

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

STUDY GROUP

WITH RAJ

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Good evening. And welcome to everyone who's joining us on the Internet.

In the practice of the two-step, you employ the practice of peace. You choose for the silence in you—that altar in you—which is not occupied by the business of your personal private thoughts. And in that silence within, not giving preference to your attention to things without, you ask to know the Truth. You ask to have the Father's Perspective, which I have been telling you has been placed in you from the Beginning and has never left.

Now in the process of choosing for your peace, there are four things that have to be met or dealt with, or passed by, moved beyond, let's put it that way. These are: the desire to get rid of the peace which we've already discussed and as we're going to talk about tonight, *The Belief that the Body is Valuable for what it Offers*. The next obstacle is *The Attraction of Death*. And the last obstacle is *The Fear of God*.

If you sit quietly contemplating these four items you'll find that each one is, shall I say, progressively more difficult to cope with or progressively presents a more difficult obstacle to get past. Fear of God is the last.

Now, these four things are dealt with in the order that you can handle most easily. Choosing for your peace in the holy instant is the easiest, it's easier than actually abandoning the fear of God or the fear of what God's Presence would do to you considering who you think you are presently, which is a mortal, a sinner, a flawed presence that must improve itself but as long as it hasn't, there is still the penalty for the flaws that God will surely meet you with. And so you couldn't possibly deal with the fear of God first.

The willingness to embrace peace—to let go of what objects to it—is the easiest. And it opens the door for communion with the Holy Spirit or with the Father. It opens the door, you might say, briefly but easily, and it puts you in the position of being able to hear divine Guidance even if it is brief. And its continued practice allows it to happen more frequently, more easily, and the communion changes you. The communion reduces your fear of peace and prepares you to be able to take on the second obstacle to peace with not only more confidence but more understanding.

Now the second obstacle is:

[III.] The Belief the Body is Valuable for What it Offers.¹

Well my goodness, what does the body offer each of you? What it offers you is, shall I say, the manifest presence of force that enforces and embodies physically, the presence of you. That's what it does. It provides you with the capacity to be in control through the use of force, even if the only force you are exercising is yelling at someone—a strong voice, a committed sound, the presence of, or shall I say, the absence of weakness. Still, it's the use of force for the purpose of controlling, influencing, making things happen.

Now we have talked in the past about the fact that as an infant, you experienced physical sensations not only of what you learned to call your body but the body of your mother, the body of your father, the bodies of your brothers and sisters and you experienced each of them as discrete presences just as you experienced yourself as a discrete presence. But the thing that escaped your attention and the thing that your parents and siblings could not educate you about and inform you about, was the fact that you are not the discrete body you thought you were and no one else was the discrete body they appeared to be. But you and they were the presence of *Mind—consciousness* experiencing all of these experiences of form and tangibility. You see?

It escaped everyone's attention that they were Mind, not body.

And so, all of the developmental processes in growing up reinforced and confirmed the misunderstanding—the misperception—until someone came along like me, or until someone engaged in mediation and inadvertently, we'll say, engaged in the two-step and the holy instant, discovered that Mind was the ground of Being, not matter, not form.

Now someone is educating you and making available the truth about existence in a manner that can easily reach everyone. And so you are all learning to make a shift.

Now it's important to understand this because there are misperceptions about it and I've talked about them before too. Basically it is this: The *Course* says:

I am not a body, I am still free to be as God created me.

Now because of the absolute identification with form that everyone has been involved in, this statement seems to say that a spiritual understanding of things means that bodies are illusions. And it's not true. There is that which identifies you. There is that which makes you experienceable. And I've said this many times and it continues to need to be said in order to facilitate the shift of consciousness that constitutes a miracle.

Now you are not a body but you are not bodiless. You are not without that which identifies you. And yes, *you are still free to be as God created you*. Which means you are still free to be the Mind—the conscious awareness in which all experience of Creation occurs, in which all Ideas of Mind are experienced as being substantial to the Mind that formed them, but without ever becoming less than the Idea that is rendered visible. To become less than the Idea would be to become the visibility—the identification. And that is not what you are. And that is the misperception that Awakening pulls you out of.

That is why the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers is something that peace moves across as it shifts your perception.

Now when you are angry, when you are perturbed, when you are irritated, you experience physical sensations. When you are depressed, there is a thickness in the head. It's not a headache but it's as though a scull-cap is on and weighing heavily and pressing down so that it's a *downward* feeling. There's a sensation usually, you think you experience it first, and so you think that depression has come over you when in fact there is an *idea*—an idea of a loss of power, an idea of being inconsequential, ineffective, incapable through force and the use of your body to do anything to lift yourself up.

And you believe it. You don't challenge it and say, "Wait a minute . . . Father, are You giving me these sensations? Holy Spirit, is this a true experience I'm having? Am *I* depressed? Do *I* need to find a way through the use of my body to exert force to establish the presence of *me* in the world?"

Well the answers are no, of course. And yet it's very hard to abandon them because you have the physical sensations—the physical sensations *you value*. You think they are important. You think they must be acted upon or you think that you are obligated to let them act upon you and you must just suffer.

Again, it's not true. And it does arise out of the fact that you *feel* that the body has essential value to you because it will keep you alive. It will allow you to

become a success. It will allow you to create and maintain order. Of course it will be your personal private sense of order and not one that takes into consideration everyone and everything. And so peace must move across this *obstacle*.

Now, I want you to pay attention—you must pay attention to your frame of mind. You must watch to see when the emotions shift and when they seem justified and when they seem to call for a show of force of one form or another *to save you . . . to make you safe!*

“Well . . .” you say, “Nothing ever happened to my benefit if I or someone else didn’t exert a little force and make changes so that there was greater harmony. Nothing has ever happened without the expression of power—physical power.”

Now it’s not true. Think about it for a moment.

Has no one ever experienced transformation of one sort or another—sometimes miraculous—occurring because of the presence of Love embodied by you or someone else? Has no transformation occurred as a result of a sudden shift of perception, as a result of your mind being imbued with something miraculous above and beyond your personal capacity to *conceive*?

Of course this has happened. But it doesn’t occur to you that total and complete safety, absolute invulnerability is your Birthright when you engage in the holy instant and you let yourself, your Mind—the presence of Mind that you Are—be filled with the Love and the Grace that the Father bestows upon you, that your experience is being bestowed upon you because you’re not objecting to it as much as in the past? You see? Your Birthright—your wholeness—lies in the complete absence of the use of body as a means of reinforcing a sense of the presence of you in the world that not only changes the world but that others recognize, we’ll say, as a force to be reckoned with. You see?

It’s difficult to give this up because it is a misperception that occurred within moments after birth and you were flooded with sensations and you were completely ignorant of the fact there was Something *experiencing* the sensations. *There was Mind*. You see?

Now let’s go into the book:

We said that peace must first surmount the obstacle of your desire to get rid of it. Where the attraction of guilt holds sway, peace is not WANTED.

You see? Because you have more important things to do that are active and that arise out of the stimulus of fear and excitement and this is interpreted by you to mean that it's the vitality of life motivating you to engage in discovery. And it's your nature to discover. You're a discovery mechanism. You're here to do that!

So you don't want peace because you say, "Peace? Well nothing exciting can happen there. Nothing like fear is there to motivate me." And so on. We discussed this at some length.

Now . . .

The second obstacle that peace must flow across, . .

. . . you get that? . . . *flow across*, flow across like water across a river-bed when the first rains of Spring come. It flows. It doesn't bull-doze its way through. It *lets itself* through. It flows. No act of force required.

The second obstacle that peace must flow across, and closely related to the first, is the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers.

And we've just discussed what it offers: The presence of force, the presence of energy that can motivate and make things happen!

For here is the attraction of guilt made manifest in the body, and SEEN in it.

You see? First of all you want not to have peace so that you can respond to the stimuli of fear which will move you to become more than you are. And then the second part of it is that you have a body with which to accomplish these goals—these needs. You see? The first part isn't true and the second part isn't true.

You are not a body but you are still as God created you to be. And so that which identifies you continues to identify you even though you are not using it as your focal point of action. You are recognizing your Mind, your conscious awareness as that Presence of attention which follows, which flows with the Movement of Creation without force.

And then as we've said, in your giving It your attention and flowing with It, you are confirming the Movement of Creation that God is Being and you are co-partnering with God, you are cooperating with God, you are confirming the Movement of Creation by virtue of your attention.

So . . .

This the value that you think peace would rob you of.

Meaning this, the body—that which gives force to your presence.

This the value that you think peace would rob you of. This is what you believe that it would dispossess, and leave you homeless.

You see? You think [chuckles] just like you do when you hear the statement: “*I am not a body I am still free to be as God created me,*” you think that statement is going to dispossess you of the visibility and tangibility of your individuality which you have called “your body” and which you have defined within the first thirty seconds of your birth.

This is what you believe that it would dispossess, and leave you homeless. And it is this for which you would deny a home to peace.

You see? Now you might experience peace and the holy instant and the Guidance and inspiration that naturally accompanies it. But you can't seem to hold onto the experience. And so it passes and you have to renew it. And so you practice the holy instant frequently. And each time you practice it, it becomes easier. And each time you practice it the duration of the peace increases. But then life interferes and calls for you to use your body as the force that identifies your presence in a way that allows for control to occur. You see? And you lost the peace and so you have to do it again. You have to engage in the holy instant again.

The time comes when you need to make commitment to it completely. Because that's the only thing that brings you back into the full experience of your Birthright.

But again . . .

. . . it is this . . .

. . . the loss of your body . . .

. . . for which you would deny a home to peace. This . . .

. . . so-called . . .

. . . “sacrifice” you feel to be too great to make, too much to ask of you.

But only because you don't understand what it means. You don't understand what I've just explained. Now you do have an understanding and it will be easier for you to risk the chance that abandoning the body as the vantage point from which you experience everything will cause you a loss. When the fact is, that abandoning the body as the vantage point and adopting the Mind, which has been with you all along and you don't have to fabricate or imagine, letting that Mind be the focal point from which you experience everything. You see?

Is it a sacrifice, or a release? What has the body really given you that justifies your strange belief that in it lies salvation?

Well, I understand that it seems to have given you a certain amount of control that has perhaps saved you, that has perhaps made your life more tolerable, maybe even greatly blessed. But the *point is, that you are not a body* and any successful use you put it to that convinces you that it is foolish to abandon the body as your vantage point, *that must be overcome!* You must arrive at a place where you're willing to abandon that, even if it's only for the sake of experiment, to see whether what I'm saying is true or not.

If the experiment doesn't occur, you will continue to see yourself as a body—vulnerable. And because you're experiencing the visibility and tangibility of your individuality as something that started from a sperm and an egg, a purely physical organism, having nothing to do with the divine Source, your experience of your body will be full of pleasure and pain—conflicting experiences. And they will be unavoidable. They will be ever present until you make this shift from body identification to Mind identification.

What has the body really given you that justifies your strange belief that in it lies salvation?

Nothing!

Do you not see that this is the belief in death?

You see? As long as you continue to identify with the body *as a body* that happens to have this strange capacity to have ideas because of the way a hunk of meat in your head functions, as long as you embrace that you are dissociated from the very thing that constitutes your eternality and the undisturbed experience of harmony and health and peace, which is your relationship to your Father, which tells you who you Are and which puts you in the place of being able to desire to know what the Father's Perspective is, because the Father's Perspective is now relevant to you—*It is now relevant to you*—making it worthwhile to give your attention to.

The belief that the body has given you something: well . . .

Here is the focus of the perception of Atonement as murder.

. . . which we talked about: The ego's definition of Atonement is not you abandoning the ego, it is you confirming your mortality. You see?

Here is the source of the idea that love is fear. The Holy Spirit's messengers are sent far beyond the body, calling the mind to join in holy communion and be at peace.

Calling what? The mind. Because Mind is what you Are. And calling the Mind that you Are to join in holy communion and be at peace is to return your attention to its native place and to your holy function. And so it promotes Atonement, it promotes your Awakening. And in so doing, puts you in a position of being able to address the attraction of death—the next obstacle to peace—and to do it without fear and to do it with a greater clarity that death is just a misperception and abandoning the attraction to it constitutes release from illusion, not the loss of anything. This is important.

The Holy Spirit's messengers are sent far beyond the body, . .

You see? Far beyond the body as you are perceiving it, this little discrete shape that for most is not any taller than six feet—little inconsequential in the face of the *immensity* of space—you *send* things from your discrete shape to someone else's discrete shape and unity of mind is never experienced. The actuality of what you Are as consciousness and the actuality of the one you're communicating with as consciousness is never brought into play. You see?

Now . . .

The Holy Spirit's messengers are sent far beyond the body, calling the mind . . .

. . . that infinite Presence of attention that includes everything . . .

. . . to join in holy communion and be at peace.

So the peace flows over the valuing of the body for what it seems to be able to do that is apparently essential to your well-being.

Such is the message that I gave them for you.

It is only the messengers of fear that see the body, for they look for what can suffer.

[Repeats] . . . they look for what can suffer.

Well, you might not have thought about it that way, but you use control always, and succeed at the use of control through the threat of pain, the threat of suffering, the threat of some sort of penalty or unkindness or inconsideration or withdrawal of approval. You see? It's mean. Because you know from your experience that those things make you hurt either physically or mentally or emotionally. And you know it works. And so you have learned that it's valuable to you to employ.

It is only the messengers of fear that see the body, . .

. . . as something discrete and as something that constitutes the individual . . .

. . . for they look for what can suffer. Is it a sacrifice to be REMOVED from what can suffer?

Now, that may mean being removed from the body or being removed from the *misperception* of body? Obviously the latter.

The Holy Spirit does not demand you sacrifice the hope of the body's pleasure; . .

. . . remember, I said that in this misidentification or misunderstanding your body enjoys pleasure or pain. We've talked about pain, now here . . .

The Holy Spirit does not demand you sacrifice the hope of the body's pleasure; it HAS no hope of pleasure.

That which doesn't exist the way you're perceiving it can't have any effect applied to it. It can't have an experience of anything. You see? And so the pleasure that you think you might lose if you're not identifying with the body is an impossible circumstance. It never was there as an experience of pleasure in the first place. And the illusion of pain or pleasure in the identification with the body is what will disappear as you shift to identification with the Mind that is *aware* of body and trees and tables and all form.

But neither can it bring you fear of pain. Pain is the only "sacrifice" the Holy Spirit asks, and this He WOULD remove.

Now, it is always removed when you abandon your insistence upon coping with problems through the use of your body. It's that simple!

When you stop using your body to provide the force to make things happen and you enter into the holy instant to join with the Holy Spirit, which is the Father's Perspective and is nothing more than your right Mind, you will find pain and false pleasure disappearing. And the threat of their being taken

away will disappear and the threat of their *effects* will disappear because now you are functioning in the arena where God's laws prevail. You see? But it only *happens* in the release of the body as a tool for accomplishing Godless acts. And when I say Godless acts, I mean acts in which God was not brought into the picture and with Whom you are not engaging in *actions*. You see?

Peace is extended from you only to the eternal, and it reaches out from the eternal in YOU.

In your abandonment of the concept of yourself as a body, as a mortal, as an organism in a physical universe, the divineness of you that has always been present underneath those mistaken self-beliefs, become illuminated to you. And in their illumination from the holiness of you, from the eternal in you, they are shared. That's the blessing of the holy instant. That's the function of the holy instant. It reunites that which was always One as the conscious experience of All from which nothing is withheld and your invulnerability and peace and joy are irrevocably present. This is the point. And the way to that experience is in abandoning the belief that the body is valuable for what it offers, for what use you can put it to without knowing who you Are and without finding God anywhere in anything.

Peace is extended from you only to the eternal, and it reaches out from the eternal in YOU. It flows across all else. The second obstacle is no more solid than the first. For you will neither to get rid of peace NOR limit it.

You don't will for either one of those.

What are these obstacles which you would interpose between peace and its going forth but barriers you place between your will and its accomplishment?

Meaning the accomplishment of your will. You see? The obstacles which you would interpose between peace and its going forth are barriers you place between your will and its accomplishment. In other words, . .

You WANT communion, not the feast of fear. You WANT salvation, not the pain of guilt. And you want your Father, NOT a little mound of clay, to be your home.

You see, those are your will. Stop interposing what blocks it and you will experience it clearly as yours and you will become integrated—single.

In your holy relationship . . .

. . . with your Brother or Sister . . .

... is your Father's Son.

... is your Father's Offspring, the holy one that, the one you're in holy relationship is.

He has not lost communion with Him, . .

... meaning God ...

... nor with himself. When you agreed to join each other, . .

... in a holy relationship, I'm adding ...

... you acknowledged this is so. This has no cost, but it has RELEASE from cost.

Wow!

You have paid very dearly for your illusions, and nothing you have paid for brought you peace.

You see? As long as you took the misperception of your first few minutes of life after birth, because you took those perceptions and solidified them into a permanent definition or meaning of you, of body, of world, of Brothers, Sisters and so on, because of that you have not had the opportunity to shift from body identification to Mind identification.

You have paid very dearly for your illusions, and nothing you have paid for brought you peace.

... because you're still stuck in a misidentification of you. And it's coloring every part of your holy experience causing it to seem to be unholy.

Are you not GLAD that Heaven cannot be sacrificed, and sacrifice cannot be asked of you? There IS no obstacle which you can place before our union, . .

... yours and mine ...

... for in your holy relationship I am there already.

You see? You don't have to seek for me because I was with you before you took your first few breathes and suddenly thought you were a discrete form in a delivery room. I was with you and you were who you divinely Are *then* and

you still Are, but you're only now coming back into the realization of what that Means, you holy Son or Daughter of God.

We will surmount all obstacles together, for we stand within the gates, and not outside.

In other words, we stand within the conscious experience of Being, the state of Attention. We stand within That and not outside. We do not stand in the picture you have of being a discrete form amongst other discrete forms that can only communicate through space to each other and never quite unified, never quite experience perfect unity.

How easily the gates are opened from within, . .

. . . in other words, from that place of identification as Mind.

How easily the gates are opened . . .

. . . like opened outward from the altar within you, instead of opened in a wall on a street, in a city, in a country on your globe in the middle of a universe. You see?

How easily the gates are opened from within, . .

. . . this is what you need to understand so that there's a willingness to embrace the experiment of identifying as Mind, because you will find that the gates open easily . . .

. . . from within, to let peace through. . .

And another way of saying it might be: to let peace *out* . . .

. . . to bless the tired world! Can it be difficult for us to walk past barriers together, when you have joined the limitless?

No. Now, dare to experiment with this so that we can have the experience together and you can become freed from the belief that the only way to solve problems is to give vent to distress, anger, frustration, hate, through the use of the body to give yourself more presence that can provide greater and greater control through force in your world. Here it is . . .

The end of guilt is in your hands to give.

You see?

Would you stop now to look for guilt in each other?

Would you look for opportunities to tense up your body to get the adrenaline rushing so that you might have the power to overcome whatever stands in the way of what you call your good? Is that what you would do when you have another alternative that arises out of the awareness that the body is not valuable for what it offers, but the Love in you, the Truth in you, the Principle in you, the Life in you governs, inspires, illumines, and is the Movement that is called Creation.

I love you all who have no body which is valuable for what it offers, but who Are the Presence of Mind which embraces everything and blesses everything into the singleness and purity, the unflawed Presence of Life.

And I look forward to being with you next time.

A Course In Miracles (reference pages)

*Chapter 19 – Section: OBSTACLES TO PEACE – Part: II
Sparkly Book – p.464 / JCIM – p.194 / CIMS – p.391*

*Chapter 19 – Section: B. THE SECOND OBSTACLE:
First Edition – p. 384 / Second Edition – p.412*

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