

Our Gratitude to God

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part XV

"Attainment of the Real World"

We turn now to a series of four paragraphs from the section "Attainment of the Real World" in Chapter 13.

(14:1) Whenever you are tempted to undertake a useless journey that would lead away from light, remember what you really want . . .

This is another expression of an idea found throughout all three books of *A Course in Miracles*, a practical guideline about what we should do. The important thing is to recognize what the "useless journey" is, a phrase the Course uses earlier in the text to talk about the crucifixion (T-4.in). Aside from the places where it is obvious that Jesus is talking about his own crucifixion, the term *crucifixion* is used as a synonym or symbol for the ego thought system, and thus becomes a symbol of attack, destruction, murder, victimhood, persecution, etc., all of which go hand in hand with every aspect of the ego.

An even more inclusive understanding of "the useless journey" would be that it refers to anything the ego tells us will help, anything that is part of the ego's plan for salvation, or anything that the Course calls magic—anger, for example. The ego tells us that anger is a wonderful way of avoiding responsibility for our own guilt and having to deal with the horror and pain of our self-hatred. We just project the inner belief that we are no good onto another person. In that sense, the useless journey is a journey away from where the problem really is. One of the ways that the ego attempts to deal with itself is to have us take the problem away from the answer, the answer being the Holy Spirit's Presence in our minds, which is the correction for the problem of guilt in our minds. The ego, not wanting to have us listen to the Holy Spirit—because listening means that we will never again listen to the ego—then takes us away from our minds out into the world and the body. Our attention then is always riveted outside us rather than inside.

Our gratitude to each other develops when we shift our attention from the person out there in the body back within the mind where we then look at the person through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. The useless journey is what takes us away from the guilt in our mind, which also takes us away from the love that is in our mind. The useful journey, which is not a phrase the Course uses but is the same idea, would be anything that takes us back within our mind. That is what the miracle does. The whole purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to have us recognize all the useless journeys we take, which are our investments in being angry and ungrateful, judgmental and critical, in feeling unfairly treated, getting sick, being in pain, and seeing any aspect of victimization or separation outside us. The idea is that we would recognize that, and then realize that that is not what we want. We really all want peace.

The egos in us tell us about different ways of getting peace, which of course do not lead to true peace. We do not want to feel pain and guilt, and we all want peace; we just do not know how to attain it. One of the key themes in the Course is to have us look at this ego thought system for what it is, without trying to sugarcoat it or pretend it is someplace where it is not. It is never in another person out there; the ego thought system is within us. Therefore, whenever we find ourselves being upset, angry, disgruntled, disappointed, critical, feeling unfairly treated, or feeling a lack of gratitude and appreciation, what we should do is step back and look at that—continuing with the image we have been using—to see ourselves in a movie theater and looking at ourselves on the screen. Instead of turning to the ego or feeling that we are the ego looking at this, we need to turn to Jesus next to us. At that point, we look at what we are doing and ask the question, which is inherent in the act of looking: Is this really what I want? Do I really believe that by beating up on another person and being filled with judgments and complaints that I will feel better? We can then recognize that that is not going to bring us the Love and the peace of God. Therefore, this little prayer is a reminder:

(T-13.VII.14:2) *The Holy Spirit leads me unto Christ, and where else would I go?*

The ego tells us the Holy Spirit does not lead us to Christ; He leads us to hell, to a vengeful God Who will destroy us because love crucifies. This statement corrects that ego untruth.

"... and where else would I go?" The Course explains that the ego takes us is nowhere, literally (C-2.6:6-7). It begins with an illusion and then gives us a solution that is itself an illusion. The ego literally takes us nowhere. It tells us it is taking us to reality: i.e., this world; and then it tells us how to make a wonderful place out of this reality—our bodies are going to get healthier and stronger; we are going to do better and better things with our physical and psychological bodies, and with everyone else's body. We are going to build a better society, a better world, etc., and yet all of this is no place and nowhere.

Yet, the one place that we do want to go to is Christ, because that is Who we are, and in fact that is where we never left.

(T-13.VII.14:3) *What need have I but to awake in Him?*

This statement comes in the context of the preceding paragraphs that spoke about the Holy Spirit meeting all of our needs. What it is saying is that we have no needs in this world except the need to forgive or to awake in Christ, forgiveness being the way we awaken. An earlier passage in the text says that "the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven have everything" (T-3.V.6:3). Thus, from the Course's perspective there is no point in praying to God, the Holy Spirit, or Jesus for help with specific problems because there are no specific problems. Our need is to recognize there are no specific problems, that all the so-called specific problems are simply smoke screens to confuse us about what the real problem is, which is that we listened to the wrong voice at the very beginning. What enables us to listen to the right voice is to forgive, and forgiving is what enables us to awaken from this dream. In the context of our theme, the way we forgive is to experience gratitude for the people in our lives, not necessarily because of what they do for us, but because of the opportunities they provide for us to forgive ourselves.

Once we choose to turn to the right mind, listen to the Holy Spirit's Voice, and begin to grow so that we become that Voice, we become the manifestation of His Love, just as Jesus has done. Then we follow Him in joy. We realize that true joy does not come from hitting someone over the head or making

ourselves sick to offer atonement to God, but from being able to look at our guilt and learning how to smile at it.

(T-13.VII.15:1) Then follow Him in joy, with faith that He will lead you safely through all dangers to your peace of mind this world may set before you.

The dangers to our peace of mind would be all the different thoughts the ego has given us: the horror of our guilt and self-hatred, and that we deserve to be punished. These thoughts get projected outward so that it appears as if there are external dangers in the world and that the world has set these before us. If this sentence is taken out of context, it sounds as if the world sets these dangers before us. In truth, the world does not do that. *We* tell the world what to do to us, and then we forget we are the ones who told it. The so-called dangers in the world, all of the problems in the world, are nothing more than reflections or projections of the basic problem in our own mind.

The Holy Spirit does not lead us through this world. He leads us *from* the world back within to our own minds. That is literally what the miracle does, and that is why this is called *A Course in Miracles*. It is a course in how to look at our problems differently. Our problems are not what appear to be outside. The miracle takes our attention, which has been focused on another person or some problem in the world—whether in another's or our own body—and basically tells us that that is not where the problem is. The problem is not outside the mind, because there is nothing outside the mind. The problem is *within* our minds. It is the same idea as sitting in a movie theater and having something go wrong with the film so that it looks funny on the screen. No one rushes up to the screen to try to fix the film. You go back and fix the projector or the film. No one in his right mind would go rushing up to the screen because everyone knows there is nothing on the screen except some projections of light. But that is exactly what we all do; we go rushing up to the screen. The miracle says the problem is not on the screen; it is in your mind; that is the projector. The problem in your mind is that you have chosen the wrong film. No wonder it looks funny on the screen! It is a film of horror, death, pain, sickness, and suffering that appears to be pleasant at times but in reality is not. The role of Jesus or the Holy Spirit is to remind us not to go rushing up to the screen when we find ourselves getting uncomfortable in our seats, because there is nothing on the screen. He tells us the problem is in the projector, in the wrong-minded film chosen to go into the projector.

Still once again, the reason the Course is saying we should feel grateful to the circumstances and the relationships in our lives is that they first bring out the discomfort in us. As we are sitting watching what is going on in our lives and all of a sudden we become uncomfortable, anxious, fearful, guilty, depressed, or whatever, Jesus tells us the source of the discomfort is not what is on the screen. But if we did not feel uncomfortable because of what is on the screen at first, we would not know that there is a problem. What goes on the screen brings to the surface and into our awareness the discomfort we are feeling. Now that we are aware of the discomfort, we know there is another presence, another thought in our minds that tells us what the true source of the discomfort is. There is a passage in the text that makes just this point:

(T-27.VII.7:3-4) Once you were unaware of what the cause of everything the world appeared to thrust upon you, uninvited and unasked, must really be. Of one thing you were sure: Of all the many causes you perceived as bringing pain and suffering to you, your guilt was not among them.

This is saying that as we are sitting in the theater and feeling discomfort and pain, we all have rushed to the screen to try to find the cause. If you are a doctor, you look for the germs that caused sickness, or something that is wrong with an organ. We are always looking for causes outside. As this passage is saying, of one thing we were sure, that of all the many causes we perceived as bringing pain and suffering to us, our guilt was not among them.

The value of relationships in our lives is that they bring to the surface this pain and suffering. Our first instinct or reflex is to rush to blame the cause of our pain on someone else. What *A Course in Miracles* helps us do in a process that occurs over a period of time is to recognize that that is not why we are upset. "I am never upset for the reason I think" (W-pl.5.h). Jesus and the miracle remind us that the reason is in our own mind. That is why we should feel grateful, not only to the Holy Spirit or to Jesus, but to the circumstances in our lives.