

Search for the Center

By Jon Mundy

*Healing is release from the fear of waking
and the substitution of the decision to wake.*

***The decision to wake is the reflection of the will to love,
since all healing involves replacing fear with love.***

T-8.IX.5:1-2

Rest comes from waking, not from sleeping.

Sleep is withdrawing; waking is joining.

T-8.IX.2:5-6

Awakening is a Decision

Do you ever wake up early in the morning and find yourself laying there – thinking? It’s too early to get up and you’re still tired but it seems unlikely that you will be going back to sleep. You’ve got an hour or maybe even two before the feet need to be on the floor. What do you think about at such times?

On several occasions the Course asks us to “watch your mind” or to “watch your thoughts.” We’re looking to catch the ego doing its stuff as in:

*Watch your mind for the scraps of fear,
or you will be unable to ask me to do so.*

T-4.III.7:5

What do you think about during those early morning hours? Do you worry? Do you have anxious thoughts? Do you wish you did

not have to get up and do the things you need to do? Lesson 47 from the Course encourages us to look at the different situations in our life which we have invested with fear and dismissing each one by saying, *God is the strength in which I trust.*

*Do not leave any spot of pain hidden from His light,
and search your mind carefully
for any thoughts you may fear to uncover.*

*For He will heal every little thought you have kept to hurt you and
cleanse it of its littleness, restoring it to the magnitude of God.*

T-13.III.7:5-6

The Course tells us that the Holy Spirit speaks to us even while we sleep. Pay attention to these early morning thoughts. Maybe you awake with some creative thoughts? Look at what is coming up. Are you excited about what is about to happen? Our friend Vicki Poppe, thinks each morning – “Who can I love today?” Perhaps you’ll have some clarity about how to solve a problem, or how to begin writing a letter or an article. I love it when American Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau says:

Morning is When I am awake, and there is a dawn in me.

You were in another world only a moment ago. You might go back into a dream world for a little while. While you were dreaming, you did not doubt that the dream “was real.” It was also simply one in a zillion of possible dreams. Psychologist tell us that the average person has 8 dream cycles per night with many dreams going on within any one cycle. In fact, the number of dreams is infinite always being multiplied.

You have seen the extent

*of your lack of mental discipline,
and of your need for mind training.
It is necessary that you be aware of this,
for it is indeed a hindrance to your advance.*

W-95.4:4

No one awakes in the morning without facing some responsibility. Maybe you're retired and your responsibility is no more complicated than what is required to take care of the body for another day. Maybe you're like a neighbor friend with a wife and three little girls, a mortgage and – so much more. He must be on the road by 4:00 a.m. headed into New York City to spend the day in the construction of one of the innumerable skyscrapers reaching ever higher into the heavens above the city. Maybe you have children to take care of. Maybe you're facing a load of obligations at work.

The following is a suggestion for a morning ritual. After the obligatory bathroom visit, fix a cup of tea or coffee, water or juice – whatever. Before opening the e-mail, before anything, read the workbook lesson for the day. Study it. If there is a paragraph that seems difficult, read it again for clarity. If possible, leave the book laying open with the lesson in view. Have specific times you want to look down at the lesson if possible. Perhaps on your way to lunch – maybe mid-afternoon and again before bed.

Another good time is to watch the mind is in the shower, being “baptized” by the water raining down cleansing your body. Put your head back. Let your scalp, face and body be covered with water – what is going through the mind? Are you worried? Are you thinking about all the things you must do today? Are you anxious? Are you peaceful? Are you calm?

Try to do what it asks of you. Before stepping into the shower look once more at the thought for the day. Think about the lesson while you are in the shower. Clean the body and the mind. Many of the workbook lessons are affirmations. Can you affirm lesson 45, “*God is the mind, with which I think?*” It’s true you know. Do you believe it?

For perfect effectiveness the Atonement belongs at the center of the inner altar, where it undoes the separation and restores the wholeness of the mind.

T-2.III.2:1

I drive a lot, so like a lot of folks, I listen to books. Recent “reads” include Jordan Petersons, *The 12 Rules for Life*, also William McRaven’s *Make Your Bed*, and Brian Tracy’s *No Excuses*. They are all about establishing order in life. One of Peterson’s 12 Rules is *Set your house in perfect order before you criticize the world*.

I have often said that a person who wishes to begin a good life should be like a circle. Let Him get the center in the right place and keep it so. And the circumference will be good.

Christian Mystic, Meister Eckhart (1260-1326)

Search for the Center

The atonement is the means by which the ego is undone and then only Spirit, only God is there. We might think of this process of the atonement as “polishing or cleaning the center,” that is, a process of clearing the mind of ego static so that the Holy Spirit -- the Voice for God, can get through. We want to polish the center till there are no more spots, no more darkness. We want to work on clearing out guilt so that our innate innocence can shine through.

One good way for clearing out guilt is to accept responsibility for what is happening around us. Jordan Peterson's first rule for Life is to, "Stand up straight with your shoulders back." His second rule is, "Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping." I ask the students I work with on an ongoing basis, to memorize the following from Chapter 21, section II of the Course. Whenever you're in trouble repeat it to yourself.

The Responsibility for Sight.

I am responsible for what I see.

I choose the feelings I experience.

*I decide upon the goal I would achieve
and everything which seems to happen to me.*

I ask for and I receive as I have asked.

The Projection of Guilt

The ego, rather than accepting responsibility, projects irresponsibility onto others. It never works. That way you wind up feeling guilty. Projection of the ego pushes God out. How can we do the work we need to do if God is seen as outside rather than within? There is a place where through "total" forgiveness the world of perception can be released. It is called the "Vision of Christ" and it blesses rather than condemns the world. God could not create guilt. We create guilt when we feel as though we have hurt someone. The ego is essentially selfish, and we feel guilt when we act selfishly. You cannot be selfish and free of guilt at the same time.

*Your part is only to offer Him a little willingness
to let Him remove all fear and hatred, and to be forgiven.*

On your little faith, joined with His understanding,

He will build your part in the Atonement.

and make sure that you fulfill it easily.

T-18.V.2:5-6

You know the saying “God helps those who help themselves”? It’s true. “God helps those who help God.” In eastern philosophy this principle is known as dharma. As God has always been reaching out to us, so must we reciprocate and reach back to God. We must be “willing” to follow God’s Will and guidance in all things.

A wise parent, employer, supervisor, superior officer etc. will gladly turn responsibility over to those who demonstrate their ability to take on projects and see them through. In the same way God helps those who help themselves, as we do what we are being asked to do. We are all here to heal and we are healed by consistently offering only our loving thoughts to each other.

¹This spring our Miracles in Manhattan class is studying the Ten Characteristics of a Teacher of God as discussed in *the Manual for Teachers of A Course in Miracles*.

Let’s look at one of the ten characteristics and see how, though often difficult, the cleaning up and polishing of any one of these characteristics can help us to complete the atonement and thus lead us closer to Home. Let’s take the 2nd characteristic, honesty.

*The search for truth is but the honest searching out
of everything that interferes with truth.*

T-14.VII .2:1

A minister noticed a group of boys standing around a small stray dog and asked, "What are you boys doing?" "Telling lies," said one. "The one who tells the biggest lie gets the dog," said another. "Why, when I was your age," the minister said, "I never told a lie." The boys looked at one another. Disheartened, one of them said, "I guess you get the dog."

Here is the one emotion that you made, whatever it may seem to be.

This is the emotion of secrecy, of private thoughts and of the body.

This is the one emotion that opposes love,

and always leads to sight of differences and loss of sameness.

Here is the one emotion that keeps you blind,

dependent on the self you think you made

to lead you through the world it made for you.

T-22.1.4:7-10

Time magazine once ran a cover story with a lead article titled *Lying: Everybody Is Doing It*. One of the great temptations of the ego is to bolster its power with deception. Let's practice stepping away from the ego by being honest and acknowledge that we all lie. Our concern is not to be looking for lies in others, it's looking to clean up our own act, to wash our own windows so then we can indeed see clearly.

In his book *Radical Honesty*, Dr. Brad Blanton tells of a survey in which respondents were guaranteed complete anonymity. One of the questions asked was about the frequency with which the participants perceived themselves as being dishonest. Ninety-three percent of the respondents said they lied regularly. Dr. Blanton suggested that the remaining seven percent were perhaps the biggest liars of all. Dr. Blanton begins his book the following way:

*I have been a psychotherapist in Washington, D.C., for over 25 years.
.. This is what I have learned: We all lie like hell. It wears us out.
It is the major source of human stress. Lying kills people.
The kind of lying that is most deadly is withholding or keeping back
information from someone we think would be affected by it.
Psychological illness of the severest kind
is the result of this kind of lying.*

According to Blanton, adolescents spend much of their time playing the game of hide-and-seek. The better we get at playing hide-and-seek, the greater the sense of isolation and aloneness, the greater the unhappiness. Keeping secrets and hiding from each other is a trap that keeps us from being the authentic self we were meant to be.

Dr. Blanton writes, “Important secrets and all the plotting and cogitation that go with them are all bullshit.” Dishonesty is separation. Hiding keeps us from knowing Self. It keeps us from the memory of God, and it makes us unhappy. The whole world is based on lies. Nations deliberately deceive other nations through espionage, spying, concealment, and secrecy. Deception is so much a part of international affairs—so much a part of business relationships and church politics, we don’t even think it is unnatural.

Two Hollywood executives are talking.
One says, “You’re lying to me!”
The other responds, “I know. But hear me out.”

Our first defense is denial. When we say there is nothing about which we feel guilty, we simply and conveniently overlook whatever we do not want to see, because we believe that looking would be too difficult. Yet, only by looking within can we be set free.

*Under each cornerstone of fear on which you erect
your insane systems of belief the truth lies hidden.*

T-14.VII .2:7

This does not mean that we should go out and talk about the guilt we feel with the world. This would not make us feel better and it would not make others feel better either. Martha Crawford, author of *What a Shrink Thinks* writes, “perhaps our task, when we feel the impulse to confess, is to be certain others aren’t injured by our admission.” God is forgiving. Egos are not.

Alcoholics Anonymous suggests sharing our story with God, ourselves and one other person. That other person is someone who has been working the program for a while themselves and has gone through what those who are working on cleaning up their lives are going through now. What is shared in these instances is held in the highest confidence. This should be true, of course, of any therapist, counselor or minister. The idea is to heal, not to bring further harm.

Each of the ten-characteristics are built on the ones which proceed it. There is a reason why 1 is 1 and 10 is 10. Trust is the first characteristic. What we are trusting is that there is a God; God is in charge; God loves us and wants us to awaken to the truth of who we are, not as ego endowed beings but as the True Children of God we always have been.

If asked a question answer as honestly as possible. Remember that your opinions are not the truth. If you don’t like the way some are dressed or If you don’t like tattoos, or whatever may distract you, there is no need to share that judgment with the world. The third characteristic of a teacher of God is *tolerance* and beyond tolerance is acceptance.

Let him be what he is, and seek not to make of love an enemy.

T-19.IV.D.13:8

We could say, “let her be who she is. Let the situation be what it is.” It is not our job to fix other people. Our job is to clean our own house from the inside out and to love other people – even those who would oppose us. Trust is the first characteristic of a teacher of God. Tell the truth to Jesus. In any event, he already knows, and you have already been forgiven.

Lovingly,

Jon