

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

STUDY GROUP

WITH RAJ

January 23rd 2003

THIS IS A ROUGH TRANSCRIPT.
THIS COPY IS NOT IN ITS FINAL FORM
AND WILL BE UPDATED

Good evening. And good evening to everyone who is joining us on the Internet as well.

We have been gathering like this for over six months now. Time flies. And during that period of time many of you have made comments, asked questions, and participated. But as some of you have joked, if I don't stop doing so much talking, we'll never get through the end of the *Course*.

So I want to, I wanted to take some time at the beginning tonight to give all of you an opportunity to, well, for example, let me ask this. I know that sometimes you've gone home and thought, "I didn't understand a thing he said." And other times you've gone home and felt as though you understand what the *Course* is saying better than you ever understood it before. I would like to give you an opportunity to express questions or comments relative to what I might call a spiritual disconnect between what you're hearing about the *Course* and what the *Course* is teaching, a spiritual disconnect between *that* and the life you are living every day. Are you finding it difficult to relate the one to the other? And if so, what are those areas, so that we can, you can bring them out and everyone can benefit from not only finding out they are not the only ones thinking that, but also with the answers.

So, and let me mention also that when we get into a give and take situation like this, it's easy to forget to ask for the microphone when you want to butt in and say something. So try to remember to reach or ask for the mic.

So I will turn the floor over to you. Right there.

Good evening, Raj. ¹

Good evening.

Well, in particular last meeting, the last meeting was particularly meaningful because of the emphasis of your wanting us to ask you before we make any decision if our will is in accordance with yours. And I'm finding just to be conscious of that in my daily life, I'm finding I'm not as conscious of that as I would like to be. But in going about my everyday affairs, just being present and observing life as it's unfolding, I don't feel too much difference other than I'm at more and more at peace and I feel more and more present. But I'm trying to understand how the Course is, how we are to integrate what we're supposed to be looking for, if that makes any sense, other than being in our peace. I mean watching for light episodes and things like that, I'm still not too sure about.

It is a good question.

You've got to remember what this is all about. It's not about miracles. It's not about *A Course In Miracles*. It's about joining isn't it, if you stop and think about what we've been talking about for six months. It's about breaking the isolation, so therefore it's about not being alone. Now that's the negative way to put it. The positive way to put it is that it's about union, unity, communion. With whom? [expecting an answer] With whom?

Well, with each other and you.

Yes. So, it's about reuniting the Family, isn't it? So what is the Peace for? What is the point of turning to the Altar so that you might experience Atonement, if Atonement is an Act of Love? It's about . . . anybody want to yell out the words?

Being present.

It's about *relationship*.

So, what do you do? What is the *reason* for finding your Peace? The reason is so that once having found it, you might extend it to your Brother. You might engage in *involvement*. You see, this is *not* about finding *your* bliss, finding *your* Peace, and experiencing *your* enlightenment, and flashing out of here, as it were. This isn't about you individually. It's about you breaking the isolation, and from a place of a clearer experience of What Love Is, becoming *involved* with your Brothers and Sisters, *expressing* that Love.

Then it's about forgetting oneself?

It's about forgetting the self that you think you are as an isolated entity. Yes.

But it's about bringing *yourself* more clearly and more beautifully into relationship with your Brothers and Sisters. So, at the bottom line, it's about healing relationships, even pleasant relationships, happy relationships. Because if the pleasant and happy relationships are just a result of perfect attunement to mutually agreed-upon decisions that you have made with each other, you're still dreaming the dream. That's *not* involvement.

And so, involvement means bringing Love into those places where your ego would have said, "Love is not deserved. Back out. Be separate. Stay away from him. Stay away from her. She is trouble. He is this." So on and so forth. You see?

We have talked about this in varying ways during the past six months. If you think that the Atonement and Awakening is about you, and you alone, becoming clear and going Home, you've missed the point. When you turn to the Altar and you say "help," you say, "Father, show me the Truth here," you are wanting to know the Truth here so that you might extend it to your Brother in *committed* involvement. Why committed? Because if it's not committed involvement, it's temporary. It's vague. It's tentative. Loving your Brother is something you do fully, or you're not loving your Brother. And so, all of this is about learning to become still and experience your Peace, and then experiencing the influx of Love that naturally occurs when you are not inserting yourself into this, so that you might turn to your Brother and Sister and love them *fully*. You see?

Being fully . . . let me see if I have this straight . . . fully concerned with every aspect of their life when you are in there present [in their presence].

Being fully committed to bringing whatever you can to your relationship with them for the purpose of blessing them.

Which is, "I am here only to be truly helpful."

That is a statement that identifies your Function. But saying it is not a practice of your Function. Do you understand what I mean?

That's a good point. But it brings my attention back to where it needs to be when I say it.

That is correct. "I am here only to be truly helpful." And then you follow it by saying, "Father, how can I be truly helpful?"

Yeah. Yes. I found that prayer that you gave in the Course to be

extremely valuable.

Yes, for pointing you in the right direction.

In the right direction.

But not for accomplishing the goal.

Pass the microphone.

What is the distinction you're making of? If I've understood, you've made it twice, and I'm still not clear. If one is just saying it . . .

You could walk into a friend's home and say to them, "I am here only to be truly helpful." But saying it doesn't constitute *being* truly helpful.

This all has to come from the heart.

That is very true.

I mean . . .

That is *all* that it's about. Yes.

And caring enough to hang in there with a Brother or a Sister who is in need, through the thick and thin of their suffering, if I may put it that way, for the purpose of helping to relieve the suffering, *is* what it's about. It is what Mother Theresa did—wiping the sweat from the forehead, bathing those who couldn't bathe themselves—providing Love that instilled or re-instilled in that one standing in receipt of the Love, a sense of his or her dignity again. It's much deeper than the social niceties of friendly talk. You see?

You want to feel the Father's Love so that you may fulfill your Function, which is to be the Presence of Love, not just glowing somewhere in the void with incredible colors of Love, but with Love that embraces, *deeply* embraces your Brother and Sister, where there is *involvement*. That is the *best* word for it. Involvement that is presented with commitment. Another way of putting that is involvement, Love, that is presented with *faith* in your Brother—faith that is *felt* so that your Brother knows that it's not a *tentative* expression of love. It's not a trial experiment in relating to them with love. You see?

Well, then that would also include addressing the Christ in them. I mean really from your heart.

It would indeed, but you must remember that the one before you who is perhaps dirty, disheveled, smelly, behaving unpleasantly, not exhibiting

Christ-like qualities, is indeed the Christ with mud all over his face, or her face. So, it's not to see the Christ and to address the Christ in them is not, once again, a spiritually disconnected thing where here's this dirty stranger, but you're going to address "the Christ" in them that is somehow above and beyond, or behind, what you're seeing there. You see what I'm saying?

You must recognize that the one standing in front of you, whether fat or thin, ugly or beautiful, tall or short, is right then and right there, the Christ. That's another way of saying you approach another seeing the worth in them. To say, "the Christ in them," is to take it all the way to the ultimate, so that you are addressing the Ultimate *right there* where the one who is unlovely, or behaving in an unlovely way, is.

Your example of healing when you were here those many years ago, you looked into the faces of all your brethren, you looked into the eyes and saw the Christ and remembered God. I know that's the phrase, but that has very important meaning—that if we can look into each other's eyes while we're relating, and remember who we're relating to, even if we can't see it being acted out, that's the opportunity for real healing.

Yes.

The bottom line of what I am trying to express in answer to your question is that any of you who have spare time, the *best way* to engage actively in your spiritual growth is not to sit there and read the *Course*, or to sit and *think* the Truth, but get out there and find a Brother, and help. You can do social service. You can read for children in the library. Find a way to be involved, where you have to bring this Love into play, so that it actually gets *addressed* to these other Christs, instead of your sitting in your ivory tower *thinking* Christ-like thoughts about the Christ in your Brother that you know must be there, even though they are not seeing it at the moment.

You get my point. Okay.

It's hands on.

It is indeed.

Thank you.

You talk about commitment, but I know that a connection that's meaningful has to be involuntary. Could you speak a little bit about the relationship of my commitment and what it is to, and how the Real Love is going to be involuntary and impersonal? So I'm making my personal commitment and it's coming back as impersonal and

involuntary acts.

Well, let's put it this way. It is not an involuntary act to turn toward the Altar. What happens as a *result* of genuinely turning to the Altar ends up being involuntary. But *you*, the Christ That You Are, as ignorant of your Christhood as you might be, has to arrive at a point of *deciding for* turning toward the Altar, of *deciding for* finding the better way to be with your brother, or your sister, or your mate.

Not on my own.

On your own, for your reasons, *you* will have to arrive at a point where you are miserable enough to say, "there must be a better way," and turn your very own attention by virtue of *your very own* decision to the Altar.

I had a good day and I wasn't miserable. And I was seeing clearly how you . . .

Just a moment. Did you understand my answer?

I did. And I'm going on to another point you made before about you feel good and you feel strong because of the mutual agreements that we have. And I had a good day and I was feeling that and I saw that. And feeling good and having a good day, I still stopped and turned towards the Altar. I didn't have to be miserable. I still remembered.

Indeed. Indeed.

And in some ways I think that that was, I felt like that was more significant than when I get all down and beat up, and I turn to God. But . . .

It really doesn't matter what the reason is that you turn as long as you *turn*, as long as you *decide not* to continue to do whatever it is you are doing, whether it's a happy or unhappy experience, by yourself.

My only commitment is to turn to the Altar. That's the only commitment.

Yes. The reason for turning to the Altar is to find out *what* your Function is and to experience it, so that you might turn to your Brother and extend it.

That's . . . I mean I can't just go pick anybody. I can't just run out . . . I mean it's got, it's a particular exact thing.

You know what? You're going to be thinking *something* about everyone you

run into. And what you think about them is either going to come from your memory and habit, or it's going to come from Insight and Revelation. You are going to be thinking something about everyone. Everyone in your experience, whether you see them out of the corner of the eye, or whether you're looking them straight in the eye talking to them, you are in relationship with, and *you have some thought about them*. The point is, is that thought going to come from your memory, or is it going to come from Insight because you've wanted to reach *past* your best judgments, and your best theories, and your mutually agreed upon definitions?

If you don't make it really simple, it gets really complicated.

If you don't *let it be* as simple as it really is, it becomes hell.

Overwhelming.

Yes.

If I don't think about it, I got it.

Hello, Raj.

Good evening.

Could you talk to me about how forgiveness might be an aid in us laying aside our habitual reactions and anxiety, or whatever, anger, fear, so that we can see What's Real about our Brothers and Sisters?

Well, very simply you can't be in a forgiving state, you can't be in a state of forgiveness if you haven't abandoned the very things that kept unpleasantness going.

So forgiveness is definitely an aid.

It's an essential integral part.

Why are you turning to the Altar? Because you need help. And you can think that you're turning to the Altar when you're saying, "God, help me get this bastard. Help me straighten him out." Or you can turn toward the Altar embodying this attitude, "Let the reign (r-e-i-g-n) . . . let the reign of Divine Truth, Life and Love be established in me and rule out of me all self will."

You see the difference? One way you're turning, because of fear, to God to help nail the thing you're afraid of. The other one embodies the willingness to have an entirely new frame of mind, an entirely new frame of reference, supplied to you. Supplied *to you*—not to the bastard out there. Why? So that you might be

able to turn to the one you thought was a bastard, with new Vision. In other words, with forgiveness. In other words, having let go of the picture *you* were holding of him, and holding him to, and seeing as a call for justice that it's your job to implement. You see?

You want the frame of *mind* to change, *your* frame of mind, so that you aren't continuing the habit of looking at things from an isolated place.

I understand what you just told me with my intellect. [laughs]

I will tell you that you *feel it* as well.

Yes, I do.

Now I will tell you something else.

Yes.

As long as you get it with the intellect, it means... and it's clearer, intellectually it's clearer to you, then you are experiencing an improved belief. And improved beliefs are beneficial, because they become part of a new habit of mind. And because they are improved, they don't continue to reestablish the old level of stress and distress.

Thank God.

Indeed.

It's just that an improved belief is *not* what you're after. It's beneficial, but it's not the point. The improved belief simply allows you to be less defended. And it's the absence of defense, or the lessening of defense, that makes it possible for Insight to penetrate, because your armor isn't as dense.

Okay.

Thank you, Raj.

You are welcome.

And I want to keep this on track. We are talking about . . . this is an opportunity for you to discuss things that haven't been resolved through the things I have shared and the things we have read.

Okay.

Okay. Actually, [clears throat] excuse me, I want you to just keep

doing exactly what you're doing. It's helping me immensely, no matter what stupid thing I said about hurrying through the Course.

I did not name names, did I?

But, every time I come I get some little nugget that gets me through the next week. 'Cause my life has really accelerated. And I'm amazed at what's happening. And no, I don't want you to change a thing. I just think it's really, really valuable and helping. And I can't do this otherwise, because there's just too much expected of me and my structures don't work anymore.

And is there anything that we have discussed that hasn't settled with you, that you're saying, "I hear what he's saying, but I just don't get it"?

Things have come up from time to time, but what I am getting out of it is one thing that my mind holds onto. It reminds me, as you said, to turn to the Altar. So, no, I don't have a lot of specifics I want explained.

I, too, want to express gratitude for what you're doing. It's been very helpful to me. And I've experienced it in my life as kind of like photography with a lens, that things come into focus and they are very clear, and then they blur again because I've lost my focus.

And there are times when I don't understand what you're saying, but if I just wait it out, eventually I kind of absorb it and I think I understand it. Sometimes only vaguely. But I don't worry about it anymore. I used to worry like, what on earth? I don't have a clue even what anybody's questions mean. I don't even understand those.

But after listening and coming here week after week, I, too, am very, very grateful to have this opportunity. And it is making big changes in my life. And sometimes I don't like them very much, the changes, but [small laugh] it's okay. I don't really have any questions. Well, I do kind of. When you say, "turn toward the Altar," I don't fully understand what you mean by that.

It means the same thing as turn toward your Guide. Extend an inquiry. Express within yourself a desire to have Clarity, knowing that you are not asking the question of yourself, but of One Who Is Awake, whether it's your Guide, or whether it's Me, or whether it's the Holy Spirit, or whether it's the Father. It is the act of breaking the isolation.

And, you see, you're not some tiny entity in the middle of an infinite universe, even though that is the way you have conditioned yourself to think about it. *You*, the Essential You, are Consciousness. Conscious Awareness *being*

Conscious. And the Universe is what you're conscious of. Sometimes you're focused on a very small point in the Universe, but on the other hand, you can look through a telescope and you can see a lot more of it. It's embraced *within you* as Consciousness. So obviously you are not reaching to the Holy Spirit somewhere out in the universe that is infinitely surrounding piss-ant little you. You see?

You are turning not to a place, but to a Point of Connection with God, a Point of Connection with a Brother (or a Sister) Who Is Awake, or the Holy Spirit—all of whom see the *difference* between Reality and the way you are presently perceiving it. *And who are committed to involvement with you* through your every miserable step—I say miserable as it seems to *you* to be—constantly ready to tell you the Truth about the step you are misperceiving and experiencing as misery. *Committed to loving you out of* every bit of agony you are creating for yourself by defining the Kingdom of Heaven as something other than the Kingdom of Heaven. And not tiring of your bitching about the agony and the misery. You see?

Now there's a point I want to bring up. To be present with your Brother, or your Sister, with commitment to being the Presence of Love, does not mean that you become their doormat. It does not mean that you sacrifice integrity.

Two of my disciples came upon a lame man, at the gate to a temple, who begged for alms. Now, they were willing to be present *with* him and *for* him. But they were not willing to do what would confirm his miserable state of life. And so they, without apology, said, "We don't have any money. We don't have any alms for you. But what we *do* have, we'll gladly give you." You see?

You see what was happening there? He didn't respond on the terms that the beggar was asking them to respond on. *He believed* that he had been born lame and that his station in life was to be a beggar, which was not a profession, if you will, worthy of great negative judgment. It was a well-accepted station of life, you might say. They were unwilling to respond to him on those terms, because they would have left him lame. And that wasn't what they were there for. So they *did not* respond on his terms.

They gave him a new way of looking at it. They shared what provided Insight, sufficient Insight to cause him to choose for being as someone who could walk and behave in the world just like everyone else, which changed everything about his life, in the sense that now his ego could say he had to become responsible and get a job. You see? And the Inspiration had to be sufficient to get him to abandon everything that he had become comfortable with; a community that had become comfortable with him being one of those in that station of life in their community which they were willing to support. You see?

He had to be inspired enough to be in a new way that required his community to look at him in a new way. *Now* somebody in the community had to be willing to hire him. As long as he was sitting begging, oh, they didn't have to be that involved, you see. They didn't have to *relate* to him like an employer would. And the others in the community didn't have to relate to him as a fellow employee, and so on. You see, a lot of minds had to change. And the Inspiration had to be enough to get him, the lame man, to abandon what not only he, but everyone else in the community, had become comfortable with.

Now one could look at the disciples and say they were upsetting the status quo. They were up-starts. Why didn't they just leave things as they were? You see?

So, when you turn to the Altar to find out how to be the Presence of Love and extend it, and if it's going to be truly Love extended, it's going to be transformational, which is going to require change. And there may be some complaining about it, and they may not. But mostly you must understand that being the Presence of Love doesn't constitute catering to the current ego-sense that your Brother has of himself.

It's so easy to think that being the Presence of Love means simply turning the other cheek when your Brother behaves badly. And sometimes you have to say, "No, Brother. You are behaving badly when you ask me for alms, because you are not honoring the Christ That You Are. And *I* am not going to join you in dishonoring the Christ That You Are. I'm going to join you by saying stop doing this. Stop behaving this way. Stop conceiving of yourself this way because here's What You Are. You are the Immaculate Expression of God at this very instant. You're just *believing* otherwise, and your poor *belief* is governing your experience. And it doesn't . . . your experience doesn't have to be governed this way. So let's talk about a new belief. And maybe even let's go beyond a new *belief* and talk the Truth, so that you might not *ever* behave poorly like this again by demeaning the Immaculate Christ That You Are, by presenting yourself as a poor, lame beggar."

You see what I'm saying? Do you understand what I'm saying?

[in the background] Yes, and I want . . .

Whoops. Microphone.

Before you say this, this is part of what the *involvement* is that I'm talking about.

Yes.

Taken to greater depth.

Continue.

And I can see where this is supposed to go.

You're doing better than I am. [audience laughter]

Well, I mean . . . [laughs] Forget . . . I didn't mean.

Let me just share what just occurred to me as you were saying that. That the scripture that says that you said, "And the things that I did, you can do, and even greater things."—meaning healing the sick, raising the dead, and doing all these things—and it cannot begin until we start, from what I'm hearing you say, making this kind of commitment.

I'm glad that, that it is making sense to you. And I'm glad *you* put it into words, so that it can make sense to everyone else who is hearing this. Yes. Exactly.

Because this has got to begin.

This is what it's about.

Yes. Okay. Thank you.

This is what the Atonement is about. Again, the Atonement isn't about any one of you individually somehow getting the point, making it, and going Home. You go Home right through the middle of your Brother that you've made a commitment to. Can I put it *any* simpler than that?

[in the background] You can't go Home alone, right?

Someone said, "You can't go Home alone." That is correct. [pause] That is correct.

Was there a question over here?

Raj, you mentioned the other week that every thought that we have, has an effect at some level.

Indeed.

The example that came to my mind is on Martin Luther King's birthday, I was teaching a yoga class. And on the way to yoga class, I

was taking my friend with me, and I said to my friend, "I don't expect many people are going to come today. But that's okay. If no one comes, you and I will just do yoga together." And my friend said to me, "Don't . . . don't say those things, because if you say things like that, then that's what you'll get." So, in other words, by me saying it, it will actually have an effect of no one coming to the yoga class.

There are no private thoughts.

Continue.

Okay. So, what I'm saying, at what level does thinking versus speaking have an effect? For instance, . .

Oh, I will tell you something.

Yes.

It's what you *mean*, and *not* what you *say*, that isn't private.

When you say, "You're wonderful" and you are thinking or feeling, "I can't stand this person," your words are meaningless. Your . . . the *meaning* and the *feeling* behind the insincere chitchat is what is communicated, and is what has impact, is what finds manifestation.

The other thing that comes up for me around this is that when I hear things like this, it makes me think, well, then, if my very words have some kind of magical quality to them that will make things manifest. You see what I mean? In other words, if you carry it to that degree. So, in other words, the difference is, say for instance, I think a certain way, then that's what I'll see. Okay.

Indeed.

But yet, that . . . if I think a certain way, will that actually have real effect in the scheme of what other people are doing?

It depends entirely upon how sensitive the other person is. And as well as how mature they are in terms of their spiritual growth, in terms of their clarity about their Real Integrity.

The more . . . I will put it this way. The less defended you are against the Experience of your Divine Integrity, the more you will experience it. At the same time, because in order to experience it you have broken the isolation and are less defended, you will find yourself feeling meanings that other people are experiencing relative to you, or relative to their life, but because they are in

your immediate vicinity, you are able to be aware of it. The reason you are able to be aware of it, is because you have the capacity to bring the blessing of your connectedness with the Altar to the situation.

If you are engaged with the voice for fear in *your* mind and in *your* life, you can count on it that you are contributing to the density of the dream and the so-called *strength* of the *teacher* for the voice for fear. In that sense, everyone is contributing to the ongoingness of the dream. You are either contributing to it, or you're not. There's nothing else for you to *be* doing.

So it's very important for you to understand what I'm going to call *the power of your thoughts*. Because the power of your thoughts cause you to see the world in a particular biased way, that causes you to have certain feelings which are not based on What's Really Going On, and those *feelings* become the . . . for lack of better words, become the engine for a movement of fear that others who are equally defended *feel*, because it has become essential to them to *feel* these inclinations in order to survive in a hostile world—a hostile world which they have created for themselves by having decided to look at the Kingdom of Heaven by themselves. (Just a moment.) It's all part of the mutually-agreed-upon definitions. It's part of the way the dream has been very consciously and precisely set up.

Does that answer your question?

Yes, to some extent. But the other thing that I spin on is contrived thinking. And what I mean by that is saying, okay . . . or wishful thinking. In other words, well, I'm just going to keep thinking this, and that'll make that happen. Okay. And then you've got the other end of saying, well, gosh, I had that thought and I didn't mean to have that thought, but I had it, and that's what happened out there. So that's my fault that that happened. Or I contributed to it because I had that thought.

So you've got two things. The person who is contriving their thoughts to get what they want. And then the other person who is afraid that their thoughts are having these ramifications that they don't mean them to have. You see what I mean?

Yes.

The first, where you are contriving a thought, is actually the modus operandi of the ego. And all of you are doing it. And that's why you are suffering.

The one who has a thought and sees something happen and feels guilty, has more conscience, and is in a better spot. Because *you* are asking a question about someone who is contriving a thought on purpose, and you are placing a

value judgment on that, and absolutely ignoring the fact that, for the most part, that's the way you go through your day as well, except that you aren't consciously contriving it—you're just doing it. Okay? So, the one that recognizes a connection between their poor beliefs, their poor thoughts, and what happens in the world, is experiencing greater clarity, which leads to what would be called greater social conscious, or greater social consciousness, so that they actually can arrive at a point of disciplining their thoughts, *training* their mind.

The *Course* is a course in mind-training so that they are *not* thinking idle thoughts, careless thoughts, unloving thoughts. Why? Because to the degree that you are disciplining your *thinking* and employing your thinking for the purpose of expressing your *best* beliefs, or for the purpose of convincing yourself of the need to ask for help and break the isolation, you are lessening the density of the dream and priming yourself for breakthrough, where *you* actually experience a sudden shift of consciousness, a miracle, that puts you in an entirely new place, so that you become an even more significant contributor to the Awakening of mankind.

Does that answer your question?

Yes. I guess it also goes back to the old story of the little kid who gets mad at his parent, and says, "Oh, I wish you were dead," and then something happens to the parent and the kid grows up with this complex, thinking that they wished it, and therefore it happened.

And I believe there is something in the Course that talks about a safety mechanism, so that when we are not co-creating with the Father, those things don't happen. Is this . . . am I on with this?

Yes. In this instant, the child is believing that his thought was powerful enough to actually override the integrity of his father, or whoever the parent was, when *that is impossible*. But it's not impossible for the parent to *feel* the anger, or the negativity, that the child was feeling. It's the parent's responsibility to decide how they are going to respond to that *feeling*, either recognizing it as a call for Love, or as Love Itself, and then responding, to the best of their ability, from having turned to the Altar to know what to do.

So, you are all capable of communicating silently or audibly to your friends, your neighbors, your enemies, everyone, a *feeling* that you are feeling. And that can be impactful. It will register. How that person *deals* with it is their responsibility.

But hey, let's stop giving your Brothers trouble to have to decide how to deal with appropriately. That's part of the involvement. Part of the involvement means don't let parts of your day be taken up with idle, negative, judgmental

opinions and thoughts about your Brothers or Sisters, your acquaintances or your enemies. That's not your function. And I promise you that as long as you find that a valuable activity to engage in, you are absolutely blocking your ability to feel the Presence of the Father in you, *illuminating you* more clearly to you, so that you become a transformational presence with your Brothers and Sisters. It keeps you from turning to the Altar. And until you turn to the Altar and reach beyond your ego-centered mental activities, you are still going to experience isolation and all of the hell that accompanies it.

So, we can be a little sloppy here for just a moment by saying that you could decide not to engage in this kind of idle mental activity relative to your fellowman, because it's going to keep you from experiencing What You Divinely Are. It will keep you from experiencing Joy, and Fullness, and Wholeness, and freedom from misery. Okay? And so you can say, "Okay, I'm going to do this for myself. I'm going to turn to the Altar for me." You can do that. That's a reasonable unreasonable reason for turning toward the Altar. Your reason doesn't have to be perfect.

But you're turning toward the Altar because you don't want to be miserable and you don't want to miss your Function. Right? And you don't know what your Function is so you're going to have to inquire. And what you're going to learn is that a Gift is given to you that you can't hold in, and you're going to extend it to your Brother. And you're going to involuntarily fulfill your Function. And you're going to watch it happen. And you are going to discover that although you had had a selfish reason for turning toward the Altar, it couldn't stop the way things work from *happening* that uncovered to you that the Love that you are filled with is a Love that can't be withheld from your Brother. And you were tricked into caring for your Brother before yourself involuntarily. And your Brother was blessed. And you felt the fulfillment of it. And now you know as a matter of *fact* that the only place your Joy can come from is from the Joy you've given your Brother first. So I say we can be sloppy.

The simple fact is that you cannot experience the Atonement privately. Something else has to be more important to you than you, that you wish to extend Love to and *bless*. That's the fact. *But* you *can* decide to turn to the Altar for selfish reasons and still be blessed.

You see what I'm saying?

[in the background] That's where the energy is, isn't it? Sorry. [waiting for the mic] Is that . . . that's where we can experience the energy.

The Movement. Yes.

The Movement of All That Is.

Yes.

And with our relationship.

Yes.

The Sonship relationship.

Yes.

So to speak.

Exactly.

Now you can turn toward the Altar for a selfish reason and get the blessing just the way the lame man, the beggar, turned to his blessing and said, “Bless me in the terms of what blessing means to me right now, which is a few shekels that I can manage to have enough food to survive to be here tomorrow to ask for more.” You see? Wrong question. Asking for the wrong thing. Asking for what wouldn’t answer the problem. But nevertheless, he was reaching outside himself, *and* the answer could come that didn’t knock him off his feet—knocked him on his feet. You see?

Yes.

Okay. Is there a “yes, but”?

[in the background] Well, there is.

Of course, there is. [audience laughter]

I wasn’t going to get into this, but you asked. [small laugh]

[with the mic now] Another regarding one’s thoughts, there have been a lot of . . . and I’ll bring it to something that’s relevant, but it can be applied far and wide. Regarding the peace movement, peace march, the war-hawks, that’s going on right now, I was having a discussion with someone and I said, “I don’t know what anything is for.” I don’t. I know I don’t. I don’t know if a war should happen, or if a war shouldn’t happen. What I do know is that I turn to Altar and say, “Father, Thy Will be done in this situation.” And I can’t worry about peace out there until I feel peace in here, in my heart. So that’s how I’ve been approaching it.

Then Michael.

Yes.

Find out what you do feel and get off the fence.

Well, I'm definitely not on the fence.

Now I am meaning here that it is copout. And you all have to stop this. You have to stop saying, "I don't know what anything means," and leave everything meaningless. *You* are here for a reason. *You* have a voice. You have a voice to say something. And if you are not saying anything, it is because you have not found what you *feel*. And you haven't found what you *feel* because it's easier not to get *involved*.

I'm not just picking on you. But this is something *you* need to become clear on. And I can talk to you this way because you understand me.

If you don't know what to say, then you have chosen to be unconscious for a while. And you are not fulfilling your Function in doing that. It is *not* a spiritual thing to be in your Peace in the middle of a situation that calls for your voice to be heard, for *your* clarity to be expressed and counted, whether it is "yea" or "nay." *You are neglecting to vote*. Do you all hear me? Don't neglect to vote.

Don't neglect to raise your voice on the pretext, the *spiritual* pretext that like the first lesson in the *Course* says, "Nothing that I see means anything." *You can't get stuck there* with "nothing I see means anything," and therefore I don't have to participate, or, I don't even know whether there's a real way for me to participate. You count. Your presence counts.

Now, the thing is, how . . . what is going to be the basis for letting your vote be heard? Is it going to be memory? Is it going to be habit? Is it going to be the mutually-agreed-upon definitions that seem to govern the whole picture? Or are you going to say, "I don't know what this means, but something meaningful is going on here, and I need to know what it is, and how *I* feel about it, so that I can register my vote"?

Paul is registering his vote when he lets me speak. And what I am saying is his vote. The *Course*. Helen didn't just sit there and say, "There must be a better way. I don't know what it is," and then just go on her unhappy way. She registered her vote. You see? She got involved and said something that is making a difference in the world today, whether it's totally obvious to everyone or not.

Now, stop sitting on the fence saying, "Nothing I see means anything" or "I

don't know what anything means," and then *leave it there. Stop It! Be hot or cold. Be no or yes.* Don't be "I don't know." If you don't know, find out, and cast your vote, and let it be from that place in you, your heart, where you can genuinely say "yea" or "nay" from your heart.

Is anyone having any trouble understanding what I have just said?

No. Let me tell you the trouble I'm having. Okay. I don't know if this guy, okay, is just, you know, just a big whirlwind that's just going to dissipate, or if he's the next Adolph Hitler. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know if somebody should go in there and kick ass. Okay. Or naturally I feel in my heart that war is horrible. It's a horrible thing. Okay. So does that mean that we shouldn't have had World War II? You see what I'm getting at? Then everything would have been different had we not done that.

But you're avoiding what I said. You're getting off out there.

No. What I'm saying is, is I truly am not sure.

So, what did I say?

Turn to the Altar and ask.

Find out! Find out what you *feel*, whether it makes rational sense to you, or not, based on all of the kind of thinking you just expressed about Hitler, or this guy, and so on. *Find out what you feel. Find out what the answer is for you and cast your vote.* And if you have to march, march. If you have to voice something to the grocery clerk, or a stranger, because the opportunity is there and you're moved to express it, *voice it. Cast your vote.*

How does . . . and clarity comes from just being quiet, and going inside, and feeling into the situation?

That is the only way it comes.

And so, when one feels torn in two directions, that is a call to do that?

Exactly. It means that you are stuck in your head reasoning between two incompatible ideas. We're not talking about ideas, or theories, or historical perspectives, that allow you to make a better intellectual decision today. We're talking about getting involved, not standing on the sideline objectively where you can say, "I don't know. I really don't know what this means." You see? *Find out* what it means and *cast your vote.* Not just about this issue though. Find out what *everything* means and cast your vote.

That's really what we've been talking about since the first question. *Involvement* with *commitment* to *bless*. And you bless by being in touch with what is appropriate for you and *acting* on it. *That* is an *Act* of Love, whether it's saying, "No, I will not give you silver and gold. I don't have any money. I will not give you what you're asking for, but I *will* give you what I have."

What is this all about? It's about no longer sitting in a place where you never get around to the *Act of Love* that is the Atonement, because you are stuck in a fairy tale safety place called, "I don't know what anything means. And as long as I stay where I don't know what anything means, I will be safe." You're saying, "As long as I don't know the Truth, I will be safe. So I'm not going to *ask* what *does* this mean because then I'm going to have to put up or shut up. I'm going have to vote, or not vote and know that I'm not voting and feel irresponsible, truly irresponsible." Because you didn't choose to glorify God. You chose to keep your mouth shut and not give voice to that which *would* transform and bless everyone.

Involvement with commitment, with you coming from the tips of your toes because you took time to find out what the tips of your toes had to say. And you find out what the tips of your toes have to say when you turn toward the Altar and say "help" and let the response in. Why? Not so that you can sit there with your little nugget of clear perception, but so that that can be extended because you care enough *to cast your vote*.

Now, in a way tonight, we have discussed what's in section VII [Cause and Effect], but we've talked about it in really relevant ways.

The key point tonight is that what you call *life* is a call for involvement from your heart, from the Altar within you, which is where the Light of God is being the Light that you are. It's about not withholding the Gift of What *You* Divinely Are from your Brothers and Sisters, your friends and your enemies. Atonement simply isn't a private affair. Again, it's an *Act* of Love. And an *Act* of Love cannot be an isolated expression or experience.

I'm speaking very, very clearly tonight, because the clearer you are about it, the more disciplined your mind can be. Because there's less confusion. There's less of this airy-fairy, metaphysical, spiritual nonsense that can imagine that because nothing means anything, or because you don't know what anything really means, and maybe what is meaningless can really be meaningful. You think that this attitude, this frame of mind, is like a safety net. It's more like a padded room in an insane asylum. And if you can be clear on this, so that there is less confusion, then, you'll find it easier to dare to ask for what is the Truth, so that you can *find out* what the Truth is, so that it might *spontaneously* find expression through you and your voice gets counted. And the Heavenly Host Who Are Awake will throw up an infinite cheer in favor of

and in support of your having the courage to cast your vote, and not be on the fence, and not hide in a nebulous place, thinking that somehow it's a dependable spiritual hideout where you don't have to cast your vote.

I love you.

Even you, Michael. [audience laughter]

Well, then I guess I have to love you, too. [audience laughter] [Raj laughing]

We will call it a night.

Thank you, Raj. Thank you very much.

A Course In Miracles (reference pages)

Discussion Today

¹ *Students – commenting or asking a question.*

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