A Course in Miracles Study Group with Raj

November 10th 2007

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

We've been talking about guilt. We haven't been talking about [gestures to the audience] you, or you,

It's a mean-spirited thought that you employ or don't employ. You apply it like pinning a tail on a donkey. You apply it to your friends and your enemies. And you apply it to yourself.

And then you act as though what you've applied to yourself is real and valuable and valid. And when you do that, you immediately set up for yourself an expectation of a penalty being extracted from you. And you fear the penalty. And you keep yourself, [chuckles] yes, you keep yourself in an unforgiving state—an unforgiving ongoing state of misery.

Once you begin to see that guilt is a thought or an idea which you are employing and not an actual thing, it will become clear to you that it isn't anything you can actually suffer from and it isn't anything that you need to take seriously. That in fact, it's something you can simply set aside. It is something that you no longer have to practice on yourself and it's something that you no longer have to practice on anyone else.

The only thing is, there's a little bit of a hooker. And that is, that in order for you to set it aside, you have to abandon the thing that has created the inner

experience of discomfort that you are identifying as guilt. And that something that you have to abandon, is a strong commitment that you have that you are self-created; that you've just been born of a sperm and an egg and that you're a physical embodiment of an organism of life, and that you're on your own—you're all by yourself; that you make up the rules; that you make your life what you want to make it and it's all up to you.

This attitude overlooks something. And that is, that, that which creates something knows how that something came to be. And you don't have the foggiest notion of how you came to be. Here you are! You can't explain it. I mean, you really can't explain how it is that a microscopic sperm and a microscopic egg joining together could make this incredible being that you are; with a capacity to think, with a capacity to be conscious, let's put it that way, and experience infinity. No one can account for the being that each one of you is, by virtue of the penetration of an egg by a sperm and conceptualization happening.

So obviously, if you're going to be honest about it, you didn't create yourself. And it's not all up to you. And there is something else that is responsible for your existing.

The reason you feel uncomfortable and you call the discomfort guilt, you also call it fear, is because you are assuming a responsibility for your existence that cannot rest on your own shoulders. And when you try to take that on your own shoulders, you feel the fact that something is wrong here. You can feel the fact that what you are trying to do isn't natural.

But the thing is, that this little independent mind that you think you are, sees that and takes it on as a challenge and says, "I can overcome this! And I am going to overcome it, come hell or high water!" And sheer willfulness and determination comes into play, is brought into play by each one of you in an attempt to overcome this uncomfortable undercurrent of energy that you call either fear or guilt.

Now, as we've been discussing for a number of weeks now, the only way to dissolve and get rid of that undercurrent is not by thinking better; is not by being better, but rather by abandoning the attempt to be something all by yourself, on your own, independent from everything else and saying, "If I didn't create myself but I'm here, something must be responsible for my being here. If that's the case, that means that right now and forever, I have been in a relationship of some sort with That which is being me, since I am not being myself."

This Something that you're in partnership with or that you are inseparable from, has been called many things but the one that all of you are familiar with is the word, God.

Now, if you want to get out of the arena or the level of experience in which guilt is felt and fear is felt, you simply have to abandon the idea or thought that you and you alone are responsible for your well-being and what your life will be, and for your very existence. And abandon the responsibility that comes along with that thought. And say to whatever this Something is that you are in partnership with, "I yield to You, I yield to being in a partnership. I abandon my insistence upon autonomous independence and autonomous or independent capacity to be creative all by myself.

The moment that you, in effect say, "Father," or "God," or "That which Is and always has been All There Is," the moment you say words like that, you're abandoning your independence—you are letting in Something else. And when that invitation to active or conscious partnership instead of unconscious partnership; that invitation to conscious partnership moves you out of the arena in which fear and guilt can be felt, whether what you were feeling guilty about has changed or not, whether you have started thinking better thoughts or not, the simple fact is, that you have all thought and reasoned poorly because you thought that the discomfort or dissonance that you were experiencing was real and was a statement of guilt that was truly yours, that called down upon you necessarily, punishment of some sort that was really going to hurt. And was going to hurt so much that you were willing to bring all of your energy to bear upon the situation to avoid it without doing the one essential thing, which was or which is abandoning the attitude of independence and consciously embracing this partnership which has eternally been the fact about you.

Now you all know or most of you know that if you meditate, it doesn't matter what state of mind you've been in before you sat down to meditate. If you were in a state of fear; if you were in a state of anger; if you were in a fit of jealousy—all of which were fully justifiable to you—if you sit down and meditate all of them will vanish, for all of their justifiability they are gone and you are experiencing peace. And you have the interesting experience of discovering, and you don't know how it is you know it, but you discover and know that this peace you are experiencing is real; is something more actual about your being than the fear and the jealousy and the anger that you were experiencing before you sat down and meditated. You know that you have moved into, for lack of better words, a different space in which fear and anger and jealousy and on and on and on, are absent.

What seems to escape your attention is, that if you were to stay in that space and return to your activities—whatever they might be—whether it's going to

school or going to a job or cleaning a house and being a housewife and a mother or whatever, if you were to stay in that space of peace, you would be able to be fully functional without ever experiencing fear or jealousy or anger or guilt.

And in the absence of all of those negatives, you would find yourself fully able to be responsive in the most incredible and apparently creative ways relative to the housework or the schoolwork or the parenting or whatever.

It's not your Birthright to be experiencing existence that is constantly colored by fear, guilt, anxiety, jealousy, anger and so on.

Now, we're spending quite a bit of time on this subject because guilt is the one subject that you use excessively on yourself and others; and others use on you and themselves. And it's so much of a habit that you don't even realize when you slip into employing it or when you slip into justifying beating yourself up, because you think you're guilty of something you should have done better.

And yet, the simple answer to the problem of being—what you might call the problem of being—lies in the one single act of abandoning the practice of guilt.

If you're not valuing guilt and therefore are not employing it on yourself or on others, what could be said about you? What could describe your state of existence? Well, the simple one word: forgiveness. If you're not employing guilt, you're being the state of forgiveness. In other words, you're being the absence of the employment of guilt—the exercise of guilt, the attack of guilt.

And by comparison with when you were employing those things, you will appear to have changed and to have become a very forgiving person.

But, let's understand something: The tendency is to believe that forgiveness is something you offer to somebody who really has been guilty; and you absolve them of their very real guilt by your great and grand generosity in your extension of forgiveness to them. And that is—pardon me—bullshit! Crap! It is stupidity!

Forgiveness is really a word describing you being in a state of mind where the practice of guilt is absent. That's all. And you extend to your brother your willingness to see him as guiltless.

You see, if you can meditate and go into the Silence within and find the experience of guilt to be gone and the fear associated with it, or you can find anxiety absent, and your blood pressure going down; and if you can find jealousy absent, and you have the experience of the Peace of Your Being that you know is actual and that the fear, anxiety, jealousy, guilt and so on was an

invalid or unreal distorted mental experience, then you will be able to look at your brother and know that if he's experiencing any of those things or if she is experiencing any of those things, they are an invalid experience for them as well. And they need to be free of it. And they can be free of it by being or becoming willing to abandon all attempts to be a really excellent autonomous actor; creator of his experience at the expense of his awareness of his Creator; at the expense of his awareness of his Oneness with his fellow man.

Your brother doesn't deserve to be deluded any more than you have deserved to be deluded. And so, you can't sit there and forgive him for something you can now see he never did. He just got confused and thought he was on his own and was overwhelmed with the responsibility of being on his own well enough so that everybody would respect him. He got overwhelmed by it. And in the state of overwhelm, he reacted. And his reactions didn't match the reality of what he really is, or of what his fellow man really is.

And so, he and his fellowman—you and your fellowman—have bounced off of each other's ideas of righteousness and thoughts of whether or not you're worth it or they're worth it; and confidences that you're not worth it but you've got to try; and that they're not worth it—and [chuckle] they're so not worth it—that you're not willing to try to have a better sense of them than you currently have.

And so, you bounce off of each other negatively and it's your misperception bouncing off of their misperception. And none of it will happen; none of it would happen if you hadn't adopted this idea that you and you alone, all by yourself, are the sole cause and creator of whatever your life becomes. It's that simple.

So, when the Course teaches forgiveness, it does not mean that you're forgiving your brother for a very real guilt that he is subject to. You are rather, standing without judgment—choosing to see your brother with the help of God's Perspective, which is indelibly built into you—and simply neglecting to inflict guilt upon him or upon her.

And, if they still behave as though they are guilty, because they're so convinced that they are on their own and totally responsible for themselves; and it's too overwhelming a job for them, you can confidently and competently and lovingly stand with them and, for lack of better words, educate them out of it—help them come out of their confusion—because you can see they don't deserve to be suffering. They may need to change; but they can and because they can, they don't need to be suffering forever. And they deserve your time and attention.

As I said last week, the nature and function of the Course is ecumenical, it's inclusive, it's embracing, it's loving. And if your life isn't reflecting more and more of your willingness to embrace, if it isn't easier and easier for people to be around you and if it isn't easier and easier for you to be around people, it's because you've missed the point. The point is Brotherhood, and the point is friendship; the point is communication and communion; the point is togetherness; the point is being without dissonance, without stress, without jealousy, without fear, without guilt, so that the experience of a relationship is at once peaceful and fulfilling.

Now, those are two key words. Peaceful could make it sound as though the nature of the relationship might become boring. But fulfilling expresses exactly the opposite because fulfillment is far from boring. It's invigorating. It's satisfying. It's, for lack of better words, enlarging. It makes you feel bigger, fuller, more all inclusive than before. And this is the nature of relationships when guilt ceases to be employed.

I'm going to come back as I did last week, to this paragraph because it's so important to remember it, since the subject of guilt always implies condemnation upon you for some legitimate reason; a condemnation that you seem not to be able to get out from under, which is why it calls for such strenuous effort on your part to overcome this injustice, you see.

And as I've just explained that isn't what guilt is and that isn't the response that is called for. Now . . .

Within you is the holy sign of perfect faith your Father has in you.¹

What's the holy sign that's in you? It's called the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit was placed in you by God.

It . . .

... is the holy sign of perfect faith your Father has in you.

And you could say, in spite of how you have come to think about yourselves; it doesn't matter what you've come to believe about yourself, what you have believed cannot change what you were created to be. You don't think that you could decide to become a dog or a cat and succeed at it.

Now, you might try crawling around on all fours and barking or meowing and rubbing up against the furniture and peeing on the floor and do all the things that puppies and kitties do. But you would still be a human being behaving [chuckle] idiotically, wouldn't you? [Laughing] Because you can't change

what you are by imagining that you're something else and even behaving as though you are something else.

So . . .

Within you is the holy sign of perfect faith your Father has in you.

Now, again the Holy Spirit is another word for; are other words for; that which is nothing more than your right Mind. And mind you, your right Mind isn't an esoteric or a metaphysical concept. When you meditate and you come to that place of peace within yourself, where there is perfect quiet, you're experiencing your right Mind; which is why the fear and the anxiety and the guilt and the jealousy and so on are absent.

The place of quiet is right in the middle of you; right in the center of you where the Altar of God is. As the Course puts it, where the Presence of God being truly you is, which is your right Mind. It's right there in the middle of you.

He does not value you as you do.

... God doesn't. That means he doesn't devalue you as you devalue yourself. At the moment you don't value yourself highly. You value yourself lowly. And then you spend your lives struggling to get higher. When all the time that you have adopted this tiny stance and self-concept, you cannot accomplish that any more than you can accomplish becoming a dog. And so, you're practicing being something that you can't be, but it doesn't change what you are.

Can YOU see guilt where God KNOWS there is perfect innocence?

... meaning in you?

Well you sure think you can. And you sure think other people can see it in you. And you sure can become upset about what you think they might do, because they know you're guilty.

But the fact is, that the only reason they can see guilt in you is because they think guilt is a violable, meaningful thing to be employed—something that is real. And they don't yet see, as you don't yet see, that it's a discomfort that everyone naturally feels when they try to do something they can't do, or when they try to be something they cannot be. And their innate sanity tells them, "You cannot do this. You're trying to do the impossible." And it has a

sensation that gets your attention. It's your sanity saying, "Stop trying to do this! You can't succeed! Give it up! Come back into your right Mind."

So . . .

Can YOU see guilt where God KNOWS there is perfect innocence?

Well, yeah, you can.

You can DENY his knowledge, but you cannot CHANGE it.

You can believe and claim that you're guilty, but you cannot change the fact that you aren't.

Look, then, . . .

... what?

... upon the light He placed within you, and learn that what you feared was there HAS BEEN replaced with love.

You're all afraid that if you look within you will find confirmation of your guilt and it will condemn you to a state of existence that you will never be able to get out of. And so, of course, you don't want to look within. It's sort of like saying, you don't want to meditate, because that's what looking within is—meditating. And if you have meditated, you found that when you've gone within you haven't found confirmation of your guilt. You've been removed from the arena in which that seems to be going on. And what you need to do is to hold on to that state of peace and insist upon going through your day being out from that place.

And how do you do that? You say, "Father, God,"—whatever word you want to use—you say, "Father, stay with me, and help me be in this place. Help me not suddenly slip and abandon You. Let me not forget about being joined, so that when apparent challenges come my way, I will stay with You and look at it from this peace which is inseparable from our joining. So that I might live through what comes up in ways that identify peace and fulfillment and nothing else. Because I really want to exist differently than the way I have been existing."

Now, let's continue from where we left off last week.

When you maintain that you are guilty but the source lies in the PAST, you are NOT looking inward.

Remember, past isn't really an existential part of time, just as the future is not. The past is memory and the future is imagination. The only thing that you have as a conscious experience ever, is the moment you are in—now. In the now you may draw upon memory to remember the past and to remember the injustices and the hurts; and to remember the mistakes you made and perhaps how they hurt other people; and how, therefore, you are guilty. And you use the past as justification for penalizing yourself and causing yourself to be miserable now, when the past isn't going on and where the call for penalty, for guilt, is non-existent.

So . . .

When you maintain that you are guilty but the source lies in the PAST, you are NOT looking inward.

If you were looking inward, you would be moving into the quiet place in you, your center, you would be meditating. And there you cannot find the past. All you can find there is an incredibly heightened experience of now. Not so bad to have that kind of an experience available to you so easily.

The past is not IN you. Your weird associations . . .

. . . mental associations—your connecting together of ideas and memories to create a picture that justifies your being mad at yourself or justifies your being mad at somebody else. These . . .

Your weird associations to it have no meaning in the present. Yet you let them stand between you and your brothers, with whom you find no REAL relationships at all.

"Well, you know, look at you. You know, the way you're behaving today is the way you behaved a year ago; and a year before that, and ten years before that. You know, look at you; your history convicts you—now. And I'm going to hold you to whatever it is you're doing right now. I'm going to hold you to it with criticism because not only is it a stupid thing to be doing now, it is a demonstration of the fact that you haven't learned anything for ten years. You're just where you were ten years ago. And you know what? I don't know, I don't know if I want to continue having patience with you, when you're obviously unwilling to learn."

You let them, your weird associations regarding the past, stand between you and your brothers, with whom you have no real relationships at all. Why? Why no real relationship? Because in the moment you're in that's when the only real thing is happening. That's when you are present with your brother

or your sister; or your wife; or your daughter; or your son; or your father; or your mother. In the moment you're in is where connection can occur.

You cannot connect with them five minutes ago. You cannot connect with them a year ago. But if you are looking at them through your memory of all of their past behavior that shows to you that they're unwilling to grow, you're not connecting with them at all. You're connecting with your picture of them; your assessment of them, and the judgments that you have applied to them because of the awful assessments you've been making about them. And so no real connection is occurring now. No real relationship.

You let the past—your memory—stand between you and your brothers, with whom you find no real relationships at all because you're not present with them in the moment where something really is happening.

Can you expect to use your brothers as a means to "solve" the past, and still to see them as they really are?

[Chuckle] Can you reasonably expect to look at them through the lens of the past and at the same time connect with them now? That is an irrational thought. No, you cannot.

Salvation is not found by those who use their brothers to resolve problems which are not there.

Are not where? Are not here, in the moment in which connection can occur. Further, if in the moment where connection can occur, each of you is taking the time to become centered; to become still and not employ memory or imagination, you will find yourself in your peace where judgment is absent; where the capacity to judge is absent, but where the capacity to love is fully present. Where the capacity to be connected in peace and fulfillment exists as an actuality.

So . . .

Salvation . . .

... what's salvation? The experience of peace and fulfillment; the experience of joy, of the experience of being conscious without conflict. There you go.

Salvation is not found by those who use their brothers to resolve problems which are not there.

Where? Here, in the now.

You wanted not salvation in the past.

I would say that you always had wanted salvation, but to whatever degree you valued employing guilt and laying guilt trips on others and extracting penalties from them so you could get them to behave in a way that didn't upset your plans, you didn't want salvation. You wanted justice according to your terms of what justice meant. And you were willing to use guilt to accomplish it. You were willing to use guilt as the leverage, the force, to get someone to do what you wanted them to do, whether it was good or not.

So you didn't want salvation in the past, because you preferred to employ something else. That's all there is to it.

Would you impose your idle wishes . . .

In other words, the wishes you were utilizing in the past.

Would you impose your idle wishes on the present . . .

. . . in the now, where connection and communication can really occur?

Would you impose your idle wishes on the present, and hope to find salvation NOW?

Well, I'm going to tell you that you all do. Today, you all have done it in one way or another whether you wanted to or not, whether that was ultimately what you wanted, it's second nature to you at the moment.

And that's why we're spending so much time on this subject. Because you deserve to be free of the habit. You deserve to be free of unconsciously slipping into a way of behaving that is absolutely destructive to the connection in the moment where there's really something happening, where there's really someone present. I'm going to say, where there's really two someone's present to connect with and to experience the bond; to experience the sense of family; whether it's real family or whether it's the grocery store clerk that you're talking to at the moment that is part of the family of man, we'll say.

So why are we talking about it? Were talking about this to motivate you to change; to motivate you to try something else, instead of what hasn't worked forever.

Determine, then, . . .

Become determined and become decisive.

Determine, then, to be not as you were.

Determine to try something new, because there's a new result to a new attitude, always. If there's nothing new, there's been no change of attitude. If there's nothing new, you have not let in any other way of experiencing things than the past ways that you are diligently holding onto for dear life. And which, you are holding onto for dear life because you are afraid of the penalty that is going to come down on you; because you are guilty for something and you don't know what it is. It just hangs there, over you, and threatens you with penalty that you will be very sorry for.

But you know what? It never reveals to you what you are guilty of—never! And you can go looking for it and spend lifetimes trying to find out what it is you are guilty of, and you will never find it. Because you're not guilty of any actions, of any act, of any determination that you were able to carry out in opposition to what reality will allow.

And so you've never accomplished anything that you could actually be penalized for, but you have accomplished something: You've accomplished a frame of mind that is very confused and thinks that things are true that are not true.

But you know what? As the saying goes regarding women, you can always change your mind—even if you're a man. And where women are willing to change their mind—much to the exasperation of men—men can be willing to change their mind too and discover the freedom from bondage to their mindsets that can come from it. Because if you can change your mind, you can decide to stop doing what doesn't work and start doing something that does work even though what does work would never have occurred to you to be a worthy goal before. You see.

You have been taught... taught... taught to use your mind well; to think well, to learn how to be reasonable, to use logic well, to express yourself concisely, to use as few words as possible and have maximum communication. All of these things you've been taught are worthy of your energy and attention. They constitute goals that are significantly meaningful to you.

But you know what? The moment you have a slight glimpse that maybe you're not an autonomous entity and maybe you never were supposed to carry the whole burden of the creation of your life and the success of your life on your shoulders privately; the moment that begins to dawn on you, it becomes easy for you to change your mind and experiment.

Hey, experiment. Try something new. See if it works. And try, not thinking better, not thinking more efficiently, but *not thinking at all*. Now there's a goal that never would have occurred to you to be a worthy goal. And yet, when you meditate, you move into a place where you're fully, totally conscious

but you're not having a single thought. And in the absence of the noise of a thought, this silence is experienced as being infinite—huge, embracing everything. And you can't find words to share that experience with others after you've stopped meditating.

You have a whole new experience of what it means to exist awaiting you when you dare to abandon the valuing and the employing of guilt on yourself or on your brothers and sisters.

Remembering the hooker, as it were, that in order not to experience guilt and employ it on your brothers and sisters you have to abandon your lonely, suffering isolation and you have to acknowledge this something that you have to be in partnership with if, indeed, you did not create yourself.

So, if you simply face the facts that you don't know how you created yourself and therefore you can't possibly have created yourself; and you just acknowledged that there must be something in addition to you responsible for you—responsible for your existence—that moves you out of your isolation, that is the equivalent of meditating.

And in that union—that partnering, let's say—with your Creator, you open up to yourself the means of being guiltless and of recognizing, realizing that your brother and sister and everyone and everything is guiltless. And you're able to have compassion upon your brothers and sisters who are still feeling guilty, because it's clear to you that they don't need to be. And in the absence of your judgment on their insensitive and crazy behavior—because they are confused—in the absence of that judgment on your part, you find them worth giving your energy and attention to in helping them abandon their ignorance.

Determine, then, to be not as you were.

. . . in the past. And I would add, determine then, to not try to be what you want to be in the future. Abandon both ends of the spectrum, so that you can be present in the moment where things are really happening and things are really available to experience.

Use no relationship to hold you to the past, . ..

. . . and I would add, use no relationship to hold anyone else to the past.

... but with each one ...

... each relationship ...

... each day be born again.

What does that mean? Oh-h-h, you're gonna roll around on the floor and talk in tongues and, you know, be born again. No. In each moment, be in the moment where connection can occur, because there's really something present to connect—or there are two something's present to really connect. And in being willing to be in that moment you are born again, you are able to experience Be-ing without it being colored by the past. And in that sense it's new, and you're born again.

So . . .

Use no relationship to hold you to the past, . . .

You know it's what you all do. But it isn't getting you anything helpful. So, you know, there's no judgment here, it's not: "Use no relationship to hold you to the past, you idiot!" No, don't do anything silly or ridiculous. You don't have to use relationships to hold you to the past.

... but with each one each day be born again.

You can do that instead. You know, it's a simple penalty-less choice you have. It's Grace.

A minute, even less, will be enough to free you from the past, . ..

When it says even less than a minute, it can just be the moment. Your willingness to just be innocently present in the moment, bringing nothing ugly into it; being innocently aware in the moment—in just a moment—that's all it takes to free yourself from the past and the future.

A minute, even less, will be enough to free you from the past, and give your mind in peace over to the Atonement.

The Atonement: the transition or the transformation within you in which you stop trying to be what you aren't and let yourself be what you Are. When you stop trying to be independent and let yourself be joined in a Partnership that is an unalterable and essential part of existing for you.

When everyone is welcome to you as you would have yourself be welcome to your Father, you will see no guilt in you.

Now, you might have thought that, that sentence should say:

When everyone is welcome to you as you would have yourself be welcome to your Father, you will see no guilt in . . .

... them. [Chuckle] You see. But no, you will see no guilt in you. When you are willing to be present with your brother and give to him the awareness of his guiltlessness you get to keep what you've given.

... and you will see no guilt in you.

That's just the simplicity of the way things work.

But you know what? Most of you have great faith in the complicated. And because it's complicated it must be really valuable. And it must really be worth the energy it takes to get the complicated thing under your belt so that you can utilize it well. It's all in simplicity.

Again . . .

When everyone is welcome to you as you would have yourself be welcome to your Father, you will see no guilt in you. For you will have accepted the Atonement, . . .

. . . the transformation and presence of peace and fulfillment in you.

... you will have accepted the Atonement, which shone within you all the while you dreamed of guilt, and would not look within and see it.

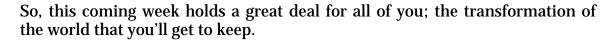
Again, you . . .

... would not look within and see it.

. . . because from your guilt ridden perspective, the flat-out assumption was made, that when you looked within you would find absolute confirmation of your guilt that you would never in all of eternity be able to escape from. And the fact is, that such confirmation is not there.

The truth about guilt is the most wonderful truth you can learn and embrace. It is what will finally transform the world.

I could ask: Are you willing to be agents for change of that sort? Well, let me ask this: Is it worth it not to be an agent for change of that sort, if not being an agent for change of that sort means that you will never experience your guiltlessness? Is anything worth that? Especially now that you know that there's a way to escape an illegitimate imposition of guilt upon you that has kept you struggling without resolve forever and ever, as long as you've employed it.



I'm so happy for you. I want you to be happy for yourselves, because you deserve what the subject of this section is called, "Release and Restoration."

Okay.

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