnel. I cannot change the facts of the world. I cannot change the fact that my whole family was killed. I cannot change the fact that terrible things are happening. I cannot change the fact that thirteen million people were killed in the Holocaust. I cannot change any of these facts, but I can change how I look at them. The Course says, "Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7). Freedom and joy come from that choice.

**(8:10) Magic thoughts need not lead to condemnation, for they do not really have the power to give rise to guilt.**

Magic thoughts are not sinful. Sin gives rise to guilt and sin is condemned. I am angry because I have sinned and I have condemned myself. That is why I feel guilty. Or else I accuse you of sinning and condemn you for it. But magic thoughts are simply a silly, feeble attempt on the ego's part to sustain itself by keeping the Love, the power, the might, and the joy of God away from me. That is all they are. So how then could a magic thought have any effect on God? When I begin really to look at it, it is no longer sinful. It is silly. And if it is merely silly, then it certainly cannot be condemned, and does not warrant any guilt.

**(8:11) And so they can be overlooked, and thus forgotten in the truest sense.**

Not forgotten as the ego forgets, which is to deny, to make real first and then to forget. Rather magic thoughts can be "forgotten in the truest sense" because they do not exist. This is not the ego's forgetting by burying it in my memory. The magic thought simply dissolves, disappearing into its own nothingness.

**(9:1) Madness but seems terrible.**

"Madness" would be the whole insanity of the ego thought system. And it does seem terrible. It seems terrible to believe that we could shatter the unity of Heaven and the Love of God and Christ. And what goes on in this world seems terrible.

**(9:2) In truth it has no power to make anything.**

The madness of the ego thought system has no power to make up a self that could oppose God, let alone make up a world that could oppose God.

**(9:3) Like the magic which becomes its servant, it neither attacks nor protects.**

The ego has told us that we have attacked God. And then the ego tells us that it will protect us. And, as we have seen, the world then becomes a major fortress. But it cannot really because it does not exist. The whole thing is just all make-believe.

**(9:4) To see it and to recognize its thought system is to look on nothing.**

Remember, the ego tells us, "You must not look on this thought system because it will destroy you." So we lock it up in a darkened tomb, or shrouded vault, in our minds. But if we ever really look at it, we realize literally nothing is there. It is all made up. The emperor has no clothes on.

**(9:5-6) Can nothing give rise to anger? Hardly so.**

Similarly, we can ask, "Can nothing give rise to guilt? Can nothing give rise to a world? Can nothing give rise to death? Can nothing give rise to suffering?" Obviously we believe it can because that is the world that we have made real. If we really think about what this is saying—what the whole Course is saying—this obviously is a very radical reinterpretation of absolutely everything that we believe, without exception.

A line in the Course says, "To learn this course requires willingness to question every value that you hold" (T-24.in.2:1). Every value! Every single thought! Now we do not do this overnight. But just to think about this teaching—that there is no exception—gives a sense of the immensity and the profound depth of the thought system of A Course in Miracles. If the ego is really nothing, then every single thing that has come since then is also nothing. And that means it makes no sense for us to be upset over something that does not exist.

But it is a step-by-step process—slow, gradual and gentle—that leads us to a growing understanding and acceptance of that truth. And so to be a teacher of God is to say, "Yes, this is what I really want to learn and to have taught through me," and then to trust in the process, as the Love of the Holy Spirit or Jesus walks with us, step by step, until this truth becomes a simple fact for us.

**(9:7) Remember, then, teacher of God, that anger recognizes a reality that is not there; yet is the anger certain witness that you do believe in it as fact.**

We have said that we cannot get angry at a fact, but we can now take that one step further. The fact is that nothing is there. We get angry at an interpretation that says that something is there that is sinful, incurring guilt, and deserving of punishment. If I am angry, I obviously am angry over something, which means I have denied the nothingness that is in front of me. I believe that the something is a fact. And the ultimate fact is sin. I have separated from God, attacked Him and He is going to attack me in return. That is a fact. So as was said earlier in this section, I accept it as a fact and then I forget it.

**(9:8) Now is escape impossible...**

Once I have made separation real and sin a fact, where do I go? I am now a product of that sin. The only way to cope, then, is to use magic somehow to deny this awful fact, and make the best of what is already a perfectly dreadful situation. That is why this world is hopeless and dreary and miserable. There is no hope within this system. The only hope comes from outside the system, from the Holy Spirit's light. Again,

**(9:8) Now is escape impossible, until you see you have responded to your own interpretation, which you have projected on an outside world.**

That is the hope: I have made it all up. And that is why it is so essential, as we work with the Course, that we not set aside the metaphysical teachings on the world as an illusion that is not really here. Without that understanding, our learning will indeed be limited; it will be limited by our belief that there is a world here that has to be fixed.

The world does not have to be fixed because there is no world. We do not strive to make the imperfect perfect. We strive to look at the imperfect and realize it does not exist. And then we say, "Yes, the imperfect world, the imperfect situation, came from an imperfect thought, but the imperfect thought is simply silly. It is not sinful. It is just a mistaken thought. I made the mistake of listening to guidance from the wrong voice. That is all I did. I can just as easily turn the other way and listen to the Holy Spirit's Voice. And then everything else will disappear."

**(9:9-11) Let this grim sword be taken from you now. There is no death. This sword does not exist.**

This sword, the ego's weapon, is the ego thought system—that is the madness.

**(9:12) The fear of God is causeless.**

The "fear of God" is caused by sin, but there is no sin. If there is no sin, there is no cause that could be having effects. The effect of sin is the fear of God and death. But if there is no sin—if the whole thing is made up—then it is not a cause. And so sin can have no effects, which means there is no death and no fear.

**(9:13) But His Love is Cause of everything beyond all fear** [creation and Heaven]**, and thus forever real and always true.**

**Part XXI
How Is Correction Made? (M-18)**

We continue with our discussion of anger and magic thoughts. We will read two sections that deal with these issues. The very next section in the manual, "How Is Correction Made?" (M-18), which we will read now, addresses the temptation of wanting to correct others' mistakes or magic thoughts. We will then read a parallel section from the text called "The Correction of Error" (T-9.III).

As with everything in the Course, these sections are talking about content and not form. Jesus is not saying that we should not, on the level of form, correct someone else's mistakes. He is talking about an attitude of judgment and condemnation, based on the premise that the other person is wrong. And not merely wrong in terms of giving a wrong answer on a test, for example, but wrong simply by virtue of his own sinfulness. That is what this is addressing. So the issue is not correcting mistakes on the level of form. The whole purpose of A Course in Miracles is to correct our mistakes, so obviously Jesus is not saying mistakes should not be corrected on that level. But none of us working with the Course—unless we are really projecting—would believe that Jesus is attacking or condemning us for making a mistake.

If we read Jesus' words carefully, opening up our minds and our hearts, we can feel his gentle love through everything he is saying, even when he is making rather forceful statements about the various mistakes that the world has made. And even more to the point, when he is correcting two thousand years of Christian teaching, saying Christians have misunderstood what he taught, on the level of form he obviously is correcting errors or mistakes. But he is not doing it in a spirit of judgment, attack, condemnation, or separation.

As in all things, the Course is saying that we should not attempt to correct someone's mistakes without first unifying our mind with the Holy Spirit's Love. Then when we speak, regardless of what we say, we will only be expressing love. So, again, these sections are not saying we should not correct people's mistakes on the level of form.

**(1:1) Correction of a lasting nature,—and only this is true correction,—cannot be made until the teacher of God has ceased to confuse interpretation with fact, or illusion with truth.**

"Correction of a lasting nature" is correcting the one basic error or mistake, namely, that we are an ego and that the separation is real. And this mistake is undone or corrected simply by demonstrating that its fundamental premise is untrue. If the fundamental premise is that we are separate from God, then the correction or the undoing of that would be expressing and experiencing the Love of God. If I am expressing the Love of God, I cannot be separate from Him. If I am experiencing the Love of God, I cannot be separate from Him. That is correction of a lasting nature, which is what this is talking about.

Another way to say that "the teacher of God has ceased to confuse interpretation with fact, or illusion with truth" is that we no longer confuse form with content. The form may be that a person says something insulting or that a person has cancer. Those are facts within this world—that is the form. The interpretation would be that this is a terrible thing, that it is an expression of sin and guilt that should be attacked and corrected. That is the interpretation. As we discussed earlier, the basic ego interpretation of everything is based on the reality of victimization: what you have done is a personal attack on me or the people with whom I identify. Or my self, as a Son of God, is attacked and diminished when I am sick. These are all interpretations.

**(1:2) If he argues with his pupil about a magic thought, attacks it, tries to establish its error or demonstrate its falsity, he is but witnessing to its reality.**

So, for example, I find myself teaching a class in A Course in Miracles and I end up arguing with you because you do not share my view of the Course. I am making the difference real. This is not to say that I have to agree with what you are saying. But when I find myself in a position of arguing, of wanting to demonstrate that I am right and you are wrong, then I know that my ego has gotten in the way. All I am doing at that moment is reliving that ancient instant when the ego believed it was at war with God.

I am usurping the role of God, Who is perfect and knows the truth, and I am attacking you, whom I am seeing as an ego. This is true any time we get into an argument or a debate with anybody, or in a situation where it is important to us that we be proven right. As we have seen, this always represents a choice to be right rather than happy. Now I do not have to agree with what you say if I think the form of what you are saying is wrong. But we are talking about an underlying feeling or attitude in which I want to be right, where I have an investment in demonstrating to myself, to you, and to anybody else who is around, that I am right and you are wrong. At that point, of course, I am wrong because I am seeing separation as real. I am confusing form with content, interpretation with fact, illusion with truth.

Similarly, if I am a schoolteacher, part of my job obviously is to give exams and correct mistakes. I can do that either in a spirit of love or a spirit of attack. If I find myself trying to prove that your magic thought is wrong, I must believe that what you are saying is real. Otherwise I would not be trying to attack it and shout you down.

In the Course, Jesus speaks the truth without attacking anything or anyone else. He simply says, "This is the truth." The reader is free to accept it or not. So, if I am teaching the Course, I want to reflect the same attitude. I want to present the Course and its truth as I understand it, but without any attempt to impose my beliefs on anybody else. That can be a very helpful classroom for recognizing when my ego does become engaged and I make separation real.

In other words, I want to recognize that you and I are united in the Love of God and that is the only reality. The fact that the forms we use are different does not make any difference. The forms are irrelevant. But when I argue with you and I want to prove that you are wrong and I am right, I am making the forms into reality and I am saying we are separate.

**(1:3) Depression is then inevitable, for he has "proved," both to his pupil and himself, that it is their task to escape from what is real.**

Once we establish the error as real, once we establish the ego and the world and any thoughts in this world as real and important, there is no way to escape. And then depression enters in. We can have real joy and avoid the pain and depression only by recognizing that we do have the power to leave this world simply because it is not true. But if I make it real, I cannot escape from it.

**(1:4-7) And this** [namely, to escape from what is real] **can only be impossible. Reality is changeless. Magic thoughts are but illusions. Otherwise salvation would be only the same age-old impossible dream in but another form.**

Almost all of the dreams of salvation in the history of the world have been just the same old ego attempt to solve a problem by not solving it; i.e., by first making the ego, the world, and sin real, and then trying to devise ingenious ways—theological, economical, political, social, etc.—to escape from it. But I cannot escape from something once it has become real to me. I can escape only by stepping back and seeing myself above the battleground, or by leaving the stage and going into the audience with Jesus, looking back on the stage and saying, "This is simply a dream, and I can awaken from a dream." That ends it. That is true escape. But I cannot escape from something once I have established it as real, because there will always be a nagging thought somewhere inside me that it is going to catch up with me.

**(1:8-9) Yet the dream of salvation has new content. It is not the form alone in which the difference lies.**

Salvation is a dream also, but as the Course says, it is a happy dream (T-30.IV.7:1-2). So I do not simply change or manipulate the forms. I change the content. The content for the ego's "salvation" dreams is that sin is real and there are magical ways to escape from it. That is its fundamental content. The Holy Spirit's content is that sin is unreal, and recognizing its unreality constitutes the escape from it.

But whenever we react to anything in the world as if it were real, important, valuable, or threatening, we are making the error real; we are making magic real; and we are forgetting that it is all a dream. So fighting against sickness, for example, is a way of making it real. Arguing with someone about the correctness of your position is another way of making the difference between us real.

**(2:1) God's teachers' major lesson is to learn how to react to magic thoughts wholly without anger.**

In fact, we could even say it is the only lesson.

**(2:2) Only in this way can they proclaim the truth about themselves.**

When Jesus talks about proclaiming truth, he does not mean standing up on a soap box. Proclaiming the truth simply means letting the truth extend through us. Our voice does not speak the truth; the voice of Jesus speaks it through us. Our bodies do not demonstrate and give the truth; it is done through us.

**(2:3) Through them** [God's teachers]**, the Holy Spirit can now speak of the reality of the Son of God.**

Again, we are not the ones who speak the truth. The truth is not the principles of A Course in Miracles. The truth is the love that inspired A Course in Miracles. That same love has inspired thousands of other spiritualities as well. That love is the truth, and it is not spoken. Once we speak of the truth, it stops being the truth. I use the teachings of A Course in Miracles if that is my particular path, but I use them simply as a vehicle for allowing the Love and the truth of the Holy Spirit to extend through me. So when the Holy Spirit speaks of "the reality of the Son of God," He speaks not in words, not the words or the teachings of A Course in Miracles.

This is true of any spiritual path. The truth is the love that inspired the teachings of the spiritual path. If we look at the history of the world, with all the conflicts both among and within religions and spiritualities, we see the confusion of form with content, one of the primary, fundamental mistakes of the ego. The form does not heal or save, because it is an illusion. The Course says that. The Course also says that it comes within an ego framework (C-in.3:1). It has to, for otherwise we could not understand it. But the words are not what is holy. The three books are not holy. The love that inspires them is holy, and that love is abstract. And that same love, that presence of Jesus, is inside everyone. So that same love can be expressed if I am standing up in front of a group reading from a telephone book. What difference does it make? It is only form.

So the Course is in the world, but it is not of the world. Again, it comes within the ego's framework. So to get into an argument or debate with somebody about whether it is true or not misses the whole point. If it is true for me, that is all I have to know. If I defend it, I am saying that the Course is vulnerable, a wonderful way for the ego to reestablish its own position. The basic assertion of the ego is that God is vulnerable. That insanity and arrogance—that the ego has the power to attack God—started the whole thing. If I believe the Course is God's Word and that His Love inspired it, and I also believe it can be attacked and I have to defend it, then I am doing the same thing all over again. Truth does not need defense. Love does not oppose. "We say, 'God is,' and then we cease to speak" (W-pI.169.5:4) because there is nothing else to say.

**(2:4) Now He can remind the world of sinlessness, the one unchanged, unchangeable condition of all that God created.**

This, of course, is the creation of spirit, which is in Heaven. The reminder is simply my demonstrating, by my own attitude of defenselessness and peace, that I am not sinful. If I am argumentative, defensive, anxious, or guilty, I obviously must believe that I am sinful. All these other characteristics come from the belief that I am sinful and separated. If I am sinful, then I must feel guilty. I must then project that guilt onto others and attack them. I must then also believe that others are going to attack me back, since guilt demands punishment. And so I become afraid of what is going to happen to me and believe I have to protect myself as a result. All the attributes of the ego stem from that one basic thought or premise that I am sinful.

The Holy Spirit reminds the world of sinlessness through me, not by my actions or my words or my behavior, but simply by the love that is expressed through me, as my life demonstrates the characteristics of a teacher of God. My part is simply to let my ego's interferences be removed and to make another choice. And then the love and the light that are already within me and everyone else simply shine out. That is all we have to do.

**(2:5) Now He can speak the Word of God to listening ears, and bring Christ's vision to eyes that see.**

The "Word of God" again is basically the expression of the Atonement principle: the separation has never occurred. Those who are open and ready to accept that truth in those words will hear it. If they do not hear it through me, then they will hear it through someone else. It does not matter who the teacher of God is nor what the spiritual path is. As it says earlier in the manual, when the teacher is ready to learn, the pupils appear (M-2.1).

The form in which the message is delivered is not important. I am ready for my role as teacher when I have—at least for an instant—set aside my blocks and allowed the love and the light to shine out. And those who have been waiting for that particular expression in form of love and light will then come. But to repeat, it is not the form that heals or saves; it is the content.

**(2:6) Now is He** [the Holy Spirit] **free to teach all minds the truth of what they are, so they will gladly be returned to Him.**

The Holy Spirit's Love is not free to extend through us so long as we believe we are sinful and guilty, so long as we are angry and listen to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. Not that the Holy Spirit is imprisoned, but the extension of His Love is blocked by the barrier of our anger and guilt. Our job then is simply to end the imprisonment of this Love by removing the impediments to its extending and flowing freely through us. I mention this repeatedly, as does the Course itself, because it is absolutely essential that we understand that we do not have to do anything. We simply are involved in the process of undoing the barriers that we have placed between ourselves and the Holy Spirit.

**(2:7) And now is guilt forgiven, overlooked completely in His sight and in God's Word.**

Guilt was forgiven in the instant that it arose, because in that same instant the memory of God in the Son's mind undid it. His light totally dissolved the darkened thoughts of sin and guilt. The problem is that we blotted out the Holy Spirit's Voice. So guilt or sin is forgiven simply by removing the blocks to the forgiveness that has already occurred within our minds. The Course continually emphasizes that forgiveness does not do anything; it undoes. Forgiveness is already perfect in us; it has already been accomplished. The only problem is that we have screened it off. So guilt is forgiven as we simply remove the interferences or the veils that have kept us separate from that forgiveness.

**Part XXII
How Is Correction Made? (M-18) (conclusion)**

**(3:1) Anger but screeches, "Guilt is real!"**

When I am angry at you, I am saying, "You're the one who's guilty, not me." But I could not be accusing you if I had not first, on another level, accused myself. So when I attack you and get angry at you, I am saying not only that your guilt is real, but that my guilt is real as well, although I am not aware of that. This becomes clearer if I can understand that when I get angry at you, I obviously must believe that you and I are separate. Otherwise I could not be angry at you. And if I believe that we are separate, I am saying that separation is real, sin is real, and therefore I must feel guilty because of what I have done.

**(3:2) Reality is blotted out as this insane belief is taken as replacement for God's Word.**

"God's Word" here represents the principle that the separation never occurred. That is reality and truth. It is blotted out when I attack you because, again, obviously I am saying you and I are separate.

**(3:3-4) The body's eyes now "see"; its ears alone can "hear." Its little space and tiny breath become the measure of reality.**

Once I make sin and guilt real, and I say that you and I are separate, I obviously am making the body real. I have totally forgotten that the problem is the guilt within my own mind, and that it has nothing whatsoever to do with you. At that point, my ego mind gives my body the instruction: "Find sin, make it real, and then attack it." And so my eyes see that you have done a terrible thing, and my ears hear the terrible things that you have said. My interpretation is that you are sinful and guilty and you deserve to be punished. The implication is that I am free and innocent.

But I see it that way because I have first made a decision in my mind that that is what I want to see. So that is exactly what my eyes see. But if I shift my mind to have the Holy Spirit as my Teacher instead of the ego, then my eyes see and my ears hear something totally different. I see what you have done as either an expression of love or a call for love. And I know the reality is that you and I are one in Christ.

**(3:5) And truth becomes diminutive and meaningless.**

When we listen to the ego, the truth of God's Love is meaningless. The ego totally covers over God's Love, and it becomes threatening. The immensity and the eternity of Heaven is exchanged for this "little space and tiny breath"—namely, the body and the world—that we say is reality. And it becomes reality because I have chosen to deny the true reality, which I now fear. Thus I have thrown away the grandeur of Heaven, as the Course would say, for the grandiosity of the ego (T-9.VIII), or the magnitude of Christ for the littleness of the ego (T-15.III). Even though I am not in touch with the choice, I have deliberately chosen not to value who I really am or Who God is. I have chosen the meager gifts of the ego instead.

**(3:6) Correction has one answer to all this, and to the world that rests on this:**

What follows is the correction, the only correction that works. Basically it is the message the Holy Spirit gives to us whenever we are tempted to make the error or magic real.

**(3:7-8) You but mistake interpretation for the truth. And you are wrong.**

Jesus is not criticizing us here. He is simply telling us that what we believe is not the truth. Then he leaves it up to us whether to accept his correction or not.

**(3:9) But a mistake is not a sin, nor has reality been taken from its throne by your mistakes.**

The ego tells us that we have stolen the throne of Heaven, established ourselves on it, and that what we did was sinful. Jesus says that it is not sinful; it was just a mistake, a silly thought; and it never happened.

**(3:10) God reigns forever, and His laws alone prevail upon you and upon the world.**

His laws of Love prevail upon the world through the Holy Spirit and His plan of forgiveness.

**(3:11-12) *His Love remains the only thing there is. Fear is illusion, for you are like Him.***

This, of course, is the exact opposite of what the ego thought system says. The ego tells us that God no longer reigns; the ego reigns and its laws hold instead, and God's Love has been changed into vengeance, which we now should fear. We are choosing to deny His Love whenever we make the error real, whenever we get upset by anything, whether it is a slight twinge of annoyance or intense fury. The only problem in all the world, no matter what the shape or form, is that we have chosen to deny the truth. And so our part, as a teacher of God, is simply to remember the truth. That is all. If we truly remember, then nothing in the world can ever upset us, absolutely nothing. Truth will then automatically express itself through us.

So if I am upset by anything in the world, such as someone's magic thoughts, it means I have chosen, on another level, to deny the truth because I no longer value it. And I am saying that my anxiety, my upset, and my guilt are far more valuable to me than the Love of God.

**(4:1) In order to heal, it thus becomes essential for the teacher of God to let all his own mistakes be corrected.**

In order to be a healer, in order to be an advanced teacher of God, I simply must let my own ego thought system be corrected—that is all I have to do. I do not correct your mistakes.

Let me read something relevant from the "Psychotherapy" pamphlet. The question this section is addressing is how we achieve the final goal of psychotherapy, which is forgiveness. And it asks: "How is it reached?" (P-2.VI.6:2), that is, how does the therapist reach this final goal, how does therapy become successful? And the answer is: "The therapist sees in the patient all that he has not forgiven in himself, and is thus given another chance to look at it, open it to re-evaluation and forgive it" (P-2.VI.6:3). This is an incredible response if we think about it. The answer to the question of how psychotherapy achieves its goal says absolutely nothing about the patient. Again, it says: "The therapist sees in the patient all that he has not forgiven in himself." This has nothing to do with the therapist's technique, brilliance, or wisdom. It simply has to do with the healing of the therapist's mind. That is how therapy works and what healing is. It is necessary only that the therapist bring any concerns, anxieties, fears, guilt, etc., to the Holy Spirit. As those are taken away, the Love of the Holy Spirit automatically flows through, and the therapist then will do whatever is the most helpful and loving. But healing does not come from what the therapist says or does. Healing comes when the therapist's mind has joined with the patient's. And this cannot happen so long as the therapist is holding on to thoughts of fear, guilt, judgment, etc.

The line we just read from this section in the manual is saying the exact same thing: "In order to heal, it thus becomes essential for the teacher of God to let all his own mistakes be corrected." Healing is not a technique any more than psychotherapy is. It does not matter what I say or do. I can sit with a patient or someone who is in trouble and read the telephone book. The specific form does not make any difference.

There is a wonderful story about Beethoven. The husband of a good friend of his had died. And so he visited her to offer his condolences. As he walked into her home, he told her, "Tonight we shall speak together in tones." And then he sat down at the piano, played for two and a half hours, and then walked out, having never said another word. And the woman felt extremely comforted by that. He was joining with her in the way that he could join, through his music—the form did not make any difference.

He could have sat down and played the piano as he did, or he could have sat and read for her from the Bible, or he could have laid hands on her. It would not have made any difference. In that moment, he wanted to be of help and to join with his friend. And so, in a sense, he gave his body to the love of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, so that love could filter through his body which, obviously, was the body of a composer and pianist. And so the love was expressed in that way. The form is not important; it is the content alone that is important.

So to be a healer, to be an advanced teacher of God, we simply give Jesus all of the interferences that we have placed between ourselves and his love, so that his love can come through, instead of our special love. The focus has absolutely nothing to do with anything outside us because there is nothing outside us. So if I feel concern that I must do something to fix a problem in the world, I have already trapped myself.

The problem, at that point, is not what I should do to help someone else, but what I must do to allow my own mind to be healed. I must recognize that if I am seeing the error outside myself and have made magic real, it is because I have an investment in reinforcing and perpetuating the ego thought system instead of accepting the Holy Spirit's. That is the problem. I have chosen to throw away the love of Jesus and to substitute instead my ego's "love," which always involves helping other people so that I feel better.

So I join with another mind simply by bringing my mind to the Love of the Holy Spirit or Jesus within my mind. That is all I do. And I do that by becoming aware of any of my thoughts that would keep me separate from that Mind and that Love. In other words, all I do—and this basically is what the whole Course is about—is become increasingly sensitive to the interferences of my own thought system, of my own mind, which are always thoughts that magic is real, that the world is real, that pain and suffering are real, and that anger is justified. These are all just different forms of separation. Crucial to the process is becoming aware that any thought I have of anger, concern, anxiety, guilt, or depression, any thought that somebody out there is suffering pain on the level of the body and the world, is coming from a prior choice that I have made to keep the truth and the Love of God away from me. If I am upset about what is happening to you, I am not in a loving space. I am in an ego "loving" space, but I am not in a genuine loving space because I have made separation and sin real.

And so Jesus is telling us, over and over again, to be aware of the investment we have in making the error real and in keeping the Love of God separate from us. I want to learn to recognize that my concern over you, my feeling sorry for you, and my wanting to end your pain is not love. It seems to be love, but it is not, because it is coming from me, from my interpretation, and not from the Holy Spirit's. So I want to separate myself out from what I am seeing in the world and instead say, "I really want to join with the love that is within me but that is not of me." From that point the love will express through me and then I will do or say whatever is most helpful—whether it is spending two and a half hours playing piano music, laying on of hands, saying a prayer, or whatever.

Again:

**(4:1) In order to heal, it thus becomes essential for the teacher of God to let all his own mistakes be corrected.**

The focus is never on what is outside; it is always on what is within me.

**(4:2) If he senses even the faintest hint of irritation in himself as he responds to anyone, let him instantly realize that he has made an interpretation that is not true.**

We are being called to monitor our minds very carefully—to be vigilant for our ego thoughts. The buck always stops in our minds. I can never blame anybody. The third lesson of the Holy Spirit is to "be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom" (T-6.V-C). Obviously we do not have to be vigilant for God. To be vigilant on behalf of God is to be vigilant for our own ego's defenses against Him.

The challenge is to become increasingly aware of even the faintest hint of irritation without feeling guilty about it. Our ego would like us to practice the Course and use it for an upside down purpose: becoming more and more aware of the ugliness of our ego and then doing a real number on ourselves. Obviously, this runs counter to the purpose of the Course, which is to undo guilt through forgiveness.

We want to be able to do this gradually, becoming increasingly aware of the murderous thoughts that lie within all of us, as we learn how to smile at them and say, "Well, of course, what else is new? Why else would I be in this world if I weren't a murderer? This world represents the murder of God. So, of course, what else is new?" This allows us to become increasingly objective about the ego in ourselves.

The image of sitting in an audience with Jesus, looking at my ego acting out, and smiling at it, can be helpful. It means a part of my mind is with Jesus, looking at my ego doing its thing, and together we are saying, "Isn't that silly?" That is what it means to remember to laugh at the ego; we do not take it seriously. Everything in this world is the result of taking the ego seriously, and everything in the world then becomes serious for us. Whenever I take anything in the world seriously, I want, as quickly as I can, to go back within my mind and realize I have made an interpretation that is not true. The interpretation is that what you are doing has terrible effects on me, on my loved ones, on the planet, on God, etc. So I want to realize that it has no effects at all. The reality of the Son of God is unhindered and unchanged by any thought of the ego.

**(4:3) Then let him turn within to his eternal Guide** [the Holy Spirit]**, and let Him** [not us] **judge what the response should be.**

A passage at the end of Chapter 27 in the text talks about how we are the ones who judge effects (T-27.VIII.9:4). We judge all the things that go on in the world. We judge them either as awful and terrible, and needing to be changed, undone or punished, or as wonderful things that we want to happen. We are the ones who judge effects. The Holy Spirit in contrast judges their cause. And the cause of all the effects in the world is the "tiny, mad idea" of separation from God. The Holy Spirit's judgment of that cause is that it is silly. It is silly to believe that the ego has the power to attack God and shatter Heaven. When we judge the cause—the ego—as sinful and guilty and deserving of being taken very seriously, that leads to the need for a defense against it.

And that is what the world is. All the terrible effects in the world come because we have forgotten their cause. So, as this passage explains, the Holy Spirit does not judge effects. He does not look to the effects, He does not pay any attention to them. He does not even see them. The Holy Spirit is not involved with anything in the world. He looks at the cause, which is in our minds, and says: "This is silly." And as we can identify with His interpretation of the cause, we too will look on everything in the world and not take it seriously. That allows us to be true instruments of love and compassion to others in the world, because our ego is not involved. The Love of God is now involved. At that point I am not choosing what the loving or the healing response is. The choice is made through me.

**(4:4) So is he healed, and in his healing is his pupil healed with him.**

"He" refers to the teacher of God, who has become aware of even the faintest hint of irritation, as well as anger, rage, pity, fear, etc. As the Course explains, it takes two to make a sickness, but only one to heal (T-28.III.2). It takes two to make a sickness because the two must agree that they are separate. It takes only one to heal, because if I do not agree that you and I are separate, then we are not separate. Similarly, it takes two to wage a war. If one of the two parties does not fight then there is no war. Sickness is also a war, a war made by the ego against God. If we join in that—you who believe you are sick, and I who feel responsible for or react to it—then the sickness becomes real. The battlefield becomes real. If one of us changes our mind—that is what healing is—then there is no battlefield and no sickness. The Course does not define sickness by the physical symptoms. Sickness is defined by the thought in the mind of being separate.

This is a microcosmic expression of the ultimate healing of the Holy Spirit. The separation thought is that the ego and God are now separate. The Son of God is now separate from his Father. But the presence of the Holy Spirit in the mind of the Son is witness to the fact that the Son is not separate from the Father. If the Holy Spirit is the memory of God's Love that is held within the mind, then the Son's mind is not separate from that memory, and therefore is not separate from God's Love.

That is why the Course says that the separation was healed in the instant that it seemed to occur (T-26.V.3-5; T-28.III.5:2-4). The presence of love in the Son's mind means that he is not separate from love. He is still free to choose to believe that he is separate and sick. But the reality is, he is already healed. And everything that has happened since then—the separation thought, the evolution of the ego thought system, and the making of the world—has become a device to hide or obscure the healing that has already occurred.

Every time we choose to be healed and not make the error real, we are reflecting and becoming a manifestation of the healing principle of the Holy Spirit within our minds. That is how healing works. So if I change my mind about you, then I do not make your magic thought real. I do not get angry at you, attack you, or feel sorry for you. I recognize that our minds are truly joined in God's Love. I know not only am I healed, but you are healed as well, although you may not yet choose to accept it.

**(4:5) The sole responsibility of God's teacher is to accept the Atonement for himself.**

That is a wonderful way of summarizing what the whole Course is about. Our responsibility is not to heal anyone else. It is not to feed the hungry, or clothe the naked, or visit those in prison, or heal the sick, or raise the dead, or bring about world peace, or save the whales, trees, or the planet. It is none of those things. Our only responsibility is to accept the Holy Spirit's truth within ourselves. That is the acceptance of the Atonement. Nothing else. That is the content.

**(4:6) Atonement means correction, or the undoing of errors.**

That is a very clear definition of Atonement. It is the undoing or the correcting. It is not anything positive. It is simply the undoing or the denial of the ego's denial of truth.

**(4:7) When this has been accomplished, the teacher of God becomes a miracle worker by definition.**

When the errors within my mind have been healed, I no longer believe in the ego thought system. And because the definition of the miracle worker is one who accepts the Atonement for himself, if I accept the Atonement for myself, then I am a miracle worker. That syllogism is an example of the Course's logic.

**(4:8) His sins have been forgiven him, and he no longer condemns himself.**

I have accepted the forgiveness of my sins that has always been there, waiting for me. It is not something that happens as a result of what I am doing. The forgiveness of my sins is always there and I simply undo the blocks to my acceptance or awareness of it. So I no longer am judging myself as having done something sinful. And if I do not judge or condemn myself, then I also cannot condemn anyone else, as the next line says:

**(4:9-10) How can he then condemn anyone? And who is there whom his forgiveness can fail to heal?**

The healing has nothing to do with anything external. Once I have accepted the forgiveness of the Holy Spirit within my mind, only love and light are within it. And since all our minds are joined, that love and light extend to all minds. No one can not be affected by the love within me.

As I mentioned earlier, Jesus tells us in the Course that we arose with him (C-6.5:5). When he awakened from the dream of death, everyone was with him because minds are joined. So just as he became the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, we then can become his manifestation simply by exemplifying his life and his love in us—and that is healing. It has nothing to do with what is perceived outside.

There is always the danger that, when we are in the presence of someone who has become a manifestation of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, we will feel good for the wrong reasons. It can become a magical thing where I perceive that you have a holiness I do not have, but that if I sit in your presence, I will receive that holiness from you, which will magically cover all my sins. Real healing in the presence of a holy person comes when I accept that the love that I am feeling in this person is also within me. And then I know that my sins are forgiven. That is real healing and real joy. So the holy person cannot look within my mind and remove the barriers to love's presence for me. To use the example we have been discussing, let's say I am sick in the hospital and you come to see me. You have no ego and so you do not make my sickness real. You have accepted your holiness. But I can only experience that healing when I accept, not that you have done something for me, but that the light within both our minds has illuminated the love within my mind and has dispersed all the darkness. At that point, my joy is real and I have accepted that healing.

**Part XXIII
The Correction of Error (T-9.III)**

Let us turn to the text now and look at the section, "The Correction of Error" (T-9.III), which basically addresses the same issue we have been looking at in the manual.

**(1:1) The alertness of the ego to the errors of other egos is not the kind of vigilance the Holy Spirit would have you maintain.**

Obviously this is not what we usually believe. Let me comment about this kind of vigilance. My basic fear is that I am the one who has made the error, I am the one who is wrong. My ego tells me that I am the sinner because I separated from God. The ego then tells me that that thought of responsibility is overwhelming, and if I really get in touch with it then I am getting in touch with the horror of my guilt and my terror of God's punishment. So therefore I want to deny that I am responsible. And I ensure that I never get in touch with that part of my mind that is responsible for the separation by projecting it out and saying somebody else is responsible. My ego then must always be very vigilant to seize upon somebody else's errors, so I can say: "Ah, here is the guilty culprit."

Basically this passage is talking about how hyper-vigilant we all are to find errors or mistakes in others, to find where others are wrong. And the moment that we find someone who has done something wrong, we seize upon it and go running back to the Holy Spirit in our minds and say: "You see, I told you I am innocent. Here is the guilty one."

It is helpful to be vigilant with our own minds to recognize how vigilant we are about finding others' errors, about finding faults in others. And it is very easy to find fault. In a world of billions of people, we usually do not have to go very far from where we are living or working to find people who are wrong. Everybody makes mistakes. So we want to be aware of the part of our minds that wants others to make mistakes, so we can grab their sin and hold it up to the Holy Spirit and say: "You see, I am not sinful; this person is."

This is not to say that people do not make mistakes. Obviously, everybody makes mistakes. But we have to be vigilant for the part of us that wants people to make mistakes and is watchful to find their mistakes, so we can attack them. Not that we find a mistake, recognize it as a call for love, and then allow the love to extend through us. Rather we want to find a mistake, grab it, and call it a sin. That is what this is talking about.

**(1:2-3) Egos are critical in terms of the kind of "sense" they stand for. They understand this kind of sense, because it is sensible to them.**

This is one of those awful puns that you find throughout the whole book. Then Jesus makes it worse.

**(1:4) To the Holy Spirit it makes no sense at all.**

The ego's sense, in terms of what it perceives, is to be extremely sensitive to others' mistakes or sins. It makes good sense to the ego that there should be mistakes or sins all around me, except within myself. To the Holy Spirit, however, "it makes no sense at all" because the Holy Spirit does not see sins. He sees mistakes, but to Him all mistakes are the same mistake. And His view is simply that each mistake is a call for love and for His correction. So the ego senses mistakes all around it. And to the ego it makes good sense because the whole thought system of the ego is a mistake—except that it tries to shift responsibility for the mistake onto somebody else.

**(2:1) To the ego it is kind and right and good to point out errors and "correct" them.**

Of course, the ego attempts to do this in the name of love, honesty, and being helpful. But in reality, it is only trying to say: "I am right and you are wrong." And, of course, we always like to find allies who will agree with us. So I not only go running back to the Holy Spirit and say: "Look what this person did. It's so stupid," but I say: "There are a hundred or a thousand or a million people who agree with me." Remember, the ego always measures things in terms of quantity.

**(2:2) This makes perfect sense to the ego, which is unaware of what errors are and what correction is.**

The ego does not see errors; it sees sins. And sins are not to be corrected or forgiven or undone, but to be punished.

**(2:3) Errors are of the ego, and correction of errors lies in the relinquishment of the ego.**

The ego is an error, a basic mistake. The true way of correcting errors is to let go of the ego and not to establish it as real. In other words, when we correct errors, our egos are doing it. The ego establishes error as real and sinful and then says: "This is how we correct the problem. We punish the evil people."

**(2:4) When you correct a brother, you are telling him he is wrong.**

This implies that we are correcting a brother on our own.

**(2:5-7) He may be making no sense at the time, and it is certain that, if he is speaking from the ego, he will not be making sense. But your task is still to tell him he is right. You do not tell him this verbally, if he is speaking foolishly.**

If you say that two and two equals five, I do not say: yes, two and two equals five. This is talking about the content, not the form. Jesus is not saying that people do not make mistakes. And he is not saying that I should tell you that you are right when you make a mistake. We might do that on occasion, but Jesus is not saying that I should necessarily agree with you on the level of form. So he says, "You do not tell him this verbally, if he is speaking foolishly."

**(2:8) He needs correction at another level, because his error is at another level.**

The other level Jesus is talking about is the level of content, not form. The level at which you are mistaken is the same level at which we are all mistaken: the level of believing in the ego rather than the Holy Spirit, believing that the separation from God is real.

**(2:9-10) He is still right, because he is a Son of God. His ego is always wrong, no matter what it says or does.**

We want to correct the error on the content level. I want to tell you that you are right because you are a Son of God. The ego says that you are wrong because you have betrayed the fact that you are a Son of God and you are now a son of the ego. That is the mistake that we want to heal. As we were discussing earlier, the basic error we all share is the belief that separation is real. And so I correct the error on the level of content by joining with you. And in that joining, in that love, in that defenselessness, I teach you that you are right.

You made a mistake in choosing the ego's voice, but you are right because God's Love is present within you. And so the love with which I correct your error, on the level of form, is saying to you that the love within me is extending through my mind. And since our minds are joined, the love is also within you. And so I become a reminder of the truth, the rightness, and the love that is within you as well.

And this has absolutely nothing to do with the form. So I tell you: "No, two and two is not five; two and two is four." And I can say that without hatred or condemnation, and I can do it with love. I can even do it firmly. The words are not important. The lack of attack is what is important.

This also means that if I say to you: "No, two and two is four," and you say: "No, two and two is five," I do not feel that I have to correct you again. I do not have to hit you over the head to make you change your mind. If I say: "No, two and two is four," and you insist that two and two is five, then for you two and two is five. What difference does it make? It has no effect on the Sonship or the Kingdom. If it becomes important for me to convince you that two and two is four, then, as we have seen, that is my problem. I believe the form is what matters.

**(3:1) If you point out the errors of your brother's ego you must be seeing through yours, because the Holy Spirit does not perceive his errors.**

Again, this is not talking about form. It is referring to the part of me that wants to point out your errors, that wants to make you wrong so I can be right. Very often we find ourselves in situations, whether at work or with family or friends, in which it seems very important to us that what we say be accepted, because we know how something ought to be done. Regardless of what it is, we think we know better. But then I become insistent that you do what I say, and I become annoyed if you do not. So then I talk about you behind your back, or I plot against you. I do all that I can to make certain that the situation is handled correctly. And this is all on the level of form, which of course makes me as insane as everybody else in the situation. And I may be right according to the world's rules, but I am wrong if I care about it.

If I have an investment in something being done right or perfectly, then I am as insane and as wrong as the one who I feel is wrong, because I am judging according to form. And I have forgotten what is truly important. What is truly important is not the task to be done: not the house to be built, nor the recipe to be followed, nor the plans for traveling, or whatever I believe I am right about. That is not what is important; it has no effect on eternity.

What is important is that I not see separation as real. And that means that I always have to pay attention to the content and not to the form, even though I may be correct on the level of form. Again, this does not mean that I do not say what I believe is correct, but I say it without an investment in the outcome, without an investment in other people agreeing with me. I simply say what I feel, consistent with the role I am in, but without any investment in being right and proving you wrong. So, in contrast, by pointing out the errors of my brother's ego, my interest is not simply in having the project completed properly, but rather it is in proving that I am right and you are wrong. Ultimately, I really want to prove that I am right and God is wrong. I am just using the specific situation as a means to prove it. And that is why I am wrong.

So I must then be seeing your errors through my own because the Holy Spirit does not perceive your errors. He sees mistakes or errors as simply a fragile veil that is an attempt to hide the light, but He still sees the light. As we said earlier, the Holy Spirit does not look to or judge the effects. He looks to the cause and that is what He judges. And the cause is the thought of being separate, which He says is simply silly.

Thus I want to ally myself with that gentle judgment and not try to prove that I am right and you are wrong. It is very easy to find people's mistakes. That is not difficult. It is more difficult to realize that everyone is right as a Son of God and that the errors and the mistakes are inconsequential. That can only happen if I recognize what is truly important, and do not throw it away. If I get upset by something in the world and insist that I am right and that becomes important to me, it is because I do not value the truth. The truth is that everyone is wrong in this world. But I do not value that, and instead I value the thought that some people are right and I am among them. What is true is the fact that the Holy Spirit and the ego see things entirely differently. The ego sees errors and the Holy Spirit does not.

**(3:2) This *must* be true, since there is no communication between the ego and the Holy Spirit.**

They are mutually exclusive states, mutually exclusive thoughts.

**(3:3) The ego makes no sense, and the Holy Spirit does not attempt to understand anything that arises from it.**

The ego is always trying to understand what arises from itself. As the Course says later: "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). We all think that. We all feel that it is important to understand what goes on. The only thing that is important to understand is that nothing goes on and therefore there is nothing that has to be understood.

There is a wonderful line a few pages later that is Jesus' not-so-subtle swipe at psychotherapists. One of the preoccupations of psychotherapists has been to try to explain what happens in psychotherapy. And Jesus says, "Such evident inconsistencies [reducing the power of the mind, yet attempting to build ego strength] account for why no one has really explained what happens in psychotherapy. Nothing really does" (T-9.V.5:2-3).

The same thing can be said about the world: nothing happens in the world. All we have to understand is that nothing here is understandable because nothing is here. The ego has made up a very complicated and intricate world. And we spend eons of time trying to explain and understand something that does not exist in the first place. So the Holy Spirit does not attempt to understand anything that arises from the ego.

**(3:4) Since He does not understand it, He does not judge it, knowing that nothing the ego makes means anything.**

That is what the Course means when it says that the Holy Spirit does not judge effects. He judges the cause. And the cause is the original thought of separation. And His judgment is that this thought is simply silly—not evil or sinful or serious—but silly.

**(4:1) When you react at all to errors, you are not listening to the Holy Spirit.**

This does not mean that on the level of the world we do not perceive errors or mistakes. Two and two in the world is not five; it is four. This statement is referring to my reaction of anger at your magically believing and insisting that salvation for you consists in the fact that two and two equals five. When I react to you and make your error real, it obviously means that I am not listening to the Holy Spirit. In fact, I am reacting to you because I do not want to listen to the Holy Spirit. So I use the ego's magic to obscure the Holy Spirit's Voice, because that is what I am afraid of.

**(4:2) He** [the Holy Spirit] **has merely disregarded them** [the errors]**, and if you attend to them you are not hearing Him.**

I am paying attention to what is out there. So if you are sick, I may on one level understand why you are sick, in terms of the world's laws of health and sickness. But that is not really why you are sick, so I am understanding nothing. I only have to understand that you have chosen sickness because you are afraid of God's Love—that is all. If I am making your sickness real to me, I have chosen to see you as sick because I am afraid of God's Love. That is all I have to understand. I do not have to understand in the world's terms why you got sick, or the likely progression of the illness, or what the remedy will be.

If I am listening to the Holy Spirit, my attention will be withdrawn from your sick body or from whatever the external problem is. And I will go back to where the problem really is, in my mind, where the Holy Spirit also is. And I will ask for the Holy Spirit's help if I find myself getting caught in the seeming reality of your problem.

**(4:3-4) If you do not hear Him** [the Holy Spirit]**, you are listening to your ego** [it has to be one or the other] **and making as little sense as the brother whose errors you perceive. This cannot be correction.**

Obviously, I now am as wrong as I am accusing you of being. It always comes back to the same basic point—every problem is simply my choice to disregard the Holy Spirit and listen to the ego. And the solution to that problem is not outside me. The solution is to return my mind to that choice point and make a different choice.

**(4:5-6) Yet it is more than merely a lack of correction for him. It is the giving up of correction in yourself.**

Not only am I no longer able to correct your errors by giving you the message that God is only Love, but I am also attacking myself and depriving myself of that same correction. What I do for you is what I do for myself.

**Part XXIV
The Correction of Error (T-9.III) (conclusion)**

**(5:1-2) When a brother behaves insanely, you can heal him only by perceiving the sanity in him. If you perceive his errors and accept them, you are accepting yours.**

I perceive the sanity in you through perceiving the sanity in myself. I must first go back within my mind and say to the Holy Spirit: "I must be perceiving falsely because I am seeing a problem as outside and I am reacting to it." It is not just that I see your errors, but I accept them as real. Jesus is not asking that I deny what your body or my body is doing; the problem arises from my making it real by my reaction to it. That is the issue.

If I make your errors real, I must have first looked within myself and made my errors real; so it is my problem. If I really want to be of help to you with your problem—whatever form it takes—I must first get myself out of the way. Otherwise it is my ego trying to help your ego, which may appear to work very well sometimes in the world; but it will not bring peace or love or healing. And it will not truly solve the problem. It may solve the problem temporarily on the level of form, but the same problem will come up in another form.

**(5:3) If you want to give yours over to the Holy Spirit, you must do this with his.**

I may say that I want to be forgiven and to experience God's Love, but I will not do so as long as I project my sin onto you and attack you for it.

**(5:4) Unless this becomes the one way in which you handle all errors, you cannot understand how all errors are undone.**

All errors are undone by bringing them to the Holy Spirit—by recognizing that they had no effect, and that they have no meaning or power.

**(5:5) How is this different from telling you that what you teach you learn?**

It is exactly the same thing.

**(5:6) Your brother is as right as you are, and if you think he is wrong you are condemning yourself.**

Again, this is not about form; it is about content. You are as right as I am, because we are both children of the same God, and we both share in the same solution. Whatever I do to you or think of you reflects what I think of myself.

**(6:1-2) You cannot correct yourself. Is it possible, then, for you to correct another?**

I cannot correct myself. Only the Holy Spirit can. So if I cannot do that for myself, what makes me believe I can do it for you? Of course, it is my ego that wants me to believe that I can correct you, because that proves that we are separate—you are wrong and I am right.

**(6:3) Yet you can see him truly, because it is possible for you to see yourself truly.**

And that, of course, is possible only by accepting the Holy Spirit as my Teacher and my Friend, and listening to what He says.

**(6:4) It is not up to you to change your brother, but merely to accept him as he is.**

I do not attack you for making a mistake. And I do not have the need to insist that, since you made the mistake, you have to fix it. I simply see you as my brother in Christ without any difference. At that point, the Love of the Holy Spirit will work through me. Whatever I say or do—and it may take the form of correcting the problem or fixing a situation—would then be loving. It would not be done in a spirit of attack or separation.

**(6:5) His errors do not come from the truth that is in him, and only this truth is yours.**

His errors come because he has made the same wrong choice that I have made. He chose to listen to the ego. If I attack you for choosing the ego, obviously I am making that same mistake real for myself.

**(6:6) His errors cannot change this, and can have no effect at all on the truth in you.**

His errors cannot change truth. The ego thought system began with the fundamental teaching that the Son of God's error affected truth and changed it. That is why the Course talks about "changeless reality," as a lovely section near the end of the text is called (T-30.VIII). Another section in the text is called "The Changeless Dwelling Place" (T-29.V). And in the manual we read earlier that "reality is changeless" (M-18.1:5).

That is the Atonement principle. Reality cannot be changed by all my silly thoughts; my dreams have had no effect. If I have a nightmare, it has no effect on the reality that I am sleeping safely in my bed. Similarly, all our silly dreams about attacking God and making up a world and attacking each other have had no effect on reality. But if I become upset by your mistake and I want to prove you wrong and find others to agree with me, then I am saying that reality has been changed. If what you do here is important to me, that can only mean in my mind that you and I are here. What we do here can be important only if we believe that there is a "here." And if we believe there is a "here," then we are saying that there is not a "there"—meaning Heaven—because it is one or the other.

**(6:7-8) To perceive errors in anyone, and to react to them as if they were real, is to make them real to you. You will not escape paying the price for this, not because you are being punished for it, but because you are following the wrong guide and will therefore lose your way.**

The price we pay is the experience of alienation, depression, sadness, anger, anxiety, tension, guilt, etc. Not that God is punishing us for seeing error, but we are punishing ourselves by continuing to separate ourselves from God, Who is our only source of peace, happiness, and love.

**(7:1) Your brother's errors are not of him, any more than yours are of you.**

Errors come from a part of my mind that is not real. They do not come from who I really am, any more than yours do.

**(7:2-3) Accept his errors as real, and you have attacked yourself. If you would find your way and keep it, see only truth beside you for you walk together.**

If I see error as real and get upset about it, I have made a choice to leave the path because I am afraid of where it is leading. My ego has told me that if I stay on this path I will go home and find God there, and He is going to punish me. So if I believe that, I will want to get off the path. And what enables me to get off the path is to become angry, or to insist that I am right and to find errors and mistakes in others.

**(7:4-7) The Holy Spirit in you forgives all things in you and in your brother. His errors are forgiven with yours. Atonement is no more separate than love. Atonement cannot be separate because it comes from love.**

There are no exceptions. I must see Christ in everyone, and I must see all the errors that I am perceiving and making real as being nothing more than a flimsy veil with which I would seek to hide or cloak the truth. I cannot make any exceptions in how I perceive anyone.

**(7:8-9) Any attempt you make to correct a brother means that you believe correction by you is possible, and this can only be the arrogance of the ego. Correction is of God, Who does not know of arrogance.**

This reflects the fundamental arrogance of the ego, that it knows best, that it can judge, and that, in fact, it is God.

**(8:1-2) The Holy Spirit forgives everything because God created everything. Do not undertake His function, or you will forget yours.**

There are no exceptions; the Holy Spirit forgives everything. His function is to forgive and to be the source of the love that is in our minds. His function is to be the correction for all errors. That is the Atonement principle, the undoing or the correction of the ego thought system. Our function is simply to let His function be all that is present in us.

**(8:3) Accept only the function of healing in time, because that is what time is for.**

Healing is basically the undoing of the thought of sickness, the correction of the error.

**(8:4-5) God gave you the function to create in eternity. You do not need to learn that, but you do need to learn to want it.**

In other words, I must want to get back home. The workbook lesson "I want the peace of God" (W-pI.185) begins with the words: "To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything" (W-pI.185.1-2). We do not mean them because we still believe the peace of God will destroy us. Helen's poem "Amen" ends with the line: "God does not crucify. He merely is" (*The Gifts of God*, p. 91).

Love does not crucify; love does not punish. Love simply is what it is. It does not know of punishment or sin. We do not need to learn of love and creating—our function in Heaven—but we do need to learn to want it.

**(8:6) For that all learning was made.**

The purpose of the Course is to teach us what we really want and to show us that what the ego says is valuable in this world is not valuable. What the ego tells us will bring us pleasure and avoid pain in this world will not work. So the Course teaches us, step by step, very slowly and gently, to recognize all the gifts the ego offers us, and to say: "These are not the gifts that I want." We learn to go beyond the form that each gift is packaged in to what the gift really is, recognizing that the ego dresses up its gift—really death, pain, attack, and murder—in a pretty package.

**(8:7) This is the Holy Spirit's use of an ability that you do not need, but that you made.**

Learning is an ability that we made. It is not necessary in Heaven, because there is no learning in Heaven. But we did have to learn the ego's thought system; and we all have learned it very, very well. Once we have used the mind as a learning device to attack, the Holy Spirit then can use that same ability of the mind to teach us something else. And when we have finally and fully learned His lessons, all learning disappears. It is not needed anymore.

**(8:8) Give it to Him!**

We should let the Holy Spirit be our Teacher, not the ego. As long as we are in this world, we have to learn. And so the world is a classroom. Our only choice then is with regard to which teacher will teach us.

**(8:9-10) You do not understand how to use it. He will teach you how to see yourself without condemnation, by learning how to look on everything without it.**

Obviously we do not know how to use our ability to learn, because what we have learned by ourselves is not very happy or loving. We have taught ourselves to condemn everything and everyone. We see everything as separate, so that we do not have to experience our condemnation of ourselves. Instead, our attention has been riveted on the condemnation of everyone around us. So that is where the lesson of forgiveness has to begin. We learn not to condemn others by recognizing that when we do, we are really secretly condemning ourselves.

Thus the purpose of the Course is to have us ask ourselves if this is really what we want to do. By criticizing you and finding fault in you, I am really attacking myself. Is that really what I want to do? The problem is that I have not been aware that that is what I am doing. As it becomes increasingly clear to me what I am doing, the choice not to condemn and attack others becomes increasingly easy to make.

**(8:11) Condemnation will then not be real to you, and all your errors will be forgiven.**

I will no longer see condemnation as real, but simply as a silly mistake. And in doing that, ultimately I am saying that my condemnation of God and of Christ is also silly. At that point I recognize that nothing in me has to be forgiven because nothing is in me except God's Love. And that recognition comes through the process of reversing my ego need to find fault in everyone else, to correct and attack them.

**Part XXV
The Function of the Teacher of God (M-5.III)**

Let us turn back now to the manual. We will start with the section called "The Function of the Teacher of God", which is the third subsection of "How Is Healing Accomplished?" (M-5). We will read only the second paragraph. This is probably the clearest statement of what we have been talking about. We will address it specifically in terms of the topic of healing in the context of being a teacher of God.

As we have seen repeatedly, a teacher of God does not do anything. If I do anything, if I believe there is a problem that has to be resolved, a sickness that has to be healed, then I become a part of the problem. All I must do is have my mind be healed and then trust that the Love of God will work through me. And it will be that Love that gives instructions to this puppet—my body. It is as if I now let the Holy Spirit be the puppeteer and let Him pull the strings of my body, so that the message given to my body is only one of love. Then whatever my body does or says or thinks will come from love.

So the focus is not on what my body does. The focus is merely on shifting my mind from choosing the ego as my puppeteer to choosing the Holy Spirit. The next reading, "How Many Teachers of God Are Needed to Save the World?" (M-12), addresses this. So when I am in the presence of someone in pain, my only function is to allow my mind to be healed so that the message that I will be giving is that the ego is wrong and the Holy Spirit is right, and that the Holy Spirit's presence of Love is alive and well. In essence, I will be telling the other person: you will remember that love in yourself because you will see it and experience it in me. That is my only purpose.

**(M-5.III.2:1) To them God's teachers come, to represent another choice which they had forgotten.**

The "them" would be those who believe that they are sick; and this refers not just to physical sickness. Anyone having a concern or problem is sick. Any belief that the ego is real is sickness. We have all forgotten the choice. We believe the choice for the ego that we originally made is irrevocable, and that there is no hope and no way out. This means we have forgotten there is another choice, another presence, another teacher in our minds. So, as one of God's teachers, we want to be the reminder that there really is another presence we can choose.

**(2:2) The simple presence of a teacher of God is a reminder.**

I do not have to say or do anything. I just have to be there.

**(2:3) His thoughts ask for the right to question what the patient has accepted as true.**

In other words, you have accepted as true that the ego's thought system is the only thought system. The peace and the love that I have chosen within myself that I am experiencing, and that you now are experiencing within me, is basically saying to you, "Maybe there is something else here. Maybe there is another way to look at this." In effect, it is an invitation to you to open up your mind to the possibility that there is another way of perceiving yourself and the situation.

**(2:4-6) As God's messengers, His teachers are the symbols of salvation. They ask the patient for forgiveness for God's Son in his own Name. They stand for the Alternative.**

Again, this has nothing to do with what I say or do. But the love that is coming through me is asking you to forgive yourself by not taking your ego thought system as seriously as you have, and by not making the error real. So I simply represent the presence of the Holy Spirit or Jesus.

**(2:7) With God's Word in their minds they come in benediction, not to heal the sick but to remind them of the remedy God has already given them.**

God's Word is the Atonement principle. And what I bring is my acceptance of what the Holy Spirit is saying: namely, that the separation from God has never happened, that only love is true, only love is real, and nothing else has affected it. That is extremely important. My job is not to heal you of your sickness, whatever its form, not to take away the problem or make it go away, not to make everything nice. That is not my function. My function is simply to be the reminder that there is a solution to your problem that is present within your mind. I do not have to solve the problem for you because the Love of God within your mind will do it. And if I try to do it for you—to take away your pain—I am putting myself in the Holy Spirit's place, usurping His function. And I am really teaching the exact opposite of what you want to learn. At that point I am teaching you that there is a substitute for God: me!

Let me comment a little further on this, because it is really a central idea. The temptation always is to try to make the situation better—always. If we could just keep this thought in mind: all I need to do is experience the remedy within myself, and then know and trust that that remedy is also within your mind. The Love of God is the remedy that will solve the problem. I do not have to solve it. If I try to solve it, I am really teaching the exact opposite. I am teaching that there is a substitute for God and that I will now represent God for you. I will magically heal your problem and take away the pain. I cannot take away the pain, Jesus cannot take away the pain, because you are the one who put the pain there. What Jesus does is simply shine his love in your mind and through that shining say, "My brother or my sister, choose again." That is all his love does. His love does not take away the pain unless and until we bring the pain to him. Then it is taken away.

The source of pain is the guilt and fear that I believe I have locked away in my mind. Jesus does not break through my defenses and shine the darkness away. He convinces me gently and lovingly that I will be happier if I open up my fist—if I let go of my resistance, if I let go of the need for a defense. His love is the reminder that I can let go, and his gentleness allows me over a period of time to do that. His love and his light shine away what was never there. But Jesus does not do this for me. I am the one who has to unlock or unclench my fist. I am the one who has to take the key: forgiveness, the shift in mind that opens up the locked vault. I do that holding his hand, which of course is the only way I can do it. Jesus cannot do it for me. I must do it. Pain and suffering are my responsibility because I chose them, but Jesus represents the other answer. He represents the alternative that says, "Don't be afraid. Open up your mind and let my love heal what is there because nothing is there." Basically, Jesus heals what does not exist.

It is essential in all this that I remember my purpose. My purpose is not to make the problems disappear. My purpose is to accept that my problems have disappeared because I have chosen God's Love instead of the ego's hate. And that is all I do. At that point, the forgiveness and the love in my mind are the beacon of light that reminds you that the same choice is open to you. I do not make the choice for you. I do not try to pressure you into making the choice. I simply stand as the reminder that you, too, can choose as I have.

**(2:8-9) It is not their hands that heal. It is not their voice that speaks the Word of God.**

These are just two of the thousands of different ways that people attempt to heal. People who lay on hands believe they have a special touch that heals, as if they have something others do not have, as if the power of God works through their bodies. It can't work through a body; it works through a mind. People may have "healing hands," in the sense that blasts of heat come from them—there is no question about that. But blasts of heat are simply different forms of physical energy, like electromagnetism, which can get very hot.

Spirit is not energy in the sense in which we think of energy. When spirit is equated with energy, we are making the body real. However, if you believe you can heal through your hands, and if I am sick and believe and have faith that you can heal me through your hands—"faith healing"—then you and your hands become a symbol through which the love in my mind will flow. But your hands do not heal. Only the Love of God heals.

This is essential to understand. If I believe I can heal only through my hands, I am limiting the Love of God. What happens if I am in an accident and lose my hands? If love is love and love heals, it must heal all of the time, because there is no time or place where love is not. Love is not in the body. However, if I can experience God's Love only through the limitation of my body—which is usually the case for us—then the body will appear as if it is doing the healing. In reality, the body is just a vehicle for seemingly joining on the physical level, but the real joining is on the level of the mind.

Likewise, believing that saying certain prayers will heal is the same attempt to limit God. Or if I believe healing comes only through a period of fasting—as the Bible sometimes describes—or that healing comes through surgery or other traditional or non-traditional medical means, I am saying that healing is of the body: the body heals and the body is healed. I am then substituting form for content. But it is the content that heals. Remember: healing does not do anything—it simply undoes what never was. We do that by bringing our ego thoughts to the Love of God in our minds. That is what healing is.

**(2:10) They** [the teachers of God] **merely give what has been given them.**

And, of course, the giving is not on the level of behavior. Giving is letting the Love of God that has been given me extend through me. It is very easy, very simple. Practicing psychotherapy, for example, then becomes very simple. I do not do anything except pay attention to the ego's doing in me, which I bring to the Holy Spirit. That is all I do. And it is the same for anything I do, any occupation or profession.

**(2:11-12) Very gently they call to their brothers to turn away from death: "Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. Would you choose sickness in place of this?"**

When A Course in Miracles says I call to my brothers, it does not mean verbally. The very presence of love in my mind is the call to you, because minds are joined. It is a way of saying, "choose again," as this line says. Most of the time we would not say words like these, although at times we might. The words are not important; but this is the thought. I do not even have to think this thought in my mind. I only have to be absolutely peaceful and feel the Love of God or the love of Jesus coming through me, from within me. That love then represents these words that you and I both have another choice.

Remember: The whole problem arose, going back to the original instant, when the ego said, "Choose me instead of the Holy Spirit. Don't listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you. The separation really has happened." At that point I forgot that I had a choice because I chose the ego and I locked the Holy Spirit away in a box. And I have never thought about my choice again. Everything that has happened since has come from the belief that I chose once and for all, and that is it! Now I believe I have all these choices in the world, but they are really all expressions of the one choice that I have already made, which I swore to my ego I would never reconsider. I have turned God into a liar and the ego into truth. So I have to realize that I do indeed have a choice. And my choice is not between which doctor I should call or which form of help I should get. The choice is between listening to my ego and listening to the Holy Spirit. I do have a choice. And so as teachers of God we represent that choice: the choice for life instead of the choice for death.

This does not mean, however, that we should not go to a doctor when we are sick. We just do not want to confuse form with content, or magic with the miracle. Let me read something relevant to this from early in the text: "All material means that you accept as remedies for bodily ills are restatements of magic principles" (T-2.IV.4:1). This is referring to interventions such as taking medicine, going to a doctor, using what is considered New Age medicine like acupuncture, or dieting, taking vitamins, exercising, standing on your head, or whatever.

Jesus continues: "This is the first step in believing that the body makes its own illness. It is a second misstep to attempt to heal it through non-creative agents" (T-2.IV.4:2-3). The first mistake is believing that my body is sick and that my body, not my mind, made the sickness. Once I accept that, the second step automatically follows: if my body is sick then I must do something on the level of the body, on the physical level, to take care of the illness. This passage is saying it is a mistake to do that.

But then Jesus says, "It does not follow, however, that the use of such agents for corrective purposes is evil. Sometimes the illness has a sufficiently strong hold over the mind to render a person temporarily inaccessible to the Atonement" (T-2.IV.4:4-5). I think Jesus is being kind here—this is true for us most of the time. The ego has told us that if we accept the real healing—the acceptance of the Atonement—we will be destroyed. Accepting the Holy Spirit's Love and presence is the real healing. But I almost always am too afraid of that because the ego has told me that if I get too close to the Holy Spirit I will not be healed, I will be destroyed. A line in the workbook says, "You think you are destroyed, but you are saved" (W-pI.93.4:4).

But as long as that fear is within me—and I made up the sickness in the first place to keep the real source of the fear hidden from me—to be told it is all in my mind and I only have to change my mind will be very threatening. My ego tells me that if I go back into my mind, I will get back in touch with the part of my mind that chose to attack God, and God, Who is also there in my mind, will destroy me for that attack. That is my fear. So Jesus says, "In this case [as long as that fear is there], it may be wise to utilize a compromise approach to mind and body, in which something from the outside is temporarily given healing belief. This is because the last thing that can help the non-right-minded, or the sick, is an increase in fear" (T-2.IV.4:6-7).

So suppose I am sick and I know what the Course teaches—that all sickness is a form of unforgiveness. But I am not ready yet to forgive you truly, to change my mind about you. I know ultimately that is what I must do, but in the meantime I am still in a lot of pain. The most loving thing I can do for myself at that point then is to see a magician, whether it is a doctor, an acupuncturist, a healer, etc., who can alleviate my pain. Whatever I believe will help me is what will help me. Thus going to a doctor is a form of magic that will take away my pain. It will not take away my guilt or unforgiveness, but it will at least take away my physical pain. And going to the doctor can also be an expression of joining. Basically I am saying to the doctor, "The only help that I can accept from God, at this point, is through you." In turn, the doctor is saying to me, "The only help that I can give you from God, at this point, is through my magic." So we are both joining, sharing a common purpose of helping and being helped. And that is healing. But because I am too afraid of the healing, I believe that what helps me is the form of magic that the doctor is giving me.

**Part XXVI
How Many Teachers of God Are Needed to Save the World? (M-12)**

Let us turn now to the section in the manual that answers the question, "How Many Teachers of God Are Needed to Save the World?" (M-12). We are not going to address that question here, but we will skip to the fourth paragraph, where the section begins to speak of how the teacher of God looks at the body. Basically we will contrast the ego's use of the body—which is always to attack, to keep separate, and to reinforce the ego's thought system—with the Holy Spirit's use of the body as a classroom. The body in and of itself has no purpose or meaning, but it can serve the holy purpose the Holy Spirit gives to it—to be a classroom in which we learn our lessons of forgiveness so that the body can then become an instrument or puppet through which the Voice of Love speaks.

**(4:1) Yet what makes God's teachers is their recognition of the proper purpose of the body.**

This is really speaking about what establishes one as an advanced teacher of God.

**(4:2) As they advance in their profession, they become more and more certain that the body's function is but to let God's Voice speak through it to human ears.**

Thus I want to get my ego and my investment in the body out of the way, so that God's Love will speak through my body.

**(4:3) And these ears will carry to the mind of the hearer messages that are not of this world, and the mind will understand because of their Source.**

The messages will be expressed in the forms of the world, for otherwise they could not be understood here. But their Source is not of this world. They come from love rather than fear.

**(4:4-5) From this understanding will come the recognition, in this new teacher of God, of what the body's purpose really is; the only use there really is for it. This lesson is enough to let the thought of unity come in, and what is one is recognized as one.**

The thought of unity would be reflected in the recognition that everything in the world is seen as serving the same purpose. This is not to deny that this is a world of multiplicity, as the Hindus say, or that everyone is different and separate within the world of illusion, the world of form. But we are all joined in sharing a common purpose. That is the thought of unity. So although the bodies of the world would seem to witness to separation and separate interests, when given over to the Holy Spirit they serve as a classroom in which we learn that we are all really the same because we all share the same need to return home.

**(4:6) The teachers of God appear to share the illusion of separation, but because of what they use the body for, they do not believe in the illusion despite appearances.**

A teacher of God uses all the forms of the world, all the illusions of separation, but for a different purpose. Let me read something that I quoted earlier from Lesson 155 in the workbook:

"There is a way of living in the world that is not here, although it seems to be. You do not change appearance, though you smile more frequently. Your forehead is serene; your eyes are quiet. And the ones who walk the world as you do recognize their own. Yet those who have not yet perceived the way will recognize you also, and believe that you are like them, as you were before" (W-pI.155.1).

So as a teacher of God I still look like everyone else. The only difference is that I smile more and there is greater peace within me. And so I look like everyone else, do what everyone else does, and share in all the illusions of the world. I do not separate myself out from the illusions of the world. I join with them, operate within them, fulfill all the same roles that everyone else does. The difference is that I realize that they are only appearances, and we are sharing only an illusion. But while joining on the level of the illusion of the form, I give a different content—the content of forgiveness or love.

As we said at the beginning of this workshop, the goal is to be in the world and yet realize we are not of it. An advanced teacher of God feels thoroughly comfortable with the body and does not see it as an enemy or as a source of shame, embarrassment, or pleasure. He sees it simply as an inherently neutral instrument that can serve a holy purpose. The advanced teacher of God also feels thoroughly comfortable within the world and does not feel that it is hostile, evil, threatening, or imprisoning. Rather, the world is seen as a classroom.

Those who feel a discomfort in being in the world and in the body are still somewhat trapped, because they are making the world and the body real. As a teacher of God my goal is to be in this world and to be comfortable in it, but to be comfortable because I recognize that there is nothing in the world that I want or need or have to avoid. So I can walk this world in peace because I know that I am a child of peace, and that the Prince of Peace is walking with me. That is how the advanced teacher is different. But I would look like everyone else unless I am very specifically told that I should do something different. And that is relatively rare. Returning to the manual:

**(5:1-3) The central lesson is always this; that what you use the body for it will become to you. Use it for sin or for attack** [which, of course, is specialness]**, which is the same as sin, and you will see it as sinful. Because it is sinful it is weak, and being weak, it suffers and it dies.**

This is the ego's use of the body. If I listen to the voice of my ego and use the body as a weapon, as a way of stealing from the world, then I am using it for the purposes of sin and attack, and consequently I will see the body as sinful. I must also see myself as sinful, because I am using my body for a sinful purpose. If the body is sinful it must be weak, because it is separated from God—sinfulness is really separation. And if I am separate from God, Who is my only strength, then I must be weak. And if the body is weak, it will suffer and die. Since I believe that my body is weak and sinful, I must believe that my body will suffer and die.

That is the illusion we all labor under. We are using the body to serve the ego's sinful purpose, and so the body becomes identified with that purpose. And, of course, since we identify ourselves with the body, then we also see ourselves as sinful, weak, and capable of suffering and of dying. But this really has nothing to do with the body. It has to do with the purpose we have given to the body.

And now we hear the Holy Spirit's use of the body:

**(5:4) Use it to bring the Word of God to those who have it not, and the body becomes holy.**

When the body is used as an instrument of salvation or forgiveness—that is the "Word of God"—then it becomes holy. Not because the body in and of itself is holy, but its purpose is now holy.

**(5:5) Because it is holy it cannot be sick, nor can it die.**

Remember again that the body does not get sick or die. The mind gives the body the orders. And if the only Voice in my mind giving orders to the body is that of holiness, then the body cannot be sick because sickness is an expression of guilt. If there is no guilt but only the holiness of the Holy Spirit in my mind, then my body cannot become an expression of guilt, which means it cannot be sick.

**(5:6-7) When its usefulness is done it is laid by, and that is all. The mind makes this decision, as it makes all decisions that are responsible for the body's condition.**

We see here again a very clear statement that the body does not do anything; it simply carries out the wishes of the mind. So death means only that the body's usefulness is completed. If I attend a classroom in a university, when I have passed the course, done all the lessons, learned all that the professor can give me, then I have completed the class and I am finished with it. That is what this is. The body is laid by once it has served its purpose as a classroom. That is all that death is.

**(5:8-9) Yet the teacher of God does not make this decision alone. To do that would be to give the body another purpose from the one that keeps it holy.**

The decision is made with the Holy Spirit. If I decide by myself, I am making the decision with my ego all over again. So I really cannot decide by myself, as the text explains (T-30.I.14). I decide with either the ego or the Holy Spirit. So to make the decision alone to lay my body down really means that I do it with my ego instead of with the Holy Spirit. And that, of course, is the original problem—we decided on our own and we separated ourselves from God. We in effect said to God, "I don't need You anymore." If I make the decision with my ego or, in other words, without the Holy Spirit, I am giving the body another purpose: to represent the ego's thought system of separation and attack.

**(5:10-12) God's Voice will tell him when he has fulfilled his role, just as It tells him what his function is. He does not suffer either in going or remaining. Sickness is now impossible to him.**

If my mind is joined in love with the Holy Spirit, I am guided either to stay in the body awhile longer or to leave it. I will feel no pain or suffering either way; it will make absolutely no difference. As I said earlier, it would have made no difference to Jesus on the day he was crucified whether he had been guided just to take a stroll instead. So we just do one thing or the other, and we do not experience any pain, suffering, or pleasure associated with either activity. The real pleasure comes from identifying with God's Will, and the real pain or suffering comes from dissociating myself from God's Will.

Now this does not mean that we can live eternally within the body. But anything less than eternity, in principle, would be possible. Once we can accept the underlying premise that the world is not here at all, and that the mind is not in the body but simply tells the body what to do, all these thoughts become very clear and logically follow from the original premises.

**(6:1) Oneness and sickness cannot coexist.**

This is an interesting choice of words, because sickness here obviously is being associated with the lack of oneness, or separation. This is another way of saying that I cannot listen to two voices simultaneously. If I do not want to hear the Holy Spirit's Voice, then I turn up the volume on the ego, which drowns out the Holy Spirit. Of course, the opposite is true as well.

**(6:2-4) God's teachers choose to look on dreams a while. It is a conscious choice. For they have learned that all choices are made consciously, with full awareness of their consequences.**

God's teachers consciously choose to live in the world of the body. Lesson 136, "Sickness is a defense against the truth," explicitly states that defenses—and sickness is seen as a defense—are chosen consciously. Then, just as quickly as they are chosen, the ego drops a veil of forgetfulness or denial and we forget that we have chosen them (W-pI.136.3-4). Similarly, when our ego mind made up this world, we then forgot that we made it. And then it appears as if I suddenly came into the world, which exists independently of my mind. It is the same with sickness—we forget that we have chosen to be sick, and then it appears as if the sickness has chosen us. So then I am sick because a germ or a virus is going around, but I am not responsible for it.

The teacher of God has learned that everything is a conscious choice. When we say something is out of awareness or unconscious, we are really talking about the effects of fear. The unconscious is not a place—it is a dynamic or a process. And it is a dynamic of fear. I have chosen to see, experience, or feel something. And then I become afraid of it and say I don't want to look at it. At that point I have denied it. We say that we have repressed it and it has gone into the unconscious, as if there were a cellar in our minds where thoughts are stored. In reality, all it is is fear. So an advanced teacher of God has no fear, and no unconscious. Someone like Jesus is totally aware of everything all the time.

**(6:5) The dream says otherwise, but who would put his faith in dreams once they are recognized for what they are?**

The dream, which is the ego's world, says otherwise: that choices are not made consciously and that, in fact, I do not make them at all. Things are done to me. I am a victim of things that happen outside of my control. And that is essential if the ego's plan is going to work, because I would not put my faith in the world if I remembered that I made it up. I can only put faith in the world—which my ego wants me to do as a defense against God—if I believe it is real. I can believe the world is real only by forgetting that I made it up and that it has no existence outside my mind.

So sickness is a defense against the truth, because it is a way of protecting myself against God and blaming you for my suffering and pain. The text explains in several places that sickness really is my way of attacking you (e.g., T-27.I.4). If I am going to use sickness as a defense, and use it successfully, I must believe my sickness is real. If I were to remember where the sickness came from, it could not help me anymore because I would realize that it is all made up, that the sickness is really in my mind. And if my attention is refocused back within my mind, at some point I am going to remember Who else is in my mind. And that is what my ego is so terrified of—the "Who else."

In order for sickness to be successful as a defense, it is imperative that I believe its source is outside my mind. That is what the line means, "The dream says otherwise, but who would put his faith in dreams once they are recognized for what they are?" What they really are are projections of what is within my mind.

**(6:6) Awareness of dreaming is the real function of God's teachers.**

This is the same, as we mentioned earlier, as becoming a lucid dreamer. When we sleep at night, it is possible to train our minds to become aware that we are dreaming—that is lucid dreaming. I am dreaming, but within the dream I know that I am dreaming. The purpose of the Course is to teach us to become lucid dreamers in the world, to be aware that all of this is a dream and nothing else.

**(6:7-8) They watch the dream figures come and go, shift and change, suffer and die. Yet they are not deceived by what they see.**

We do not deny all that happens in the world. We do not deny what appears to be suffering, dying, and all the other changes that occur in the world. But we are not deceived by them, because we realize that we are watching only dream figures.

**(6:9) They recognize that to behold a dream figure as sick and separate is no more real than to regard it as healthy and beautiful.**

There are some very clear statements in this passage. The joy is in knowing that nothing here is good; nothing here is bad. Nothing here is healthy; nothing here is sick. Nothing here is alive; nothing here is dead. As an advanced teacher of God, I live with these understandings. I live in the world, fully operating as a puppet with all the other puppets, doing what everyone else does. But I realize that it is all a dream and that it is all made up. And that makes my mind fully accessible to the Love of God within, which means everything I do will be loving and comforting. Not as the world judges it, because the world's love and comfort always has a hook—a price that has to be paid for it.

The love that comes from Jesus has no price or cost associated with it. So I can be fully present to all suffering and pain because I realize there is no suffering and pain, only a belief in it. The power of love in my mind then extends to the misbelief in your mind and heals it. I simply am a reminder of where the truth and the healing are.

**(6:10-11) Unity alone is not a thing of dreams. And it is this** [this unity which is God] **God's teachers acknowledge as behind the dream, beyond all seeming and yet surely theirs.**

Dreams produce a world of multiplicity, separation, and duality—not unity. So I live in the world, but I know that I am not of it. I know that I am of Heaven, of unity, and that I have never left my Father's house. And yet I still live within the world of dreams. That is the challenge—to be fully present to the world of dreams, but not to be taken in by anything that occurs here. Being joined with the Love of God in my mind allows me to do that.

**Part XXVII
How Are Healing and Atonement Related? (M-22)**

The section we will look at now speaks a great deal about the teacher of God in terms of sickness and healing. We will begin near the end of the first paragraph:

**(1:9-12) To forgive is to heal. The teacher of God has taken accepting the Atonement for himself as his only function. What is there, then, he cannot heal? What miracle can be withheld from him?**

As an advanced teacher of God, I realize I have no function other than to have my mind be healed. My function is not to heal others, or to bring peace and love into the world, or to save people or things in the world. My function is simply to accept the Atonement for myself. Once that healing has been accepted in my mind, there is nothing I cannot heal, because my mind is joined with everything. This does not mean that the physical world will necessarily change, that people around me will throw down their crutches and start walking, etc. It simply means that the healing thought within my mind is joined with the need for healing in everyone else's mind.

**(2:1) The progress of the teacher of God may be slow or rapid, depending on whether he recognizes the Atonement's inclusiveness, or for a time excludes some problem areas from it.**

We already discussed this idea when we looked at "faithfulness" under the characteristics of a teacher of God. The advanced teacher of God has faith that this principle includes all situations without exception—which it must! To exclude certain areas and say I can forgive everything except abortion, or except genocide, or except prejudice, or except this or except that, is to make the error real, and to say there is a hierarchy of illusions—the first law of chaos.

My progress as a teacher of God and as a student of the Course is marked by my ability to generalize this lesson in forgiveness to everything and to all people, and not to give anything or anyone in this world power over the Atonement principle. If the separation from God never occurred—which is what the principle states—then nothing in this world can be real because everything in this world speaks of separation.

So as we go through our day we want to be increasingly sensitive to those things that push our buttons, that annoy us, that make us fearful, guilty, or sick. And we want to be aware that when these things happen, it is because we have forgotten that God's Love is all there is. Anything else that appears different in this world—suffering, pain, evil, sin—must be outside His Love. Therefore it does not exist; it has no power over our minds, and no power to take away the Love and the peace of God that we truly are.

The challenge, again, is to make no exceptions and, when we do make exceptions, to be aware of them without feeling guilty. I need simply say, "I've made an exception because there is a part of my mind that is still afraid of God's Love. And so I'm using this as a way of rationalizing the decision I made to keep God's Love separate from me."

**(2:2) In some cases, there is a sudden and complete awareness of the perfect applicability of the lesson of the Atonement to all situations, but this is comparatively rare.**

Jesus is saying that it is possible that someone could just suddenly shift and understand that everything is illusory, but that does not usually happen. More often than not it is a process.

**(2:3) The teacher of God may have accepted the function God has given him long before he has learned all that his acceptance holds out to him.**

I may have accepted that my function is to learn forgiveness, to heal my mind, and to accept the Atonement, but I am not really aware of what that truly entails—which is usually a blessing! The section we skipped, called the "Development of Trust" (M-4.I-A), talks about this as a process involving six stages. A part of our minds may have accepted our function, but we are not really aware of what this involves. And so the six stages describe the process of becoming increasingly aware of what it truly means to let go of what has never existed.

**(2:4-6) It is only the end that is certain. Anywhere along the way, the necessary realization of inclusiveness may reach him. If the way seems long, let him be content.**

In other words, Jesus is telling us not to be impatient and not to judge ourselves harshly or feel guilty because we are not yet perfect.

**(2:7-8) He has decided on the direction he wants to take. What more was asked of him?**

The workbook basically helps us to decide on the direction we want to take by helping us see that we will be better off taking the Holy Spirit's path rather than the ego's. That does not mean that when we complete the workbook we are one step away from Heaven, as we have seen. That is why the Course says of itself, "This course is a beginning, not an end" (W-pII.ep.1:1).

**(2:9) And having done what was required** [the little willingness]**, would God withhold the rest?**

And that really is trust, which comes back to what we said at the beginning. We develop trust and patience that, once we have begun on this path, we will complete it because the Love of God is walking along the way with us, step by step. It is only necessary that we be aware that we are involved in a process, a journey, with the Love of the Holy Spirit, Who will teach us day by day what we have to learn. And there is no penalty because we become afraid or guilty, or one day say "I am not going to learn this; I am going to do it the ego's way: I want to be angry, depressed, vicious, and guilty." We can do all that without guilt or fear. The only penalty or punishment that day is that we will feel miserable—that is all. We are choosing to be miserable because we are too afraid of God's peace. And that's okay—it is not a sin.

**(3:1) That forgiveness is healing needs to be understood, if the teacher of God is to make progress.**

In other words, there is no difference. Forgiveness and healing are just different forms. Getting angry and attacking you out there is an error, and forgiveness undoes it. Basically I have taken the guilt in my mind and projected it onto your body to justify my attacking you. Forgiveness is the name the Course gives to undoing that.

The process is exactly the same when I project my guilt onto my body and get sick, except we call it sickness instead of anger. And so the solution in this case is called healing, but the dynamic and the process are essentially the same.

**(3:2) The idea that a body can be sick is a central concept in the ego's thought system.**

That makes the body real, makes God's punishment real, and keeps the mind protected.

**(3:3-4) This thought gives the body autonomy, separates it from the mind, and keeps the idea of attack inviolate. If the body could be sick Atonement would be impossible.**

The idea that the body is sick makes it appear as if the body is autonomous from the mind. So I believe, not that my mind has made my body sick, but that it was a germ, a virus, or something else in the world. And therefore the body is separate from the mind, and attack is kept inviolate or sacrosanct. In other words, attack has been made real and can never be reversed.

If the body can be sick, then separation and attack are real, and Atonement is a lie. This is not how the world looks at atonement, obviously. Atonement in Judaism and Christianity connotes suffering and sacrifice as redemptive, and as what God wants. But that is atonement of the ego. That is not the Atonement of the Holy Spirit, which corrects error by showing that it never existed. The world's atonement "corrects" the error by establishing sin as real, and then saying we have to suffer and sacrifice to atone for it, which of course keeps sin real. It does not let sin go or undo it.

**(3:5) A body that can order a mind to do as it sees fit could merely take the place of God and prove salvation is impossible.**

The ego has reversed cause and effect. In fact, the mind is the cause and the body is the effect. My mind causes me to be sick. But the ego does not want me to remember that, so it turns the causal relationship upside down. Now my body is the source of sickness, which has an effect on me and so I experience pain. If that were true, then my body would have all the power. It would have usurped God's role, and salvation would be impossible. If salvation can only be from God, and God has been replaced by the ego, then only the ego's salvation is now possible. And, of course, that does not save at all—it merely condemns.

**(3:6-9) What, then, is left to heal? The body has become lord of the mind. How could the mind be returned to the Holy Spirit unless the body is killed? And who would want salvation at such a price?**

And yet, of course, that is exactly what the world has always chosen. The body is seen as the cause and the mind as the effect. The body is the prison in which the mind is trapped. And the mind can be free only if the body is killed. So, for example, many Christians have looked forward to their dying and the Lord Jesus coming to take them back—some even pray for death, as if the body were the problem.

**(4:1-3) Certainly sickness does not appear to be a decision. Nor would anyone actually believe he wants to be sick. Perhaps he can accept the idea in theory, but it is rarely if ever consistently applied to all specific forms of sickness, both in the individual's perception of himself and of all others as well.**

I think this is extremely important because it is obvious that this is the case. Even if we can accept in principle that the mind makes the body sick, it is very difficult to apply that principle to all situations, without exception, involving oneself as well as everyone else in the world. And so that is one of the hallmarks of an advanced teacher—the recognition that this principle holds without exception.

**(4:4-5) Nor is it at this level** [the level of the body] **that the teacher of God calls forth the miracle of healing. He overlooks the mind and body, seeing only the face of Christ shining in front of him, correcting all mistakes and healing all perception.**

In other words, I overlook the sickness in the body as well as the sickness in the mind—both are equally illusory. The body is not sick and the mind is not sick because there is no separation thought. I look straight to the Atonement principle: the error, the separation from God, never occurred. The guilt in my mind is unreal, and therefore the projection of guilt onto my body must also be unreal. The "face of Christ" is not anything literal or physical—it is simply the face of guiltlessness or innocence.

**(4:6) Healing is the result of the recognition, by God's teacher, of who it is that is in need of healing.**

It is not you—it is my mind that needs healing.

**(4:7-9) This recognition has no special reference. It is true of all things that God created. In it are all illusions healed.**

As a teacher of God, I recognize that if I have perceived you as sick or in pain, it is my mind that needs healing.

**Part XXVIII
How Are Healing and Atonement Related? (M-22) (conclusion)**

**(5:1-2) When a teacher of God fails to heal, it is because he has forgotten Who he is. Another's sickness thus becomes his own.**

This is the central principle of healing. I have failed to heal if I make your error real. If I see your sickness and your suffering as real, I have forgotten who I am, and I am now as sick as you are, because I am identifying myself with my ego.

**(5:3-5) In allowing this to happen, he has identified with another's ego, and has thus confused him with a body. In so doing, he has refused to accept the Atonement for himself, and can hardly offer it to his brother in Christ's Name. He will, in fact, be unable to recognize his brother at all, for his Father did not create bodies, and so he is seeing in his brother only the unreal.**

This is another clear statement in the Course that just as God did not create the world, He did not create bodies. So if I am seeing you as a body—which I must be doing if I am seeing you as sick—I must not be seeing you as God has created you. I am seeing you as an illusion, which means I am seeing you as unreal because I want to see myself as unreal. I am afraid of the reality of Who I really am. I am afraid of love.

**(5:6-10) Mistakes do not correct mistakes, and distorted perception does not heal. Step back now, teacher of God. You have been wrong. Lead not the way, for you have lost it. Turn quickly to your Teacher, and let yourself be healed.**

This is a clear statement of the process. I become aware of when my ego has gotten in the way. And I know that by the distortions of perception, by seeing suffering and sickness as real, there must be something I am guilty over, something I do not want to look at, something I want to correct. So if there is anything I want to do something about, one way or another, my perception is sick. And therefore I need to step back from my ego and say, "There must be another way of looking at this. Please help."

**(6:1-2) The offer of Atonement is universal. It is equally applicable to all individuals in all circumstances.**

Again, there is no order of difficulty in miracles. This principle works no matter what is going on in the world, because there is no world outside my mind. It is all within my mind. And every problem that I perceive in the world, regardless of its form, arises because I first looked within my mind and perceived the problem there. And the problem is my guilt and my fear of God's punishment. So all I have to do is bring my mind back to that point where I chose guilt and fear and say, "It is not my ego that is correct; it is the Holy Spirit. I can now make another choice." At that point all my problems disappear. Now the forms in which they appear in the world may not necessarily change, but the problems will disappear in my perception. Instead of seeing problems out there that have to be fixed, changed, healed, or solved, I see either an expression of love or a call for love, which are answered equally by the love in my mind. And that is all that I perceive.

**(6:3) And in it is the power to heal all individuals of all forms of sickness.**

Again, this is not referring to anything external or physical. The form of sickness is simply a mask that hides the sickness of guilt and separation in the mind. The goal of the healing is not to change the form. If you are physically sick, your sickness is coming from a sick thought of guilt in your mind. So when my mind is healed so that only love flows through it and that is all that I express to you, since your mind is joined with mine, then your mind is also healed. At that point, if you choose to accept that joining and that love, the form of your sickness will disappear. Whether you choose to accept it or not is your choice. That is the meaning of this passage.

So my mind heals the thought, not the form, of sickness in your mind. I cannot heal the form of sickness since it was your mind that made it. I did not make it. But I heal it by undoing the thought of sickness that made the form of sickness, and that thought of sickness in your mind is the thought of separation. If I join with you and accept the joining and the oneness that is there, then your mind is healed of that thought of separation. And you can either accept it or not. If you do, the form of sickness will disappear. If you do not, then both the form and the thought of separation remain. But the thought of healing also remains until the time you can accept it.

**(6:4) Not to believe this is to be unfair to God, and thus unfaithful to Him.**

Obviously, God does not perceive us as being unfair to Him, but in our minds we are unfair to God because our unbelief is an attack on Him. It is saying, "There is something in this world that has the power to withstand Your Love," or, as the text states, "There is a power past omnipotence" (T-29.VIII.6:2). There is a power in this world that is greater than the power of Love, and that would be the power of the ego.

**(6:5-6) A sick person perceives himself as separate from God. Would you see him as separate from you?**

All sickness comes from the basic belief that we are separate from God. Otherwise we would not be sick. Sickness is not defined by anything of the body. It is defined by a thought in the mind.

**(6:7-9) It is your task to heal the sense of separation that has made him sick. It is your function to recognize for him that what he believes about himself is not the truth. It is your forgiveness that must show him this.**

And, again, it is not what we say or do. We are simply being a reminder of the truth—forgiveness does that. Forgiveness clears away all the impediments, obstacles, and blocks in our minds that would prevent the Love and the truth of God from flowing through us. Thus, this passage clearly affirms that all we need to do is forgive. Forgiveness makes all healing possible.

**(6:10-14) Healing is very simple. Atonement is received and offered. Having been received, it must be accepted. It is in the receiving, then, that healing lies. All else must follow from this single purpose.**

It is interesting that this does not say, "Atonement is offered and received." The reason it is reversed is that it is simultaneous. Healing is simple because I accept the Atonement within myself, I offer it to you, and you receive it. The other way of understanding this passage is that I am the one who receives the Atonement and then I offer it to you. It can be understood either way.

**(7:1) Who can limit the power of God Himself?**

The ego says, "I can limit the power of God Himself." Sickness says, "I can limit the power of God Himself." This world says, "I can limit the power of God Himself." This entire world becomes a symbol of the anti-Christ in the sense that there is a power beyond the omnipotence of Heaven. When the ego says, "I can make up a world in which God cannot enter," it is asserting its belief that it has the power to keep God out.

Now the truth is that God cannot enter this world because there is no world. How can God enter into an illusion? But that is not what the ego tells us. The ego tells us that we will make a world and God cannot enter because we are more powerful than God. So basically, then, God is impotent.

The ego says, "You see, we can do all these terrible things in the world and God doesn't intervene. That just shows you how powerful this great God of yours is! He can do nothing!" The real power of God is that He does not intervene because there is nothing here that He can intervene with. The power of God is that He is only truth and reality, and therefore He does not know of anything outside Him. That is God's power. The ego turns that around and asserts that God is impotent and the ego is all powerful.

**(7:2-3) Who, then, can say which one can be healed of what, and what must remain beyond God's power to forgive? This is insanity indeed.**

Yet this is what we all say. We say some people are resistant to healing, some sicknesses cannot be healed, etc. In other words, we make a hierarchy of illusions: "There is an order of difficulty in miracles. God's Love can help in some places, with some people, with some problems, but not with all of them." We say this because we actually believe there is a world here.

God's Love heals everything because there is only one problem—the belief that there is a problem and that there is a place outside this Love. God's Love is the statement that says that there is nothing outside. In that principle, in the acceptance of that truth, all problems disappear.

But we make up laws of healing and laws of God. We make up laws of what God's Love will do and what God's punishment will be. All theologies do that. These are the ego's attempt to control God and basically to play God. We tell God what He should think and what He should do. The section "The Laws of Chaos" (T-23.II) is probably the clearest statement in the Course on the insanity of this.

**(7:4) It is not up to God's teachers to set limits upon Him, because it is not up to them to judge His Son.**

Judgment is something the ego made. We are judging when we take sides, or say one problem is worse than another.

**(7:5-6) And to judge His Son is to limit his Father. Both are equally meaningless.**

Like father, like son. If we say God's Son is limited or God's Son is a body, then we must be saying that God is limited or He is a body, too. The idea that we could judge God's Son and the idea that we could limit God are equally meaningless.

**(7:7) Yet this will not be understood until God's teacher recognizes that they are the same mistake.**

Now to understand that both are the same mistake means that recognizing that making any aspect of the world real by judging aspects of the Sonship—some are sick, some are well; some are handsome, some are ugly; some are old, some are young; some are born, some are dead; some are good, some are evil—is to limit God.

That is not how the world usually thinks. But that is what the Course is saying. The Son must be like the Father. If God is total unity, perfect and all Love, then His Son, Christ, must be exactly the same—without any differences, without any exception. So if I see the Son as limited and fragmented, then I must be saying exactly the same about God. However, if I say God is perfect and all-loving, then the same must be true of Christ. It follows then that anything that I perceive that is different from that love and perfection must be unreal because it cannot be of God.

That is the meaning of these lines—I recognize that what I say about God must be true about His Son, and what I say about His Son must be true about God. And if I believe that the Son can be sick and die, then I must be saying the same is true of God—God can be limited, and God can be attacked.

**(7:8) Herein does he receive Atonement, for he withdraws his judgment from the Son of God, accepting him as God created him.**

When I recognize that the Son must be like the Father, that is the Atonement. I am saying that if God is perfect Love and unity, then His Son, who is like Him, must be also. The ego has denied that, saying, "The Son is unlike God's creation. He is not like what God created. He is limited, fragmented, guilty, separated." So to accept the Atonement for myself means to accept my Identity as God's Son, as He has created me—perfect, loving, and one with Him. And this means that everything I see in this world must be an illusion, because, obviously, this world is not like God.

**(7:9) No longer does he stand apart from God, determining where healing should be given and where it should be withheld.**

This, of course, is what we all do. We choose up sides.

**(7:10) Now can he say with God, "This is my beloved Son, created perfect and forever so."**

We say this to each and every seemingly fragmented part of the Sonship—including ourselves. And so I no longer see sickness, death, pain, specialness, or differences as real. I see everyone here as simply like a frightened child, pulling a veil or a blanket over its eyes to keep this truth hidden from itself—that we are as God has created us. We are perfect and that perfection can never be changed.
. . . . . . .

I thought we would conclude with a reading from the very end of the manual for teachers (M-29.7-8), including the lovely closing poem, which expresses very beautifully what it means to be a teacher of God. The first person in these passages, of course, is Jesus: speaking to us and thanking us for our willingness to join with him so that together with him we can be the expressions of God's Voice in the world.

**(7) Remember you are His completion and His Love. Remember your weakness is His strength. But do not read this hastily or wrongly. If His strength is in you, what you perceive as your weakness is but illusion. And He has given you the means to prove it so. Ask all things of His Teacher, and all things are given you. Not in the future but immediately; now. God does not wait, for waiting implies time and He is timeless. Forget your foolish images, your sense of frailty and your fear of harm, your dreams of danger and selected "wrongs." God knows but His Son, and as he was created so he is. In confidence I place you in His Hands, and I give thanks for you that this is so.**

**(8)** **And now in all your doings be you blessed.**
**God turns to you for help to save the world.**
**Teacher of God, His thanks He offers you,**
**And all the world stands silent in the grace**
**You bring from Him. You are the Son He loves,**
**And it is given you to be the means**
**Through which His Voice is heard around the world,**
**To close all things of time; to end the sight**
**Of all things visible; and to undo**
**All things that change. Through you is ushered in**
**A world unseen, unheard, yet truly there.**
**Holy are you, and in your light the world**
**Reflects your holiness, for you are not**
**Alone and friendless. I give thanks for you,**
**And join your efforts on behalf of God,**
**Knowing they are on my behalf as well,**
**And for all those who walk to God with me.**

**AMEN**