

The Metaphysics of Separation and Forgiveness

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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Part V Conclusion

Let me close by reading from a passage in the workbook, "What is forgiveness?" (W-p11.1.1,4-5). It is a summary of everything that we have talked about. The idea is that I do not have to do anything. I do not have to change what is going on in the world. I do not have to change what is going on in my mind. I only have to look without judgment, with Jesus or the Holy Spirit next to me, at what I believe I did, realizing what it is costing me. By learning that I do not have to feel guilty because of all my judgmental thoughts, I am really learning that I do not have to feel guilty because of what I did to God.

One final point before we read this—it is really important that I do not get caught in the ego's attempt to have me have my cake and eat it, in a bad sense. For I may be tempted to say to myself, "I have all these negative, judgmental, specialness thoughts, and I am watching them as I am hitting you over the head." But that is not what the Course means by looking. When I look at my ego with Jesus, I also realize the cost—my holding on to these judgments is literally costing me the peace of God. I may be perfectly willing at this point to pay that price, but at least I know that is what I am doing. Looking does not only mean that I look with Jesus while I kill off everybody in my mind—it means I am also aware of what killing off everybody is costing me. And if I really am aware of what it is costing me, I will stop killing people in my mind.

Let us read those paragraphs now.

Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in that view are all your sins forgiven. What is sin, except a false idea about God's Son? Forgiveness merely sees its falsity, and therefore lets it go. What then is free to take its place is now the Will of God.

Forgiveness is still, and quietly does nothing. It offends no aspect of reality, nor seeks to twist it to appearances it likes. It merely looks, and waits, and judges not. He who would not forgive must judge, for he must justify his failure to forgive. But he who would forgive himself must learn to welcome truth exactly as it is.

Do nothing, then, and let forgiveness show you what to do, through Him Who is your Guide, your Savior and Protector, strong in hope, and certain of your ultimate success. He has forgiven

you already, for such is His function, given Him by God. Now must you share His function, and forgive whom He has saved, whose sinlessness He sees, and whom He honors as the Son of God.

Questions and Discussions Excerpted from the Workshop

Q: I'm interested in knowing what fires up the ego. But isn't that the same as asking how the tiny, mad idea could have happened?

K: Not quite, this question has an answer. The decision maker fires up the ego. The ego itself has no power at all, as powerful as it seems—and certainly we all experience great power here in terms of our thoughts and feelings. But what gives the ego thought system that power is not the ego itself. It's the power of the mind to choose—that's its source of power.

Q: But there's still a part of me that doesn't believe that I made all this up and that I chose it.

K: Right. I think that what you are pointing to is the idea that, as we study this, we begin to see that this is a perfectly dreadful thought system. And the dreadful things that go on in this world in which we live show us the enormity of the hatred and insanity inside us. It is very difficult to understand and accept that not only do we believe this, but we chose it. And not only did we choose it, but we continue to choose it. It is not that I chose it once in the past—I am choosing it right now. One of the real values of the Course (it may seem to be a dubious value at first, but in the end it is very healing) is that it helps us uncover the seething mass of hatred—the self-hatred within us that the whole world was made to mask. We read all the time about the pain and suffering in the world—in Africa, for example, or Russia, or our own country, or any other place in the world. And our tendency is to say, "Yes, it's pretty terrible, but it's outside me. What does it have to do with me?"

Well, if I am upset by anything in the world—not if I just see it objectively—then it must be because I am first seeing it in myself. But I do not want to see it in my mind, so I project it out in order to see it outside me. This basic dynamic goes on all the time with us. Something in our minds is so awful—the terrible feeling of guilt and self-hatred, and the terror of being annihilated as a result—that we choose not to look at it. We project it outside ourselves and then deal with it as if it were outside us, and not us. That is the importance of this splitting-off dynamic: I do not want to see it in myself, so I split in two. And the part I do not want to see in myself is now seen outside me, so that it is not me. It is outside me and I deal with it outside me. I never have to deal with it within me, because I do not even know it is in me anymore. The Course helps us, through the miracle, to begin to erase the veil (see chart). But the miracle does not erase it all at once—it does a little bit at a time. This process goes slowly, because, as the veil is erased, I become aware, through the miracle, that the problem is not outside me—it is inside me. And then, as most students who work with the Course over a period of time report, things seem to get worse. They seem to be much more anxious, or much more frightened, or

much sicker, or much more in conflict than they ever had been in their lives. But it is not that they never before were this anxious, or this fearful, etc.—they just were not aware of it.

In a passage near the end of Chapter 27, Jesus talks about how we were able to name so many different things as causes of our pain, but we never once thought the cause was our guilt (T-27.VII.7:4). We are very good at investigating the causes of all our problems—all the pain, all the despair, all the discomfort. We do it individually. And throughout history there have been many brilliant people who have told us the causes of our problems—from a medical level, a political level, an economic level, a social level, etc. But we have never once considered that the cause of all of our problems is our guilt.

We have lived our lives denying all this pain, not wanting to see it as ours. Even when we do begin to feel something, we attribute it to something else outside us. So Jesus in the Course tells us that the cause of all of our problems is not outside us. In fact, the cause of all the world's problems lies in this blue dot—the power of our minds to choose the ego instead of the Holy Spirit. That is the problem. Once we accept that, we can nevermore believe we are at the mercy of forces beyond our control (T-19.IV.D.7:4). But we all believe that we are. In a passage in the "Laws of Chaos," after Jesus describes in some detail the five horrible laws which are clearly insane and murderous—depicting not only what we believe goes on between ourselves and God, but what we also believe goes on between ourselves and each other—he says in effect that it would seem impossible that we would ever believe these laws, they are so insane. And then he says, "Brother, you *do* believe them" (T-23.II.18:3). The proof that we believe them is that we are here. No one in his right mind would ever come here!

That is very important to remember. No one in his right mind could ever come into this world unless, of course, love guided him to. This world is not where we are, not where we belong, and it certainly is not a place that can make us happy. Heaven is where we are and where we belong, totally at one with God. The fact that we identify with being here is not a sin, but it is certainly a big mistake. The fact that we identify with our physical and psychological selves, and are concerned about what other physical and psychological selves do with us is proof that we do believe all this. Remember, what roots us in this world is our fear of the guilt in our minds. That is how the whole thing started. The ego tells us our reality is not love, but sin and guilt. And it tells us that the way we escape from the sin and guilt is to split it off and project it onto God, so that He becomes the One Who will punish us. This is the third split.

The ego then says, "But this is so terrible—there's no way out. We need another split." Our attention now gets rooted in a world that we literally believe is outside our minds. We believe our identity is in a body. We literally believe that is who we are! And we never then, according to the ego, have to deal with the battleground in our minds. That is the glue that continually binds us to the world and to all of our specialness. That is why we do not want to let go of our specialness. That is why people can read this Course, time after time, year upon year, and literally not see what it says about the ego.

Many students want to see only the lovely and loving parts of the Course that talk about happiness and peace and joy, and pay no attention to all the parts on specialness, because it is so painful to face what is brought up. It triggers a remembrance of what is in our minds, which is what we have sought to avoid. That is the purpose of the world. Remember, the world is a smokescreen, a hiding place, a distraction device so that we never have to get in touch with the guilt inside ourselves. Instead, we split it off and see it in another. Anyone we are involved with where there is any degree of emotion—negative or positive—must be a split off part of ourselves. Otherwise, we would not feel the emotion.

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[Ken referred briefly to Freud's essay, "Mourning and Melancholia," in which Freud talks about the sense of loss experienced at the death of a loved one. Ken concluded with the statement that, when we know that the Love of God is within us, we also know that the loved one is a part of us, and that nothing that happens on a physical plane can ever alter that, because we know that nothing is happening, because we are all one. Ken then continued:]

When that becomes the only vision and the only understanding we have, we have reached what the Course calls the real world. The decision maker chooses the Holy Spirit once and for all and stops being a decision maker, because the ego falls away and disappears. At that point I know that all the seemingly separated Sons of God are one. My experience then is that all the seeming fragments are part of the whole, and I am a part of that whole. It is not that the others are a part of me, as my identity, but that we are all part of a larger whole. And so there cannot be any experience of loss.

That basically is what Jesus taught from the cross: literally nothing happened. People who mourned his death were those who had identified with his body—an obvious thing to do—who felt that his love was what would save them. Then he disappeared, he died, and they thought that love died, that salvation died with him. Yet the whole message he was teaching was that the love people felt in him was a reflection of the love that was in them. If they could truly understand that, they would realize that they and Jesus were one and the same—they shared the same loving Self, which means there could be no experience of loss.

Of course, Jesus was really teaching us, within the symbolism of our dream, that that is exactly what we believed happened with God. We believed we split off from God, we believed there was a sense of loss, and then we fabricated the whole story that God was angry at us and wanted to punish us, etc. But if we can know that we are literally one with God's Love, then there is no sense of loss. And we then realize the ego's separation thought has no power—"not one note in Heaven's song was missed."

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[Another participant was asking Ken for guidance in applying the principles he had been talking about:]

K: I think basically your question is, how does this actually play out on a day-to-day basis? What do I do? As soon as I become aware of an ego thought or feeling—and after a while it is not difficult to find them: I get annoyed at somebody, I get anxious, I feel physically ill, I am making judgments about others—I want to realize that "I am never upset for the reason I think," as an early workbook lesson (W-pl.5) says, and that what I am seeing outside is really a split-off part of myself. The reason I am anxious, angry, annoyed, frightened, sick, etc., has nothing to do with what I feel or believe about the situation. The reason is that I have dropped Jesus' hand and have taken the ego's hand again. That is the problem. And then I feel terribly guilty, because once again I have pushed God away—in the person of Jesus or the Holy Spirit—and I feel guilty about that. And I am now afraid I am going to be punished for it. So I escape from all that guilt and fear by getting involved with whatever outside me I think is making me upset.

As I work through all this—following the line of the miracle (see chart)—I am realizing that I am not upset because of something outside me. I am upset because of something inside me. I am upset that I chose the ego instead of Jesus or the Holy Spirit. That is all I have to do, and I am finished. That is what the Course refers to as the "little willingness." If I do this and still do not feel better, then I say,

I'm not feeling better because, even though I understand what I'm doing—I'm really pushing the Love of God away from me—I obviously still want to push the Love of God away. I believe the Love of God will hurt me. I believe that if I take the hand of Jesus and start walking back home, I will disappear. And all the wonderful self-importance that I believe makes me who I am will also disappear. And that terrifies me. So I am perfectly willing, right now, to pay the cost of pushing Jesus away so I can maintain my own miserable identity—I'm willing to do that.

Now that I *can* do. In a sense I can have my cake and eat it. I can still hold on to all my anger, anxiety, and justified victimhood. But I also know why I am doing it and what I am giving up. I am aware that I am more afraid of God's Love than I am of this pain. And I would rather keep myself separate from you—which is what my anger does—than really know that you and I are part of a larger self. That is all I have to do—just be aware that that is what I am doing.

Q: Ken, who or what is Jesus?

K: He is both a "who" and a "what." As a "what," he is a symbol of the Holy Spirit's Love. He is the same abstract presence of love in the mind that the Holy Spirit is. At the very end when we are in the real world, we will know that. Until that point, he is a "who," and he is an extremely important "who." As long as I believe I am a "who," I need a "what" that looks like a "who." [Laughter] Now why does that make me think of Abbott and Costello! But as long as I believe that I am specific—and we all believe that we are specific, that we are a "who"—then we need

another specific symbol that will represent for us that abstract Presence of Love that the Holy Spirit is. And I am making a big mistake if I think I don't need a "who."

If Jesus is a difficult symbol for you, choose another one. But for most people in the western world, he is it, because almost everyone has unresolved issues with him. In the end, Jesus is abstract because in the end we are abstract. But as long as we feel ourselves to be specific, distinct, and individual, we need someone who can speak to us on that level. And Jesus, as the greatest symbol in the western world of God's Love, is also the greatest symbol in the western world of God's Love as the ego sees it. That is why Jesus has not been a loving symbol for Christians, let alone Jews or Moslems or anyone who has attacked Christians. He is always seen through the eyes of the ego. He is seen as a persecutor, as someone who demands sacrifice, and who believes in sin and guilt. He must believe in sacrifice and death, because that is what the world has made of him: He has become a symbol of the ego's god.

But Jesus also is a symbol of the real God. Our reactions to him are a product of the same split mind that affects how we see everyone else. In the end, when we are in the real world, we will realize that we do not exist as separate individuals any more than Jesus does. But as long as we are here in the dream—as we all are—he is extremely important as a presence outside our personality who can represent us to ourselves, until we can remember our Identity.

Q: But would it invalidate the Course if I chose to use Buddha or Krishna or Mohammed or whoever as this symbol?

K: No. Actually nothing can invalidate this book—that's the problem! However, if I choose Mohammed or Krishna or Buddha or even Chaimyankel because I am afraid of Jesus, or guilty about my relationship with him, that is a problem I am going to have to address at some point. That is why Jesus' presence in the Course has always been up front. The same teaching could have come without talking about Jesus at all. This whole process that I have described could be presented in the Course without referring to Jesus. And it was not necessary that he speak in the first person. The fact that he did, and that he uses Christian terminology, and that he speaks about his own death and reinterprets it for us, is a way of saying to the world, as he says in Chapter 19, that he needs us to forgive him (T-19.IV.B.6,8).

Now Jesus does not need us to forgive him for his own sake. He needs us to forgive him because he cannot help us if we are still pushing him away. So before I choose another symbol besides Jesus, I should first look at why I am doing that. There are always exceptions, and there is no right or wrong way of doing the Course. But for almost everyone who grew up in the western world—whether raised as a Christian or a Jew—it would be extremely difficult to avoid having some unresolved issues with Jesus. He is the greatest symbol of the Love of God that we know, which means the ego has made him its symbol of the Love of God.

Q: Is Jesus' crucifixion an example of "God as victim"?

K: Absolutely. His death is the great example of that. All Christians then, regardless of whether they are conscious of it or not, must believe he is victimizing them. There is a statue of Jesus on the cross, a crucifix, as you approach the main gate of a famous monastery. And underneath the cross is a sign with the terrible words, "This is what I did for you. What have you done for me?" Now how could you love a guy like that? Anyone who has grown up in the western world must believe Jesus is a victimizer.

There is an even deeper reason for this perception of Jesus, which I have not addressed in this workshop, but I will do it briefly now. The ego thought system is based on the idea, "kill or be killed" (M-17.7:11), which is the same as saying that it is "one or the other." The entire thought system of the ego rests on the belief that we are different—that is how the ego thought system starts. God is different from the Son. Remember where we began—God and Christ are totally unified. There is no way that God can perceive Himself in relationship to Christ or Christ can perceive Himself in relationship to God. There is no difference. Within the dream, when we speak of Heaven, we speak of a difference—God is the Creator, Christ is the created. But in Heaven, there is no separated mind that sees that way—God and Christ are not different.

The thought system of the ego begins with differences. When the dream seemed to begin, and the tiny, mad idea seemed to arise in the mind of the Son, all of a sudden God and the Son were different. So the Son said, "We are different—God has something I do not have. Therefore I will take it." What God had of course was the power to create the Son—it was not the other way around. So the Son stole the power to create from God, and he now has it. The Son is still different from God, but now he is on top—as in the game of seesaw. With the third split, where the sinful, guilty self splits into two (see chart), there are new differences. I am no longer sinful—God is sinful, because He is going to attack me.

The thought system of the ego is predicated upon the belief in differences. In contrast, the thought system of the Holy Spirit, which is the reflection of Heaven, is predicated on the belief that we are all the same. Sure, we are different on the level of the body and form, but those differences do not make a difference.

The ego thought system asserts—and the world reflects this thinking—that if God has it, I do not have it. But if I have it, He does not have it. It is one or the other. Either I am the miserable sinner or God is. Of course it is much easier for me to get off the hook by projecting the sin onto God. And once we do that, which is the third split, it all then gets projected out onto the world—I see everyone else as having something I do not have. And why do they have it and I do not? Because they took it from me, and that justifies my stealing it back from them. That really is the kernel of special relationships.

Getting back to Jesus—if Jesus is the Love of God incarnate, then obviously I cannot be, because it is one or the other. It cannot be that we are the same. If we are the same, then the Holy Spirit is telling me the truth. But if Jesus is different from me, then my ego is alive and well. And

obviously Jesus is total innocence, total love, and total light. So what does that leave me? Since I believe I am the home of evil, darkness, and sin, then I believe I am this evil, guilty self, and Jesus is innocent, holy, and loving. Listening to my ego, I ask, "Where did he get it from? How come he is so loving, and how come he is God's favorite and I am not?" Well, the answer is obvious—he stole it from me. It is just like the story of Isaac and Jacob in the Bible, where Jacob fools his father and steals the birthright from Esau.

Where did Jesus get his love and his innocence? He stole it from me. How do I know he stole it from me? Because I secretly believe I stole it from him. And why do I believe I stole it from him? Because that is what I believe I did with God. It always comes back to this underlying metaphysical idea, which is how I began this workshop. That is why we always feel we are at war with each other. I secretly believe that whatever I have, I stole, because that is the basic premise of the ego thought system. The very fact that I believe I exist as a separate entity—and we all believe we exist as separate entities—is proof that I stole the power, the life of that separate entity, from God. And if I believe I stole it, and I feel guilty about it, what do I do? I split off the sin and the guilt—that is what egos do. I split it off, and say, "I'm not sinful and guilty. You are." The real reason I am unhappy and miserable—and all of us deep within our hearts are unhappy and miserable—is that I am here. This is not a happy world. Heaven is the happy world. On some level I feel there is something missing in me—there is something unfair and I am unhappy.

Why am I unhappy? Rather than accepting responsibility for how I feel, I split it off. Why is there something missing in me? Because you stole it from me. And why do I know you stole it from me? Because I believe I first stole it from you, but then I projected the attack onto you, except I forgot that I did so. Consciously, all I am aware of is that you have something I do not have, and I hate you for it. That is why the world has always hated Jesus: he has always been seen as different from us, which is exactly the opposite of what he taught. He taught us that

The Love of God you experience in me is a reflection of the Love of God in you. The only difference between us is that I know it, and you have forgotten it. So I stand in front of you now as a reminder that you can make the same choice to remember that I did.

If the world accepted that, the world would disappear, because the entire world exists as a way to keep that realization away from us.

Remember—the ego's original and ultimate fear is that the Son of God will come to his senses, return to his right mind, and choose the Holy Spirit, which means the Son of God will remember he is the Love of God. Therefore the ego has made up a story of sin, guilt and fear, projected the sin onto a wrathful Father Whom it has also made up, and then it has made up a world in which the sin, guilt, and fear are played out over and over again. Jesus comes along and says, "This whole thing is silly. It is all made up. You do not have to fight against the Love of God—you are the Love of God." If the world accepted his love and his resplendent light as their own,

then the whole need for the world as a defense against the love and the light would disappear. We do not need a hiding place from God if we know that we are the Love and the light of God.

But rather than admit that—which would mean admitting that the ego thought system is wrong, and admitting that I no longer have to exist as a separate and individual being—it is much easier to kill off Jesus, which is what the world did. Not only did it kill him physically, but it took his message and massacred it—turning it upside down so it literally meant the opposite of what he taught. By the way, you will find that people are doing the same thing with the Course—turning its message upside down so they do not have to look at what the Course—and Jesus—are really saying. Jesus is saying, "Look with me at the enormity of what you believe are your sins and your terrible guilt"—what he refers to at one point as your "secret sins and hidden hates" (T-31.VIII.9:2)— "And if you look with me, you will realize there is nothing there. And then all that will remain is the light of love, which you are. And then you will realize that I am not separate from you, and that you and I are part of that one greater light and one greater Love."