

Commentary

ACIM® Manual for Teachers

Chapter 5, Section III

The Function of the Teacher of God

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition.

Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview

Paragraph 1

If the patient must change his mind in order to be healed, what does the teacher of God do? ²Can he change the patient's mind for him? ³Certainly not. ⁴For those already willing to change their minds he has no function except to rejoice with them, for they have become teachers of God with him. ⁵He has, however, a more specific function for those who do not understand what healing is. ⁶These patients do not realize they have chosen sickness. ⁷On the contrary, they believe that sickness has chosen them. ⁸Nor are they open-minded on this point. ⁹The body tells them what to do, and they obey. ¹⁰They have no idea how insane this concept is. ¹¹If they even suspected it, they would be healed. ¹²Yet they suspect nothing. ¹³To them the separation is quite real.

In discussing what function a teacher of God plays in healing, Jesus quickly dispels any illusions we may have that the teacher actually heals his "patients." He reiterates his earlier point that the patient must change his own mind to be healed; the teacher cannot do that for him (1:1–3). If a teacher encounters a patient who is *already* willing to change his or her mind, the teacher plays no part in the healing except to join the celebration when the healing occurs (1:4). Notice, however, that the way this is worded implies that being healed and becoming a teacher of God are the same event!

But what if the patient doesn't know that healing comes through a change of mind? They have been choosing to be sick, and must change their mind about that choice. They believe that the cause of sickness is outside of them, and comes upon them unwanted. And they are deeply committed to this false point of view. In their minds, they are at the mercy of their bodies (1:5–9). This description probably fits most of us!

For them the teacher does have a specific function to bring about healing (1:5), which we will come to in a moment.

These patients don't realize that their way of thinking is insane (1:10).

“If they even suspected it, they would be healed. Yet they suspect nothing. To them the separation is quite real.” (1:11–13)

I think you can probably relate to this! It really does apply to us. Well, maybe not completely. I think most of us who have studied the Course have begun at least to *suspect* that our thinking is wrong-side-up. That puts us on the road to healing. This is where a skilled teacher of God can be a great help. So, “to them God's teachers come” (2:1).

Paragraph 2

² To them God's teachers come, to represent another choice which they had forgotten. ³The simple presence of God's teachers is a reminder. ⁴Their thoughts ask for the right to question what the patient has accepted as true. ⁵As God's messengers, they are the symbols of salvation. ⁶They ask the patient for forgiveness for God's Son in his own name. ⁷They stand for the Alternative. ⁸With God's Word in their minds, they come in benediction, not to heal the sick, but to remind them of the remedy God has already given them. ⁹It is not their hands that heal. ¹⁰It is not their voice that speaks the Word of God. ¹¹They merely give what has been given them. ¹²Very gently they call to their brothers to turn away from death. ¹³Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. ¹⁴Would you choose sickness in the place of this?

The teacher comes to such patients, stuck in their belief in separation and external causes (otherwise known as victim consciousness). “The teacher comes to represent another choice which they had forgotten” (2:1). That is precisely what Jesus did, what Jesus *was*: an example or demonstration of another choice, another way of thinking, a consciousness of oneness. The teacher don't even have to *do* anything or *say* anything: their “simple presence” reminds those around them of this “better way” (2:2; see T-2.VI.8:2).

I suspect that you are like me in that you find this idea — that all your sickness is caused by your mind — to be hard to accept. Jesus is our teacher here. Being aware of the way he thinks is raising a question in your mind, suggesting that what you have accepted about sickness and healing up till now might just be crazy wrong (2:3). Teachers like Jesus symbolize the truth for us (2:4). And there are more such teachers than we commonly realize.

The shift in perception the Course espouses is the most profound shift in our thinking we could ever imagine. It won't come to you overnight. Seeing the mind as cause of everything, recognizing that “there is no world,” and totally accepting and living from that state of mind isn't easy! When the Course introduces that phrase, “There is no world,” in Lesson 132, it makes it clear that we are not expected to instantly accept it:

There is no world! This is the central thought the course attempts to teach. Not everyone is ready to accept it, and each one must go as far as he can let himself be led

along the road to truth. He will return and go still farther, or perhaps step back a while and then return again. (W-132.6).

What our teachers are teaching us is “forgiveness for God’s Son” (2:5). God’s Son, of course, includes every human being who will ever live; we all are One Son. Forgiveness entails realizing that there is no sin, that nobody is guilty, that what we think has happened has never occurred. It’s all a dream. Waking up brings the realization that the world has been nothing but a dream.

Do you see the connection to *trust* (the foundational characteristic of God’s teachers) here? How could you ever trust in a world you still judge as sinful and real?

So, you’re not there yet? Not in that state of mind all the time? Maybe almost never? Join the club! You may not be ready, and that’s OK. Just let yourself be led as far as you can along the road to truth. Perhaps the first lesson in forgiveness that we must learn is to forgive our unforgivenesses, our persistent belief in the reality of the world and its pain. If you don’t make it in this lifetime you’ll be back — and *that’s* OK, too. Remember, “The outcome is as certain as God” (T-2.VI.8:7 (CE)). We are called to be happy learners, to walk the path to peace *peacefully*. Relax!

God’s teachers will show up in your life as you need them and are ready. They will demonstrate the Alternative to the way you think (2:6). They are not here to do anything for you, like healing you or somehow zapping you into enlightenment. They are reminders of what you *already have* (2:7). You “heal” yourself by recognizing God has already given you the remedy you need. They don’t speak the Word of God to you; that Word comes from within. They just give you what they have already received (2:8–10). They gently call to you to turn away from your deadly way of thinking (2:11). They say:

Behold, you Son of God, what life can offer you. Would you choose sickness in the place of this?

Paragraph 3

3 Not once do the advanced teachers of God consider the forms of sickness in which their brother believes. ²To do this is to forget that all of them have the same purpose and therefore are not really different. ³They¹ seek for God's Voice in this brother who would so deceive himself as to believe God's Son can suffer. ⁴And they remind him that he has not made himself, and must remain as God created him. ⁵They recognize illusions can have no effects. ⁶The truth in their minds reaches out to the truth in the minds of their brothers, so that illusions are not reinforced. ⁷They² are thus brought to truth, and truth is not brought to them. ⁸So are they dispelled, not by the will of another, but by the union of the one will with itself.³ ⁹And this is the function of God's teachers: to see no will as separate from their own, nor theirs as separate from God's.

The teachers are unconcerned about the form of sickness you have chosen to believe in. They know that there is no order of difficulty in miracles (3:1–2). They seek to awaken you to God's Voice *within you* (3:3). They don't claim to *be* God's Voice; they remind you that you already *have* that Voice, constantly calling you to listen and rejoice. They remind you that your dark view of yourself is something you made up, not anything real. The only possibility is that you remain just as God created you (3:4). Teachers of God know the truth. They absolutely know that "illusions can have no effects" (3:5). The truth in their minds triggers a recognition of that same truth in your mind, ending the seemingly endless reinforcement of illusions that has characterized your thinking (3:6). They give no reality to your illusions; they bring *your illusions* to the *truth* (3:7). That collision with the Truth *in your mind* is what dispels your illusions. It isn't the teacher's special powers (there are none) that dispels the illusions. It happens in your mind: The "one will" is united with itself in you. The belief in a separate self you have held to and identified with disappears, and you realize your union with the One (3:8).

That is the function of God's teachers: to see that your will is already the same as theirs, and that one will has always been one with God's (3:9).

What a marvelous picture of a true teacher of God! How utterly life-affirming and refreshing! Imagine what it feels like to be in the presence of someone who sees you as more than you see yourself. Someone who lifts you up by their perception of you. Someone who believes that your will is one with God, and by their belief in you evokes the same faith in yourself.

That is the kind of man Jesus was. It is why so many were drawn to him.

"Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12 (NRSV)),¹

¹ "They" refers to the teachers of God.

² "They" refers to "illusions."

³ In other words, healing doesn't happen through the healer imposing an alien will on the patient. Rather, it happens through the healer's will reaching out and uniting with the patient's will. This union of wills is possible because the two wills are not actually separate, but are two parts of "the one will"—God's will. Their union, therefore, is a "union of the one will with itself."

he said—and meant it. But many others have been teachers in just this way, lifting their ” students” to a higher belief in themselves by the teacher’s belief in them. It’s within the reach of all of us.