

DOES SIZE REALLY MATTER?

Namaste and thank you for being here today. I have had the opportunity to hear Gary Renard speak and he uses a prayer from Chapter 2 of the text to get on purpose and reduce any interference from the ego. So I will start my presentation using this prayer;

“I am here only to be truly helpful. I am here to represent Him who sent me. I do not have to worry about what to say or what to do, because He Who sent me will direct me. I am content to be wherever He wishes, knowing He goes there with me. I will be healed as I let Him teach me to heal. (T.2.V.A (8.2-6))

At a number of ACIM gatherings I have heard folks talk about being more comfortable with illusion or with dream and thought I would start with the definition of each word for clarification.

Definition of dream – Webster’s New World Dictionary

Dream: 1. A sequence of sensations, images, thoughts, etc. passing through a sleeping person’s mind.

Definition of Illusion – Webster’s New World Dictionary

Illusion: 1. A false idea or conception; belief or opinion not in accord with the facts.

HOW BIG IS THE ILLUSION?

COULD IT CONSIST OF PHYSICAL AND NON-PHYSICAL COMPONENTS?

We can start with our own body and move to infinite universe in the physical and we can start with our spirit and move through the realm of the little known non-physical. If we believe that we made the illusion, then it can be anything we think it is, there really is no limit on how large it could be. Both the physical and non-physical illusions could be as complex as we wish. For example the physical could contain multiple constellations, planets with intelligent life forms as advanced or more advanced than us and an infinite number of realities. The non-physical could include levels of spirituality from the near physical to the near Heaven. There could be spirits that help those in the physical plane and spirits that help those in the spiritual plane. If we can think it, we can manifest it and the world we see reflects our thoughts. So we should be careful what we think!

COULD IT INCLUDE REINCARNATION? If we can make the illusion anything we want why can we not make reincarnation part of the experience. The Manual for Teachers states;

“In the ultimate sense, reincarnation is impossible. There is no past or future, and the idea of birth into a body has no meaning either once or many times. Reincarnation cannot then, be true in any real sense. Our only question should be, “Is the concept helpful?” And that depends, of course, on what it is used for. If it is used to strengthen the recognition of the eternal nature of life, it is helpful indeed.” (M.24.1.1-6.)”

It might help some to deal with what happens to the mind when the body is laid aside even when the mind has not been completely healed. I know it has helped me. It does take some time to get to a point where we are willing to surrender those things we love about the illusion. Multiple reincarnations could occur until we are ready to surrender everything, to include the self, to the Holy Spirit and the mind is healed and Atonement is accepted. Many of us are intrigued with the analysis of the illusion as witnessed by the popularity of “What the Bleep” and it’s sequel and many other concepts that pop up. These can be very useful in the healing of the mind but the Course reminds us:

“The ego analyzes; the Holy Spirit accepts.” (T.11.V.13.1)

The Course tells us that the illusion arose from the “tiny mad idea”. In that instant of perceived separation from the Father, the whole illusion of time and space arose and disappeared in that same instant.

“Each day, and every minute in each day and every instant that each minute holds, you but relive the single instant when the time of terror took the place of love. And so you die each day to live again, until you cross the gap between the past and present, which is not a gap at all. Such is each life; a seeming interval from birth to death and on to life again, a repetition of an instant gone by long ago that cannot be relived. And all of time is but the mad belief that what is over is still here and now.” (T.26.VI.13.1-4)

HOW DO WE DEFINE THE ILLUSION?

We accept certain things about the illusion as true and regulators of the illusion. Believing we are bodies, physicality has more reality for us and so we measure and define things and then we can agree on what they are and how they affect our lives. Since measuring the non-physical presents difficulty we have placed the non-physical in the area of spirituality, religion mentalism, etc. Belief in this non-verifiable area is left to the individual but not a universal concept accepted by the general population. This is not to say that groups of like thinking people have not come together and attempted to force the general population to accept their view of the illusion. All one needs to do is to look on the controversy surrounding issues about the physical world; war, energy conservation, health care, global warming, ad infinitum. And in the non-physical realm; religious sects, radical religious sects, spiritual organizations and thought systems, astrology, new age thought systems, psychic healing, atheism, agnosticism, moral issues like, abortion, stem cell research, cloning, ad-infinitum. It is interesting that quantum physics is beginning to bring the two worlds of the physical and non-physical together. In many respects some scientists are becoming more spiritual than many confused religious persons. Some quantum physicists are coming to believe: that there are an infinite number of parallel universes, that nothing exists in the physical until you think about it and that nothing existed before the Big Bang. Some Course students see the “tiny mad idea” as the Big Bang. It is easy to see how one could get led off course with so many interesting things to focus on.

HOW DOES ACIM SEE ALL OF THIS?

The Course sees all of the above as not real, as part of the illusion. ACIM tends not to deal with the perceived specifics of the illusion. For example, I believe that is why the talk about sex in the ur-text was deleted from the first edition. It remains very general in it's approach, it doesn't address other functions of the body like eating or exercise, individual emotions like revenge or hate or activities in the illusion like work, parenting, education, etc. Specifics are in the realm of the ego and the ego loves nothing better than to have us dwell on specifics because specifics reinforce the idea that separation exists.

“Complete abstraction is the natural condition of the mind. But part of it is now unnatural. It does not look on everything as one. It sees instead but fragments of the whole, for only thus could it invent the partial world you see. The purpose of all seeing is to show you what you wish to see. All hearing but brings to your mind the sounds it wants to hear.

Thus were specifics made. And now it is specifics we must use in practicing. We give them to the Holy Spirit, that He may employ them for a purpose which is different from the one we gave to them. Yet He can use but what we made, to teach us from a different point of view, so we can see a different use in everything.

One brother is all brothers. Every mind contains all minds, for every mind is one. Such is the truth. Yet do these thoughts make clear the meaning of creation? Do these words bring perfect clarity with them to you? What can they seem to be but empty sounds; pretty, perhaps, correct in sentiment, yet fundamentally not understood nor understandable. The mind that taught itself to think specifically can no longer grasp abstraction in the sense that it is all-encompassing. We need to see a little, that we learn a lot.” (W.161.2-4)

The Course sees specifics as ego generated distractions that are attempting to delay the healing of the mind and the acceptance of Atonement. It does not condemn the use of specifics if it helps to reduce fear while we are in the process of accepting the Atonement. It only directs that we give them to the Holy Spirit for His use. We can find almost anything we want to find in the Course to justify our belief in specifics. One example is reincarnation. Here are three quotes from the Course that imply that reincarnation is part of the illusion:

“Nothing the world believes is true. It is a place whose purpose is to be a home where those who claim they do not know themselves can come to question what it is they are. And they will come again until the time Atonement is accepted, and they learn it is impossible to doubt yourself, and not to be aware of what you are.” (W.139.7)

“When dreams are over, time has closed the door on all the things that pass and miracles are purposeless, the holy Son of God will make no journeys. There will be no wish to be illusion rather than the truth. And we step forth toward this as we progress along the way that truth points out to us. This is our final journey, which we make for everyone.” (W.155.11)

“The time will come when you will not return in the same form in which you now appear for you will have no need of it. Yet now it has a purpose, and will serve it well.” (W.157.7.3)

Again the Course is not saying that the use of specifics is wrong or that they should not be used? Not at all, as indicated in lesson 184.

“Think not you made the world. Illusions, yes! But what is true in earth and Heaven is beyond your naming. When you call upon a brother, it is to his body that you make appeal. His true Identity is hidden from you by what you believe he really is. His body makes response to what you call him, for his mind consents to take the name you give him as his own. And thus his unity is twice denied, for you perceive him separate from you, and he accepts this separate name as his.

It would indeed be strange if you were asked to go beyond all symbols of the world, forgetting them forever; yet were asked to take a teaching function. You have need to use the symbols of the world a while. But be you not deceived by them as well. They do not stand for anything at all, and in your practicing it is this thought that will release you from them. They become but means by which you can communicate in ways the world can understand, but which you recognize is not the unity where true communication can be found.

Thus what you need are intervals each day in which the learning of the world becomes a transitory phase; a prison house from which you go into the sunlight and forget the darkness. Here you understand the Word, the Name which God has given you; the one Identity which all things share; the one acknowledgment of what is true. And then step back to darkness, not because you think it real, but only to proclaim its unreality in terms which still have meaning in the world that darkness rules.” (W.184.8-10)

This quote reminds us that the ego is constantly looking for ways to delay us and that everything we see and experience should be given to the Holy Spirit for His use in the healing of the mind. It also reminds us that we need to go into the light throughout the day and remember who we are and then return to the world of illusions. We do our best to always be motivated by the Holy Spirit but again ACIM reminds us not to fool ourselves, be honest with ourselves and admit we might be motivated by our ego. That’s ok, just an indication of where our mind needs healing. It helps us to more readily identify those things we are not ready to surrender to the Holy Spirit so we can accept the Atonement. It encourages us to focus on the healing of the mind through forgiveness and extension of the love that we are. To keep our focus on our day-to-day activities and the interaction with those we perceive separate from ourselves. It tends to discourage thinking about the world, the galaxy, the universe, incarnation, ESP, ascended masters, etc. because these could distract us from our purpose. The Course is telling us that we can go home in this instant and that there is no need for multiple lifetimes, we just need to accept the Atonement now. There is no tomorrow, no multiple realities, there is only now. The Holy Spirit heals our mind by removing the guilt about the past and in turn, our belief in the future so we can experience the now. It is only our willingness to surrender our illusions that needs time as a tool. We can determine how long it takes by deciding how willing we are to surrender everything to the Holy Spirit.

WHAT SOURCES OF INFORMATION CAN WE TRUST?

For the first twenty to thirty years after the Course was published there were very few sources to go to for illumination on what the Course was telling us. But in the last decade there have appeared many sources of information. It might appear that we are developing sects or “schools of thought” within the Course community and that students need to align with one or the other to get the real meaning of the

Course. I find it ironic that a spiritual thought system based on oneness has students that are embracing separation based on fear (fear that they will incorrectly understand the Course). Some teachers within the Course community have come into question of late and some other teachers have felt it necessary to “protect” their students from coming to an understanding of ACIM that does not agree with theirs. Although they mean well the Course also reminds us:

“Atonement cannot be separate because it comes from love. Any attempt you make to correct a brother means that you believe correction by you is possible, and this can only be the arrogance of the ego. Correction is of God, Who does not know of arrogance.” (T.9.III.7.7)

The Manual For Teachers talks about Teachers of teachers. For example:

“There are those who have reached God directly, retaining no trace of worldly limits and remembering their own Identity perfectly. These might be called Teachers of teachers because, although they are no longer visible, their image can yet be called upon. And they will appear when and where it is helpful for them to do so. To those to whom such appearances would be frightening, they give their ideas.”(M.26.2.1-4.)

Could this apply to experiences of Helen or to Gary Renard and possibly others? Why not, it would be our Internal Teacher that would guide us in these matters. Building our ability to listen to our Internal Teacher becomes more and more important as we journey through the illusion. In the Preface to the Course it states,

“The Course makes no claim to finality, nor are the Workbook lessons intended to bring the student’s learning to completion. At the end, the reader is left in the hands of his or her own Internal Teacher, Who will direct all subsequent learning as He sees fit.” (Preface)

And the Manual For Teachers states;

“Who would profit more from prayers alone? Who needs but a smile, being as yet unready for more? No one should attempt to answer these questions alone. Surely no teacher of God has come this far without realizing that. The curriculum is highly individualized, and all aspects are under the Holy Spirit’s particular care and guidance. Ask and He will answer. The responsibility is His, and He alone is fit to assume it. To do so is His function. To refer the questions to Him is yours. Would you want to be responsible for decisions about which you understand so little? Be glad you have a Teacher Who cannot make a mistake. His answers are always right. Would you say that of yours?” (M.29. 2)

There are so many who wish to share their experiences and guidance that they have received. They claim they received their guidance from Jesus, the Holy Spirit, from ascended masters, etc. Who are we to question their perceptions? How do we then benefit from what they are offering? ACIM tells us over and over that the Holy Spirit and/or Jesus will be there to help us to interpret these messages. Their worth will be different for everyone, again pointing out the individualness of ACIM. We want to believe that what comes from Jesus and/or the Holy Spirit is the truth and how can multiple people be speaking the truth, especially if it appears they don’t always agree. Everything we think we know is of the illusion but useful when given to the Holy Spirit for his use in the awakening of the Sonship. We may find one teacher more beneficial than others but we should not exclude those that do not see the Course the same way we do. So we should celebrate the awakening of the Mind. Be grateful for the infinite number of choices we can make, knowing we can make no mistakes. There are so many ACIM teachers to learn from, you do not need to pick one and reject the rest. Use all of them and allow your Internal Teacher to help you to awaken. We may delay or accelerate our awakening by how open-minded we are. The choice is always ours. Everyone does not need to be traveling at the same speed. Regardless of the speed you choose you will find teachers who will be there to help you to progress. Remember;

“Knowledge is not the motivation for learning this course. Peace is.” (T.8.I.1)

“The test of everything on earth is simply this; “What is it for?” The answer makes it what it is for you. (T.24.VII.6.1.)

As long as we realize that we are love and that our only function is to extend that love through forgiveness then we are on the right path. The form of this extension will reflect where our mind is in the healing process. Only the individual can decide when they are ready to go deeper. There is no need for defensiveness because there is no sin and the Holy Spirit will move you to make the choices that are right for you at this moment. Keep an open mind and listen to your Internal Teacher for guidance. The more you do this the better your discernment will become and the deeper your learning will become. So be open to all teachers and absorb what fits with you and reject the rest and you will continue to grow in peace, love and joy.

I hope this presentation has helped you all to realize that the size of the illusion matters only to the degree that we allow it to be a tool for the use of the Holy Spirit or a delaying tactic of the ego. As in all things the choice is ours to make. I leave you with this quote from workbook lesson 189;

“Simply do this: Be still, and lay aside all thoughts of what you are and what God is; all concepts you have learned about the world; all images you hold about yourself. Empty your mind of everything it thinks is either true or false, or good or bad, of every thought it judges worthy, and all the ideas of which it is ashamed. Hold onto nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God. (W.189.7)

Thank you for your time and attention, peace, love and joy!!!