

Raj/ACIM Study Group – May 1, 2003

A Course In Miracles (reference pages)
Chapter 3 – THE INNOCENT PERCEPTION
Section – PERCEPTION VERSUS KNOWLEDGE
First Edition – p. 36 / Second Edition – p. 40

RAJ: Good Evening. So we're on the chapter entitled, "*Perception Versus Knowledge*." And the way the word "perception" is used in the *Course*, it really means "misperception." Perception is the way you see something when you're looking at it without God, whether what you're looking at is being defined by you as good or bad.

And as I said last week, Knowledge is the direct perception, you might say, of Truth, the direct Experience of Truth. You, each one of you are the salvation of the world. Ye shall know the Truth and the Truth shall make you free. That doesn't mean that you will have an idea about the Truth, but you shall experience directly the Truth about anything you're experiencing. When you're engaged in your function of being the salvation of the world, you are glorifying God. And you could say that in glorifying God, you are calling God forth in whatever it is you're experiencing, instead of muddling along in your mutually-agreed-upon definitions of what that thing is.

You're here to undo the dream. It is not your function to glide along in the middle of the dream untouched by the dream. You're here to undo the dream. Which means that if you see a friend, or a co-worker, or anyone, who appears not be well, you don't say, "Poor dear, she needs to be home in bed." Instead, it's your *job* to correct that perception you're having. And at the least to realize that's not her Birthright. That is not innately natural to her. That is an illegitimate imposition upon her of an illusion which it's not her Birthright to be experiencing at all.

Of course, now that will be drawing from your memory, but it's an excellent first step to redirect the tendency, you might say, the natural tendency to respond, "Oh, poor dear, she needs to be home in bed." Which does nothing to correct the dream. And it also does nothing to *direct your* thought and your mind in toward the desire to know of God: "What is the Truth here? What is the Truth about this Divine One who couldn't possibly for an instant have ceased to be the Divine One that God Is Being right there?"

That's how you turn toward the Altar, but in order to turn toward the Altar you have to realize when you're *not* turned toward it, when you are turned away. And all of your *habits* of thinking about others have arisen out of having your back to the Altar. You're here to bless each other all day long

every day by desiring to glorify God right there in each other, no matter how cranky or ill or unpleasant another is behaving. *You* want to break the habit of *thoughtlessly* moving down a well-worn path of ignorance and confirming it further, making the rut deeper.

So you're not here to be in passive bliss while illusion goes on unchanged and unchallenged. You're here to be an agent for change. Why? Because God gave you that special task? No. But because it is your Function to be glorifying God in everything you see. And it just so happens that glorifying God in everything you see, *blesses and heals* and puts the weight on the right side, the side of Truth. And reminds you to listen more deeply and to desire when you look at this other one to see the fullness of God right there because you don't want to labor under an illusion. And you don't want *them* to labor under an illusion.

You are the Light of the World, if the Light is what you want to see and if the Light is what you insist upon letting in right where darkness and obscureness seems to prevail. Another reason you do it is because it's the way for you to wake up. It's the way you undo *your* decision to see things by yourself, on your own, in your own inimitable unique way.

The one, "poor dear who needs to be home in bed," can't possibly be the Glory of God. The perception you have of them cannot be a recognition of the Glory of God. And you know what? The picture you project upon her is the one that governs you. And the Truth that you let in blesses her and blesses you as well. Whatever you think you know about someone else is what you think you know about yourself. And whatever you *truly* Know in the sense that the *Course* is speaking of Knowledge, whatever *direct Experience of Truth* you have is unavoidably the direct Experience of the Truth about you.

Now you can't have a direct Experience of the Truth about you all by yourself, because that's still private. You, if you want to know the Truth about yourself, need to seek the Truth about your Brother. It's a fact that what you need, you need to give. And so, of course, we're coming back to this word "involvement." Involvement meaning not being private, not being isolated. And you know what? If it's your desire to see the fullness of God in your Brother or your pet or your plant or your home, and you don't see immediate transformation, you don't see immediate evidence of healing so that the fullness of God is what is being given back to you, you persist. And you don't worry about their willingness or unwillingness. You persist because they need someone to see for them the Truth in them, because they can't do it alone. You persist. You persist. You persist. And you don't fret about delays and you don't wonder if you're not doing it well enough. You

persist until whatever resistance *you* have is melted and the direct Experience of Truth can flood you, and for lack of better words, *convince* you so that you utterly Know the Truth.

Let's talk about something else. The moment you decided to look at things all by yourself, "but, Father, I'd rather see it my way," and you imagined that you could do it and you imagined that you did do it, it left you with an impression that you had a mind of your own. And you believe it. And as a result, when you look at your Brother and Sister, and they, "poor dears, look like they need to be home in bed," you make the natural assumption that they have a mind of their own. And then you can metaphysically mess yourself up by saying: "Well, they have a mind of their own and they brought it on themselves. And what can I do to overcome the mind of their own that they're insisting on embodying?" And that's a trap, because you don't have a mind of your own, except in your imagination, and that doesn't mean that you have a mind of your own.

When it dawns on you that you don't have a mind of your own and they don't, even intellectually as a thought and not a knowing, when it dawns on you that you don't have a mind of your own and they don't have a mind of their own, then you know that there's nothing to overcome. And there is no one there with a right to see things the way they want to see them. That's part of the illusion, too.

And so, as part of being the salvation of the world as far as being an agent for change is concerned, as far as being that Presence which *corrects* illusion, you must not only recognize that they are suffering from an illegitimate imposition, you must recognize that they don't actually have a *mind* to make-up their illusion and embody it, that they themselves *still* exist, just as you do right now, in your pristine state of God Presencing Himself/Herself right where you are, in which there's no mind to have its illusions or its perceptions.

You need to exonerate your Brother and Sister, not only from the belief that they're suffering from, but the suggestion that they are capable of *believing*, of *having a perception* actually of something God didn't make, or of having a perception on their own. Ridiculous words. *You can't have a perception on your own* because no such "you" exists. So in glorifying God, you are exonerating the so-called one capable of being willful and having private disturbed perceptions of Reality. You exonerate them from this in the realization that they don't even have such a mind that's going to take ages to change. They don't have a mind that you have to convince. They don't have a mind that you have to struggle with, because if there's anything right there where they are, all there is, is God Presencing Himself or Herself.

Now I am giving you ideas that prime you for being less resistance to the influx of the Experience of *Knowing* the Truth. But realize you have the capacity to provide *direction* to your *thoughts* and provide that direction so that, as I said, you don't just flow with the illusion and thus fail to fulfill your function of correcting the illusion. Why? So that there is no further apparent evidence of anything but the Presence of God there. This *Course* is not about learning how not to be bothered by the illusion while being in it. It is about correction.

Does that mean you have authority and some new level of control? No. What it means is that you have a capacity to reflect nothing other than God, to be the Presence of nothing other than the Father's Point of View and thereby magnify what God Is Being. Another way of saying *glorifying God* right there where you thought you saw an illusion and you thought you saw somebody else seeing an illusion about themselves. And which, if you weren't careful, you would give them the right to do because you thought they had a mind of their own just like you.

Let that mind be *in you*. "Let *that* mind be *in you* that was also in Christ Jesus," it was said. That's what it's about is letting the only Mind there is, the Presence of Mind that is God being Conscious of His Infinite Creation. Let *that* be in you because that is all there is *of you* and *to you*. You see? That's coming back Home.

That is not an exercise of personal authority. And it is not an exercise of the power of thought. It's the spontaneous and natural evidence of abandoning authority you think you have and the private position you think you have. That constitutes a lowered defense, a softened shell, a weakened privacy so that the Presence of God that is what is *right there* where each of you sits can be your Conscious Experience of Being putting you in a state of Knowing the Truth.

You don't know the Truth to make something happen. When you *Know* the Truth, when you're having a direct Experience of Truth, you no longer see anything to have something done to. And that's what makes you free, not that you have *known* the Truth so well that it *changed* something wrong into something right. The direct Experience of Truth is the Reality of a thing revealed to you because you weren't blocking the experience of it with a dearly loved concept or perception or definition.

SEEKER: Raj, could I ask a question please?

RAJ: No. Let us begin. Remember it.

READER: *The Bible tells you to know yourself, or to be certain.*

RAJ: Uh huh. Now, some people *try* to be certain. Some people *practice* certainty. They sort of screw up enough courage and guts to be definite. You see? And they call that being certain. Do you understand?

SEEKER (reader): I'm working on it.

RAJ: Someone says, "Such-and-such-a-thing is true."

And you say to them, "Are you certain?"

And they say, "I'm pretty certain."

"Now just a moment."

"Yes! *I'm* certain!"

That is an adopted certainty. That's a certainty that arises out of a faith one has in his own perceptions.

SEEKER: Right. Okay, then I understand.

RAJ: Yes, but to Know yourself is to be in the unobstructed direct Experience of Truth in which there is nothing but It, nothing but Truth. And *that* is certainty because there is nothing else to defer to or to be distracted by.

Continue.

READER: *Certainty is always of God.*

RAJ: Yes. The certainty of *you* is God Presencing Himself/Herself right where you are. Everything else is *un*-certainty. Any other sense of yourself that you entertain separate and apart from God's Being of You, is really uncertainty, even if you feel you have a great deal of confidence in yourself. It's not certainty.

Continue.

READER: *When you love someone you have perceived him as he is, and this makes it possible for you to know him. Until you first perceive him as he is you cannot know him. While you ask questions about him you are clearly implying that you do not know God.*

RAJ: You're clearly implying that you do not know God. And what that means is that you don't have the expectation when you're looking at your Brother or your Sister of seeing the Presence of God. It is not your spontaneous intent to see the Wholeness of God and the Glory of God right there.

Continue.

READER: *Certainty does not require action. When you say you are acting on the basis of knowledge, you are really confusing knowledge with perception. Knowledge provides the strength for creative thinking, but not for right doing.*

RAJ: Hmmm. This is because *Knowledge* shows God's Work as already done.

Continue.

READER: *Perception, miracles and doing are closely related. Knowledge is the result of revelation and induces only thought. Even in its most spiritualized form perception involves the body. Knowledge comes from the altar within and is timeless because it is certain. To perceive the truth is not the same as to know it.*

RAJ: Exactly. Perception is variable. One moment you can perceive Truth, and the next moment you can perceive error. But when you *Know* the Truth as a direct Experience of Truth, there is no variableness to it. It is *certain*.

Okay.

ANOTHER SEEKER: [apparently someone wanted to ask a question]

RAJ: I'm going to hold comments down because of the time and so that we can cover as much as possible.

READER: *Right perception is necessary before God can communicate directly to His altars, ...*

SEEKER (reader): To His Altars?

RAJ: To His Altars.

SEEKER: Hmmm. I didn't quite understand multiple Altars is why I was wondering about that.

RAJ READING: *...which He established in His Sons.*

RAJ: Plural.

SEEKER: Okay.

READER: *There He can communicate His certainty, and His knowledge will bring peace without question.*

RAJ: Now why is right perception necessary? Because *right* perception is the ability to distinguish between Truth and illusion, to recognize where an illusion is operating, to recognize where an illegitimate imposition seems to be holding a Sister or a Brother in bondage. Because without being able to

discern the difference between right and wrong, you cannot make the choice for right. And in making the choice for right, turning toward the Altar, if you cannot tell the difference, you will not know that there is a call for correction. You see?

READER: *God is not a stranger to His Sons, and His Sons are not strangers to each other. Knowledge preceded both perception and time, and will ultimately replace them.*

RAJ: It is you coming back into your *Right Mind* which, because it *Knows* the Truth, experiences nothing unlike it to distract you from it.

Continue.

READER: *That is the real meaning of “Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end,” and “Before Abraham was I am.” Perception can and must be stabilized, but knowledge is stable.*

RAJ: Yes. And so, at this point, what you’re all engaged in is a process of stabilizing perception, learning to recognize when something is going on that is illegitimate, meaning not God-ordained. And in being able to recognize that, not vacillating from positive to negative to willing cooperation with an illusion to taking steps to correct it. You are learning to *not* be fooled, not to be sucked in on a daily basis from hour to hour. Where never again, when you see someone who doesn’t look well, do you say, “Poor dear, she really needs to be home in bed.” You find yourself catching that thought and correcting that thought by *at least* acknowledging: “This is not her Birthright, *and* it’s illegitimate, *and* she doesn’t even really have a mind of her own with which to create that illusion and bind herself with. All that is there is the Presence of God Presencing Himself/Herself.”

That kind of a statement, even though it’s drawn from memory because you heard me say it or you’ve realized it in the past, that kind of thought is discernment and constitutes a mental discipline that allows you then to say, “Father, I would *Know* the Truth about her. Father, show me Your Fullness in her.” And then you listen. That’s turning toward the Altar.

Continue.

READER: *“Fear God and keep His commandments” becomes “Know God and accept His certainty.”*

RAJ: Yes. To know God, you have to have your attention turned toward God. What God is has to be more important than what you think you are and what you think your Brothers are, and what you think your obligations to your Brothers are, as well as to the mutually-agreed-upon definitions that the two of you, or more, have made commitment to. And the minute

you are willing to abandon those, the minute you are willing not to give the value to them that you have in the past, you can *shift* your attention to God so that you might be filled with the direct Experience of Truth. In other words, an Experience of Knowing that constitutes Knowledge. But again, as I said last week, not knowledge as a bit of information to be stored away in memory to be used again in the future. It is a *Living* Knowledge that can only be gathered in the moment of the Conscious Experience of what Truth is. And it's therefore always new.

The Experience of God is always new.

Okay.

READER: *If you attack error in another, you will hurt yourself. You cannot know your brother when you attack him. Attack is always made upon a stranger.*

RAJ: Why? Because you trust a Brother. You know a Brother. You feel your *kinship*. Attack is always made upon an *estranger*, someone you are *estranged* from. And yet it's your Brother whom you have estranged yourself from. And it is this lapse of memory that he is your Brother and who seems to be left when you have forgotten who he is that you attack.

Continue.

READER: *You are making him a stranger by misperceiving him, and so you cannot know him. It is because you have made him a stranger that you are afraid of him.*

RAJ: And the best way to make a Brother out of a stranger is to remember your Father and look for your Father in him. Because if you can find your Father in *him*, then you have found your Brother and you cannot be estranged. And then the messengers that you send out to him will return to you confirming his Brotherhood and God has been glorified. And correction has occurred. *Healing* has occurred.

Continue.

READER: *Perceive him correctly so that you can know him.*

RAJ: Yes. And I've restated it a number of times. When you look at your Brother or Sister and say, "This is not the Truth about them. This is an illegitimate imposition upon them. It is not his or her Birthright. And not only that, he or she doesn't even actually have a mind that can create this imposition and bind her." That is all at the level of perception. It is still at the level of perception, but it is a *truer* perception that sets a *tone* in your

mind that allows you then to ask God to reveal to you the Truth so that you *can Know* him or her.

Continue.

READER: *There are no strangers in God's creation. To create as He created you can create only what you know, and therefore accept as yours.*

RAJ: Ahhh. And the only way you can create only what you Know is when you have asked God for the direct Experience of Truth, which for, lack of better words, you could call God's Truth. And then you find yourself creating the Conscious Experience of What *God Is Being* there, which isn't an actual creation at all of your own, but is the direct Experience of God Being All There Is right there. And healing has occurred. Correction has occurred. And there doesn't seem, any longer, to even be the suggestion of something unlike God.

And the one who, you know, "the poor dear who ought to be home in bed" is obviously in exactly the place she needs to be to carry on the joyous activity that she came there for with happiness and health and perfection because correction has occurred. Again, it hasn't been a process by which you come into your peace while she's still miserable. That's not correction. That's not the *evidence* of Knowing.

Continue.

READER: *God knows His children with perfect certainty. He created them by knowing them. He recognizes them perfectly. When they do not recognize each other, they do not recognize Him.*

RAJ: And He recognizes them perfectly because He recognizes Himself in them. And you will recognize them perfectly when you see nothing else but Him in them. And when you see *Him* in them, you will Know *Him* in you.

We will end there. I want to point out something to you. When you are willing to turn to the Altar to learn of God what the Truth is so that you can give voice to God's Truth, and you do it for your Brother which is the only legitimate reason for doing it, it is an Act of Love. And that's the real event. Not the communication, but the extension and the receipt of the Act of Love.

You have watched Paul this evening make that choice under circumstances that *he* felt were disturbing. And he was willing to persist in abandoning any value that he gave to being upset. And he did it for you. He preferred to see the Glory of God right here, over an experience of self-righteous indignation. And I know all of you are grateful and I know all of you are

blessed. I would have you learn from this, more than anything we've talked about tonight.

Because your Brother, your Sister, is worth more as an object of your affection than any ego reaction that might entice you to stay in a state of misery in which no correction can occur, in which no healing can occur, in which no relief can occur for you. And so it might not always be easy to get past the desire to relish in the discomfort, the wonderful discomfort of self-righteous indignation. But do it. Doing it *is* the leaven that leavens the whole lump, the little bit that affects all. When he does that *I* can say, "I love you all." But he would not have been able to give *voice* to that Truth if he had insisted upon *relishing* his delicious discomfort. You see?

Our next Thursday evening Gathering will be a week from Sunday at 2 o'clock. We are going to change the day and the time in order to make it easier for more people who would like to attend to participate. I look forward to seeing you then.

And in the meantime realize that there are no private thoughts. And when you see something that you know *doesn't* embody and reflect the Glory of God, challenge it in your mind, even if you are simply saying: "That is *not* the Truth about her. That is a lie about him. *I* do not join in it." And then say, "Father, I would like to experience the Wholeness of You right there where I seem to be seeing something that I know is illegitimate." Even though the word "know" there is not yet a direct Experience of the Truth and *be* the little bit of leaven that leavens the whole lump.

A little bit of leaven blesses everyone, blesses the Whole. But you know what more than anything? You're gonna find yourselves not as dragged down and depressed as you are by the constant rehearsal of: "Wow, she doesn't look so hot today. Boy, he's really a grouch today. Boy, I could have done without running into her." You depress yourselves by careless [laughing]... *careless thoughts*. Careless thoughts. And because there are no private thoughts, your careless thoughts can seem to reinforce the dream.

Be the leaven. Be the leaven this next week and a half.

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