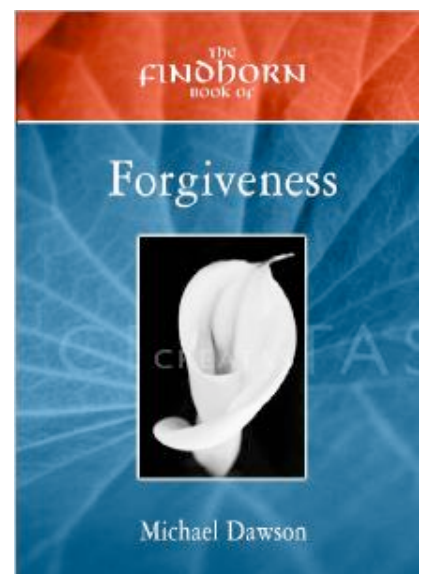
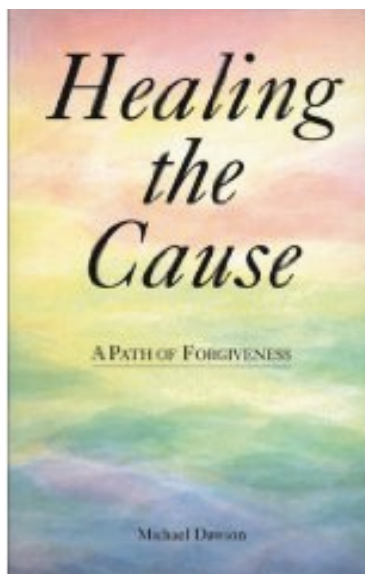
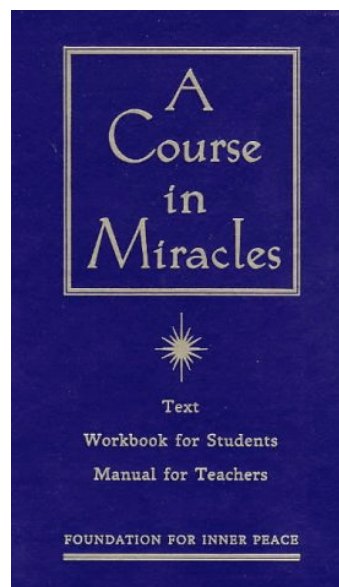


# Articles and Book Extracts on *A Course in Miracles*

by Michael Dawson

[www.acfip.org](http://www.acfip.org)

Contains a bonus chapter from *Healing the Cause*  
and *The Findhorn Book of Forgiveness*.



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## ***How A Course in Miracles Came***

Reprinted from [Healing the Cause - A Path of Forgiveness](#) by Michael Dawson.

The way the Course came to be written illustrates very well the principles to be found within its pages. In 1957 William Thetford, a professor of medical psychology, was made Director of the Psychology Department at the Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York City. The following year he appointed [Helen Schucman](#), an associate professor of medical psychology, to head a research project. Although they worked well together professionally, their personal and departmental relationships were marked with much criticism, anger and blame. Each felt the other to be the cause of their unhappiness.

During 1965 Bill said to Helen that there had to be another way to relate to each other and within and between departments. Helen agreed with him and said she would help him to find it. This is an example of what the Course would call 'holy instant', where instead of holding on to a grievance, forgiveness is chosen instead. This shift of perception is what the Course calls a miracle.

The moment of joining between them was the moment that the Course was born. Helen soon began to experience dreams, visions and psychic experiences which she found very disturbing to her logical, rational and scientifically-oriented mind. Bill was very supportive towards her and managed to convince her she was not going mad. During the October of 1965 Helen 'heard' in her mind the words "This is a Course in Miracles. Please take notes." In desperation she rang Bill who tried to placate her and suggested she take down this inner dictation and bring it to the office the following day. He told Helen that if it was found to be nonsense, they could simply discard it and no one need ever know anything about it.

However, it soon became clear that the Course contained profound teachings and they could not easily dismiss it. For the next seven years, Helen continued to receive this inner dictation which she wrote down in shorthand. She said it was like having a tape recorder in her mind which she could start and stop at will, even in mid-sentence. Bill continued to support and encourage Helen in this process and would daily type the notes as Helen read them from her shorthand notebook.

The Course comes from Jesus, with much of it written in the first person. Several references are made to his life 2,000 years ago, especially with regard to his crucifixion which he describes in a very different light to what we have been taught to believe. Helen was shocked to realise who the source of this material was. At this time of her life she posed as an atheist. She had sought to find God in her early years but felt she had failed. She had retained an anger against a deity whom she felt had not made the same effort towards her. Her ambivalence towards God now extended to Jesus, with whom she maintained a love/hate relationship for the rest of her life. In the Course, Jesus tells us he

understands that many of us experience difficulty in relating to him and that we need not believe he is the author of the Course to benefit from his words. (see M84; C-5.6)

The Course has been published as it was received except for the removal of material personal to Helen and Bill. The Text was received in one block and needed editing in the form of inserting chapter and section headings, punctuation, paragraphing and capitalisation. They were helped in this work by Dr. Kenneth Wapnick, a clinical psychologist. Ken tells the whole fascinating story of how A Course in Miracles was born in his book *Absence from Felicity - The Story of Helen Schucman and Her Scribing of A Course in Miracles*, published by the Foundation for A Course in Miracles. Bill looked upon his work with Helen as a sacred trust. The Course was the answer to their joint need for another way of relating.

Two further channelled writings came through Helen from Jesus in the form of pamphlets. The first was completed in 1975, three years after the Course was written. It is entitled *Psychotherapy: Purpose, Process and Practice* and is a summary of the Course's teachings on healing as applied to the profession of psychotherapy. In 1977 Helen channelled *The Song of Prayer*. This was in response to questions Ken had raised about the correct use of prayer. It is a poetic summary of prayer, forgiveness and healing and deals with some of the misunderstandings that were already beginning to surface on these subjects.

After Helen's death in 1981, a book of her inspired poetry was published by the Foundation for Inner Peace, entitled *The Gifts of God*.

## **What the *A Course in Miracles* Is**

Reprinted from [Healing the Cause - A Path of Forgiveness](#) by Michael Dawson.

Much of the material in [Healing the Cause](#) is based upon my understanding of some of the principles of the *A Course in Miracles*. I have included below some introductory material about what ACIM says.

It is a book about how to heal our minds, for this is where the source of all our physical and psychological suffering lies. The aim of the Course is for us to achieve a state of inner peace, a quiet joy, no matter what we are doing, who we are with, or where we may be. It does this by teaching us a new way of looking at the world. This change of perception is the miracle - hence the title of the book.

The Course teaches that everything in this world can be used as a mirror to what we believe. Our relationships are the most powerful of all our mirrors. By relationships I mean all forms: lovers, parent and child, therapist and client, employer and employee, friends, etc. A relationship is an extremely powerful way of bringing into our awareness what needs to be healed within our mind. The Course teaches that through forgiveness and turning within for help, we can undo all the guilt we carry. This guilt originates from the false belief in our unconscious mind that we have willed to separate ourselves from God, and have succeeded in this attempt. Guilt is the term the Course uses to describe our self-hate, feelings of inferiority, lack of self-worth and all the negative beliefs we have about ourselves. As we learn to undo our guilt, the memory of God's love for us will return to our mind. When we re-experience the unconditional love of God, everything in this world will lose its appeal, including our identification with our body.

The Course is a unique blend of modern psychology, radical metaphysics and deep spiritual truths. Much of the psychology is derived from Sigmund Freud's teachings on our ego defence mechanisms of denial. The three volumes comprising the Course are a lifetime study requiring much re-reading to benefit from the depths of its teachings. The metaphysics of the Course have many parallels with some Eastern philosophies and religions. There are over 700 references to the Bible, and Jesus often reinterprets these biblical sayings. Many Christian terms are used in the Course but with entirely different meanings. Jesus stresses that we are not guilty, sinful creatures who need to atone through sacrifice and suffering. Instead, he gives us the inspiring message that we are guiltless, sinless creations of God who have fallen asleep in Heaven. In our collective dream, we have forgotten the abstract eternal beauty of our real nature and believe we are bodies in a world of form.

The Course is not trying to convince us that it is the only spiritual path. It states that it is but one of many thousands of spiritual paths and that other teachers with different symbols are also needed. (M3; M-1.4:1-2) Jesus often says that the message of his Course is simple. However, when we first start to study it, it does not appear that way to most of us. This is because the Course's thought system is completely opposite to our ego's way of looking at the world. The Course uses the term 'ego' - as is also the practice in the East - to describe our 'little self' which we have made to try and take the place of our real Self which God created. Our ego identifies with our body whilst our Self (or Christ nature) knows only the truth of our formless, spiritual magnificence.

Jesus stresses that all God's children, referred to in the Course as the Son, Sonship or Christ, were created equal. Thus Jesus is not especially favoured in God's eyes but is equal to all of us. He simply awoke to his true reality before us and seeks to help us regain what we have forgotten.

The Text in particular seems hard to grasp and the practice of forgiveness equally as difficult. Because of this some people tend only to read the Workbook. However, there is much material in the Text, especially with regard to relationships, which is not found in the Workbook. The Text forms the theoretical foundation of the Workbook. It becomes very easy to misunderstand the Workbook and read its message out of context without a knowledge of the theoretical framework of the Course which is found in the Text. On the other hand, to study the Text but not apply it through the Workbook lessons is to end up with an ungrounded and abstract view of the Course. Yet, with time, the message of the Course does become simple, although never easy to apply. Victim consciousness is ingrained in our psyches and the desire to blame others for our unhappiness is universal. To read in the Course that no one can take away our peace, only ourselves, is a difficult message to accept, but one which will eventually lead us to happiness.

See also "[Introduction to A Course in Miracles](#)" from the Foundation for Inner Peace and "[What it is](#)" from the Preface to A Course in Miracles.

## Summary of *A Course in Miracles*

Reprinted from [\*Healing the Cause\*](#) by Michael Dawson.  
Published by Findhorn Press, Scotland.

"You may be surprised to hear how very different is reality from what you see." (T348; T-18.I.5:1) Our senses report to us a seemingly real and substantial world. The Course informs us however, that we spend all our sleeping and waking time in a dream of seeming separation from God. Our true nature is still spirit, as God created us, and will be eternally. God is described as perfect, limitless, formless, eternal and changeless and so therefore His Creation, the Christ or Sonship, must also be. Nothing in our universe can be described by any of these words and therefore it cannot have been created by God. We are ideas in the mind of God and as ideas we cannot leave the mind of God. This perfect unity of God and Christ is Heaven and nothing can threaten this.

For reasons we cannot understand, a thought of separation from God, which the Course calls the ego, entered the collective mind of the Sonship. This idea, at which we "forgot to laugh", stated that we could take the place of God and become the Creator. God's answer to this was the creation of the Holy Spirit in our mind to correct this "tiny mad idea" of separation.

Choosing not to listen to the Voice for God, we experienced an overwhelming sense of sin at what we thought we had accomplished. From this act of sin came guilt and the fear of God's punishment. Our minds became split into the wrong mind of the ego, the right mind of the Holy Spirit and the sleeping Son of God (the decision maker) who has now to decide who to listen to. The ego part counsels us that we cannot survive the avenging anger of God as represented by the presence of the Holy Spirit in our mind. Out of fear, we listen and identify with the ego's counsel and project the thought of separation out of our mind as an image. This image is the physical universe where we can now hide from God's anger and our guilt.

A veil of forgetfulness falls over our decision and this illusory world appears very real to us. Yet we are still safe in heaven although lost in our dream of exile. So powerful is this illusion that we could not awaken without the help of the Holy Spirit. Our body now seems a reality and not spirit which vision would reveal to us. The ego teaches us to deny our guilt and project it onto others. Our guilt (self-hate) now seems to be created by people and circumstances outside ourselves. We now feel justified in feeling anger towards others and attack in self-defence becomes a necessity (special hate relationships). Feeling a great lack within us, the ego counsels us to find people who can fulfil our imagined needs - security, sex, money career etc. (special love relationships).

To awaken from this dream and regain our lost vision, we need to undo our belief in separation from God. The Holy Spirit's plan for our awakening is called the Atonement



(correction of perception). We begin to learn that the world is but a neutral mirror to the beliefs in our mind. No person or event has the power to give or take our peace from us. When we get disturbed about someone or something "out there" in the world we are only seeing a projection of some part of our mind that is not forgiven.

If we can have the "little willingness" to allow the Holy Spirit's counsel of forgiveness to enter our mind we can begin the journey of undoing separation by joining with others. We forgive by first removing our projections from the world and then bringing them back to our mind where they originated. Now we have the opportunity to heal our mind by ceasing to judge its ego content. It is our self-judgment that prevents our mind being healed by the Holy Spirit. Guilt demands punishment, not healing.

As we learn to stop judging ourselves we allow the ever present love of the Holy Spirit to shine away the clouds of guilt in our mind. This shift of perception from the ego's world of separation and attack, to the Holy Spirit's counsel of joining and forgiveness is called a miracle. As we practice forgiveness in our relationships, we start to undo the guilt that covers the memory of God's love in our mind. We begin to see that we have not been running away from God's anger, but from God's love. To allow the awareness of God's love back into our mind will cause our ego to disappear, and this is our greatest fear.

Relationships become classrooms in which we learn to forgive ourselves by forgiving others (holy relationships). Jesus is the greatest example to us in teaching this lesson of forgiveness. Increasingly, we realise that when people attack us through fear, they are really asking for our love. Thus we begin to allow the Holy Spirit to transform our world from the prison of the ego to a teaching device that will awaken us from the dream of separation and allow us to enter the real world of vision.

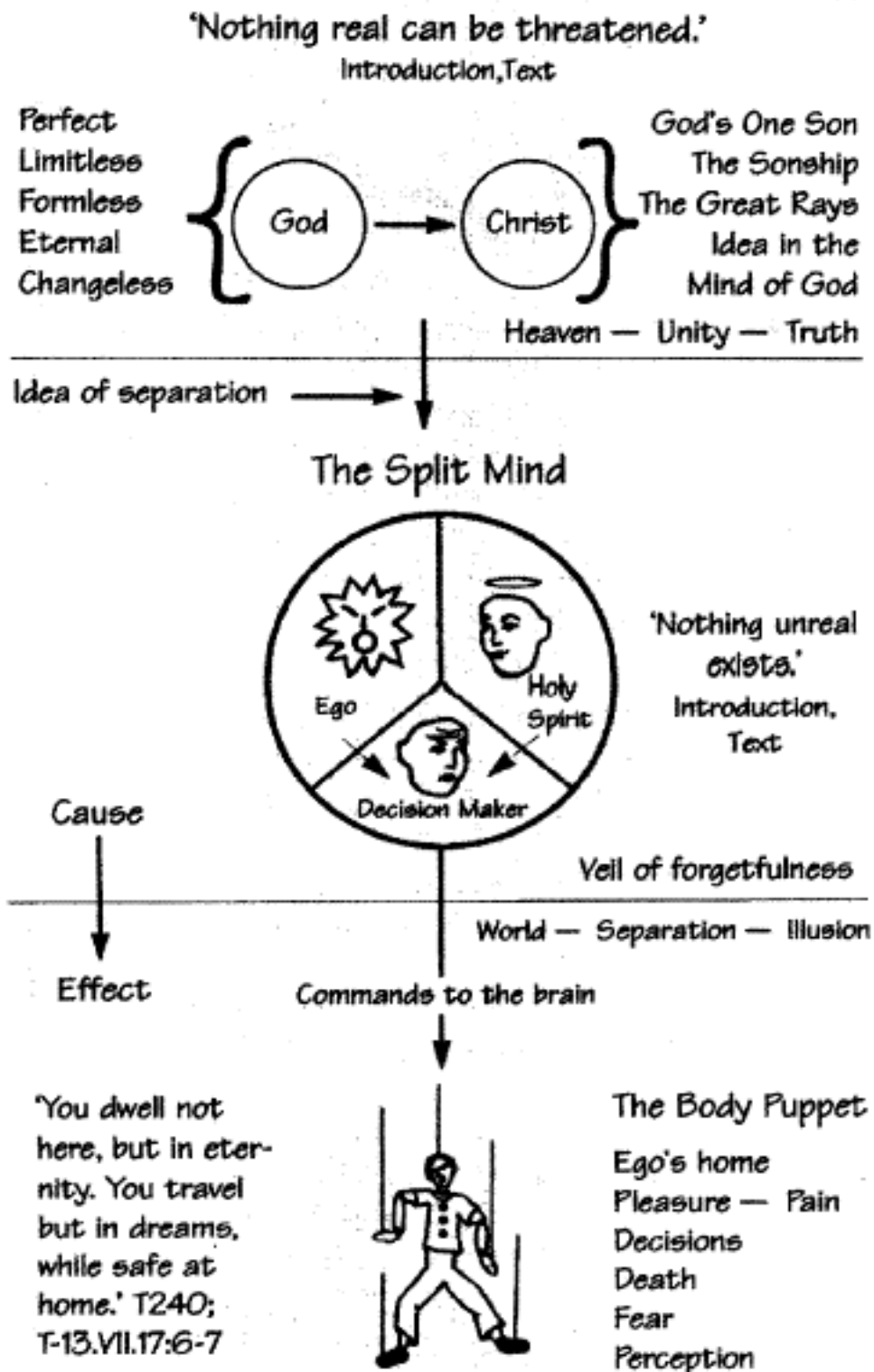
With the reawakening in our mind of the knowledge of who we really are, we will walk this world in complete peace with an inner joy that nothing can take from us. We will now perceive everyone as our brothers and sisters whose reality is eternal spirit and to whom we extend the love of the Holy Spirit.

See also ["What it Says"](#) from Preface to A Course in Miracles

A further summary of the Course by Kenneth Wapnick may be read at his [website](#)

This summary and chart has been inspired by ideas contained in *Awaken from the Dream* by Gloria and Kenneth Wapnick. [Foundation for A Course in Miracles](#)

## Summary Chart of A Course in Miracles



Reprinted from "Healing the Cause - A Path of Forgiveness" by Michael Dawson.

## Chapter Five

Excerpted from *Healing the Cause*.  
Michael Dawson Findhorn Press.

### Healing Ourselves

If we decide to follow the ego's advice to get ill, we shall, in the next moment, deny having made that decision. I can clearly remember a time when I became conscious of the choice I had to become sick or not.

Whilst talking with a group of people one day, I noticed the first symptoms of a cold. As I thought to myself that I should go and take some medicine, I became aware of a 'voice' saying to me, 'Careful! If you do that, you might lose your cold.' It was amazing for me to realise that part of me wanted that cold. I could also see the 'advantages' of being sick. I could imagine myself tucked up in bed with a pile of my favourite books which I never found the time to read. It would also give me an opportunity to take a rest from what I considered a heavy workload. I decided I wanted to make a conscious decision about whether to be sick or well. Taking out my diary, I looked at my appointments over the next few days. I wanted to keep these appointments instead of going to bed, even though my favourite books were a great draw! Over the next few days, I had a few mild cold symptoms which did not interfere with my work. In the language of the Course, I had chosen a miracle. This enabled me to drop the ego's thought system which portrayed me as a victim of circumstances and instead view the situation through the eyes of the Holy Spirit and forgive myself. Figure 5.1 illustrates how the decision maker always has a choice in how to view the world.

We always 'look inside' our mind first and then project what we find onto the circumstances of the world. To forgive ourself and others, we need to choose to look with the Holy Spirit's thought system and not the ego's.

## ‘Projection Makes Perception’

‘The world we see merely reflects our own internal frame of reference — the dominant ideas, wishes and emotions in our minds. “Projection makes perception.” We look inside first, decide the kind of world we want to see and then project that world outside, making it the truth as we see it. We make it true by our interpretations of what it is we are seeing . . . .’ (contd. below)

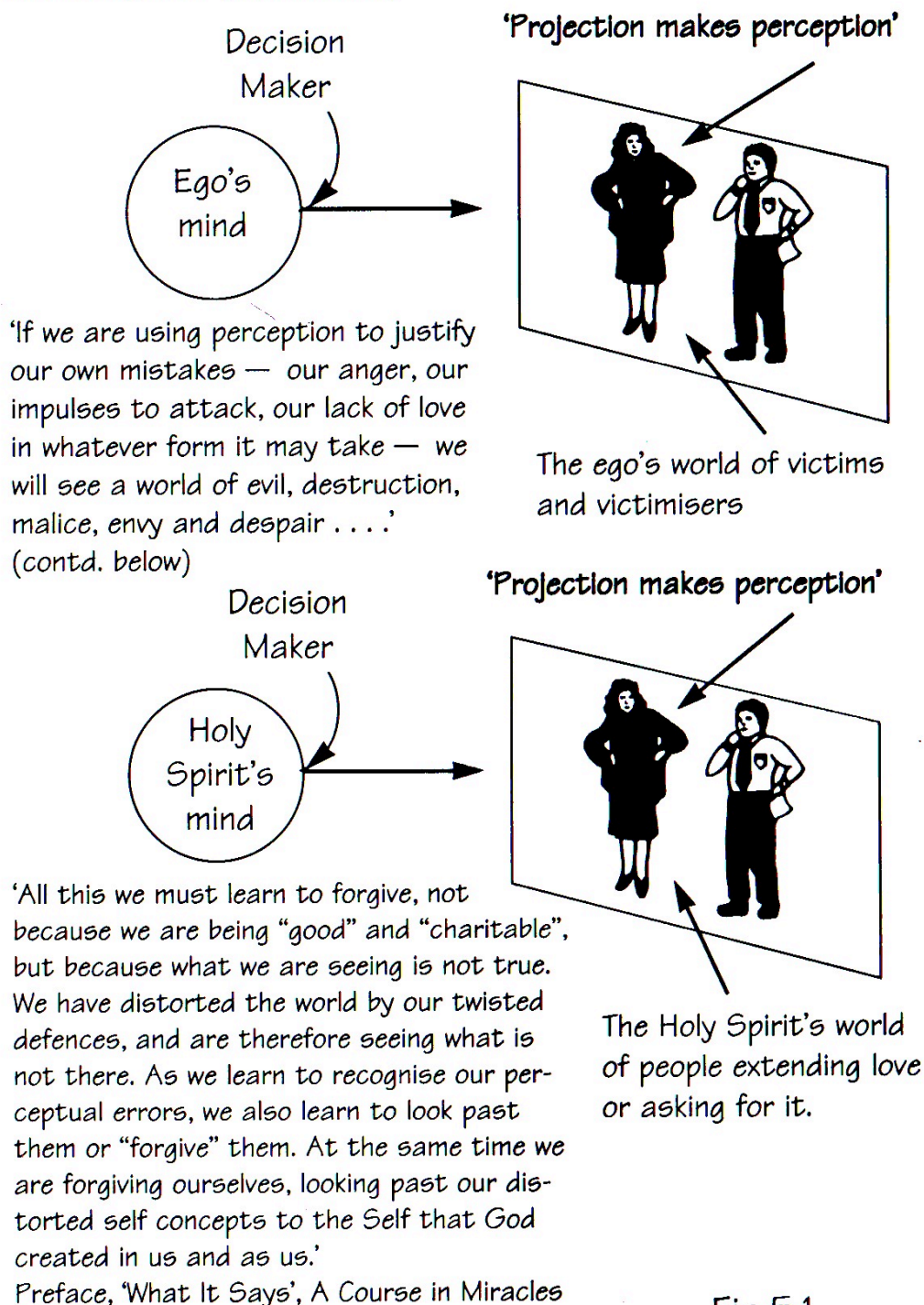


Fig 5.1

One night shortly before going to sleep, Salice and I had an argument. My ego told me I had been unfairly treated and I should separate from her by not communicating. Salice's ego had apparently given her the same advice, for neither of us was now talking to the other! I got out of bed and went to the bathroom. I saw a pack of Workbook Lesson cards and felt the impulse to take one. The title of the Lesson was 'I could see peace instead of this'. (Lesson 34) The significance of the Lesson was not lost on me and simultaneously another line from the Course came into my mind: 'Do you prefer to be right or happy?' (T573; T29.VII.1:9) For a moment I considered my two options and then said to myself, 'I'd rather be right' and put the Lesson card down again. Feeling miserable but justified in my pain, I returned silently to bed and fell asleep.

In the morning I woke up still feeling separated from Salice, as she did from me. I returned to the bathroom and remembered picking up the Lesson card from the night before. Out of curiosity I read the title again, 'I could see peace instead of this', and remembered the choice I had to be right or happy. I became still for a moment and this time I chose to be happy. I felt the impulse to share what was happening to me with Salice. She was sitting quietly at the table and as I sat down next to her I said, 'I want to let you know that I'm not handling my side of this dispute very well.' At this statement Salice began to cry and we began to share honestly with each other how we had been feeling.

Through this process we were able to understand each other's fear and found ourselves quickly moving into a state of mutual openness, care and affection. In the language of the Course, we had joined and felt at peace. At these moments I always wonder why I choose to be right and not happy. However, I am also aware that it is taking me a shorter time to forgive than it has done in the past. What would upset me for days may only last a few hours now. I am also aware that some issues which triggered pain in me in the past no longer affect me. Progress on the spiritual path may be measured by how much of the day is spent listening to the ego compared to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Eventually, only the Holy Spirit will fill our mind and then there will be no more temptation or choice, for there will not be two voices to choose between. The decision maker will have disappeared with the ego, and the Holy Spirit will fill our mind with God's love and wisdom. We shall simply know what to do from moment to moment. The Course describes this state of existence as being in the real world and this is the goal of the Course. To achieve this goal we must practise forgiveness over and over until we at last see there is nothing to forgive.

*Forgive the world, and you will understand that everything that God created cannot have an end, and nothing He did not create is real. In this one sentence is our course explained. In this one sentence is our practising given its one direction. And in this one sentence is the Holy Spirit's whole curriculum specified exactly as it is.*

(M50; M-20.5:7-10)

## How Do I Forgive?

*It is impossible to forgive another, for it is only your sins you see in him. You want to see them there, and not in you. That is why forgiveness of another is an illusion.*

(S10; S-2.I.4:2-4)

We can only begin the process of forgiveness when we start to realise how much alike we are to the person we wish to forgive. When we cannot forgive someone, it is because we cannot forgive ourselves for the same problem, albeit in another form. For example, a woman may dislike her husband's aggressive outbursts of anger, whilst she may never exhibit such outbursts herself. However, her anger will be just as strong as his but will be found in a different form. For instance, when she feels angry she may withdraw herself and cut off from people emotionally, successfully suppressing her anger. Or her anger may be expressed aggressively when she is alone. A common example for many people is when they are driving a car and someone changes lanes or stops suddenly. Anger can well up in us and in the safety and privacy of the car we may yell or swear angrily at the other driver. The woman dislikes her husband's anger because it mirrors her own which she has not forgiven in herself.

Forgiveness recognises that what we thought was done to us, we truly did to ourselves, for only we can deprive ourselves of the peace of God. As the Course teaches, we forgive others for what they have not done to us, not for what they did, and true forgiveness recognises an attack as a call for love. Forgiveness is thus a shift in perception. Our only problem is the belief in separation from God; our only healing is by joining with each other through forgiveness.

## The Three Stages of Forgiveness

Kenneth Wapnick has identified in the Course three stages or steps on the path of forgiveness which I find helpful in understanding the nature of true forgiveness. I have used these steps as the basis for the following discussion on forgiveness.

Firstly we must take back the projections which we have made onto the world and take responsibility for our own pain. See Figure 5.2.



## The First Stage of Forgiveness

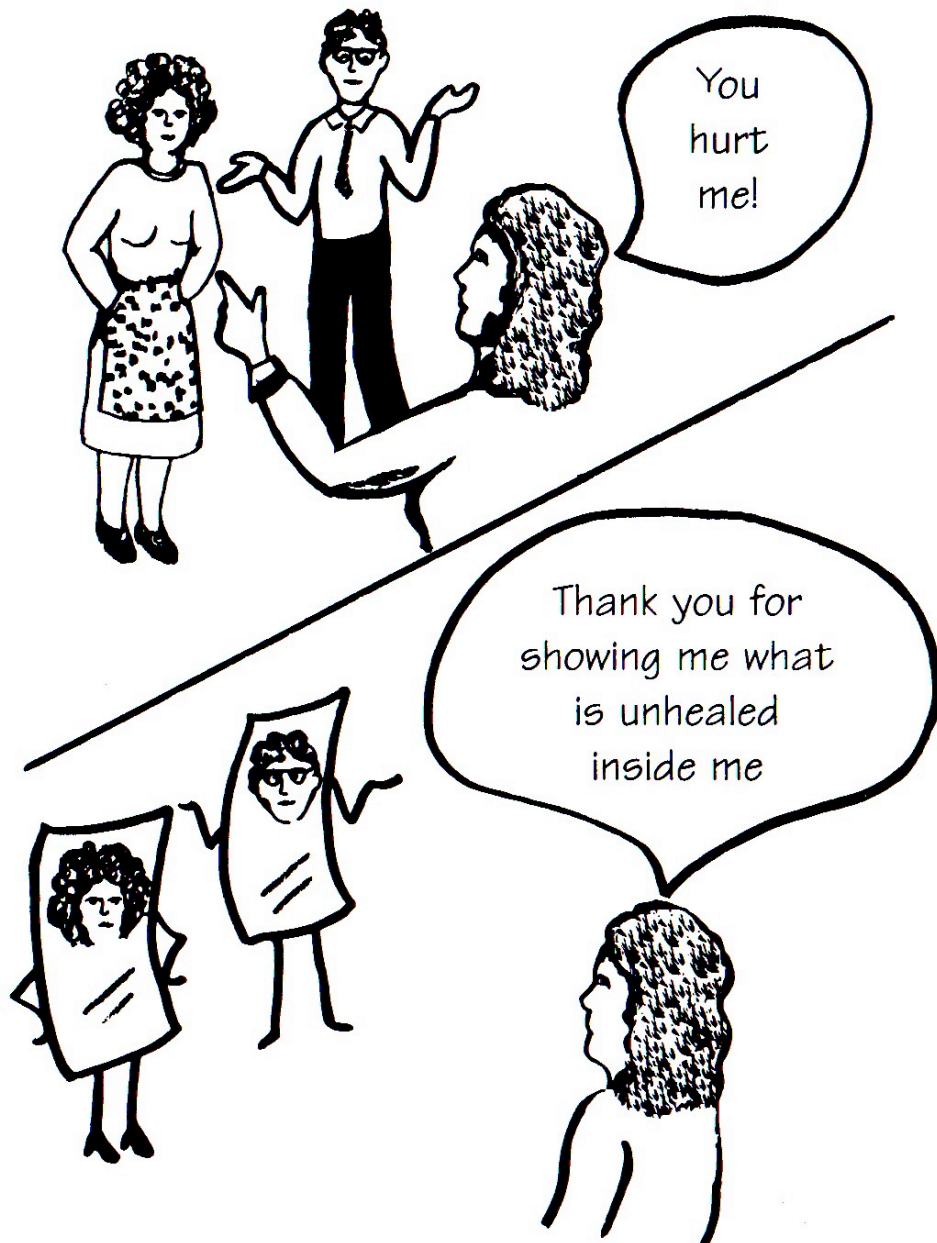


Fig 5.2

We must stop pointing our finger at people and situations and accusing them of hurting us and see that they are mirroring to us the areas we have not healed and forgiven in ourself. In fact these people and situations merit our thanks for showing us what is in our unconscious mind. Without them we would not see the forces that drive us.

*The secret of salvation is but this: That you are doing this unto yourself. No matter what the form of the attack, this still is true. Whoever takes the role of enemy and of attacker, still is this the truth. Whatever seems to be the cause of any pain and suffering you feel, this is still true. For you would not react at all to figures in a dream you knew that you were dreaming. Let them be as hateful and as vicious as they may, they could have no effect on you unless you failed to recognise it is your dream.*

(T545; T-27.VIII.10)

Our attacks are not limited to people who are behaving inappropriately and obviously acting from their ego. We are also capable of attacking people who have done nothing to us. I recently watched a television documentary about the life of Mao Tse Tung. During the period of his cultural revolution he encouraged the working classes to seek out and persecute authority figures. In one particular village the people experienced a problem carrying out Mao's command as they had already killed the landlord several years earlier. The programme mentioned that over a million landlords had been killed by the peasants at the beginning of Mao's rule in China. They remembered, however, that the landlord had a son. Although he did not hold any office of power or authority in the village, and lived as one of them, they sought him out and tortured him to death.

This story clearly illustrates the need of our ego to find fault outside ourselves. We want to find sin in the world so we have something onto which we can hook our projections. If we looked fully at the insanity of the ego's thought system, we would no longer follow it. The ego is well aware that its continuity depends on us not looking deeply into our mind and it tells us to look in the world for the cause of our distress. The Course reminds us that 'to the ego, the guiltless are guilty'. (T224; T-13.II.4:2) To usurp God's power, break up Heaven and create an alternative to God's creation is a sin, and we should feel guilty. If, like Jesus, we don't feel guilty, we are invalidating the ego and telling it that its creation is an illusion. This is the greatest sin we can commit against the ego and warrants death in its eyes. That is why Jesus was killed, although he had harmed no one.

The ego encourages us to attack everyone, whether they have attacked us or not. We need to see sin in the world so we don't have to confront the ego's thought system in our own mind. This is why our newspapers and television news programmes are largely filled with disturbing news. We want to read it and see it so we can say, 'They are the wicked ones, not me. They deserve God's punishment, not me. They are the cause of the pain in the world, not me.'

As we actively seek for enemies outside ourselves, we simultaneously strengthen the guilt within our mind and so the ego's vicious circle of guilt and attack is complete. This trap is so hard to break free from that without the Holy Spirit's help we could never do it. Before the Holy Spirit can heal our mind, we must first discover what it is that needs healing. If we believe the problem lies in the world instead of in our mind, the Holy Spirit can do nothing to help us.

When we realise that there is no one or nothing to blame 'out there' and that the problem lies within us, we usually fall into the trap of feeling guilty. This is because we make a decision to listen to the counsel of our ego which has a very low opinion of us. Our ego tells us we should feel guilty for our sins, for in this way we will take the world of



separation seriously. It is very easy to fall into the ego's trap of judgement. Guilt always demands punishment and this prevents us from releasing our pain. Our ego does not care if we blame the world or ourselves for our unhappiness. Either way we are reinforcing our belief in the ego's thought system and its survival is all that it cares about.

During this second stage of forgiveness (Figure 5.3) we begin to realise how deeply attached we are to our guilt. It appears to be a sacrifice not to feel justified in being a victim and the desire is to hold on to our anger, jealousy or greed.

## The Second Stage of Forgiveness



Fig 5.3

Although guilt is painful, it is what we are familiar with and we prefer it to the increase in self-responsibility we know will come to us when we lose our attachment to being a victim. We can now choose to decide that guilt no longer serves us and that we would like it to be undone. As we have so identified with our false ego-self, we do not know how to undo our guilt. As an example, let's imagine a couple who are having an issue around jealousy.

The wife is upset with her husband because of his jealous nature. He denies that he is jealous, saying that what she sees as emotional outbursts are only his feelings of love for

her. Although his wife is often upset by his possessiveness, she unconsciously approves of it and translates his need of her as love. One day the husband realises that his own thoughts of insecurity are producing his jealous feelings and that his wife is not to blame for his unhappiness. He also realises that if he forgives himself and lets his jealousy go, his wife might become so threatened at losing his 'love' that the relationship might end. At this point his ego will rush in and guide him to keep his jealousy or he might lose everything.

The husband is now caught in a difficult situation, for to allow his jealousy to go appears to him as a sacrifice. Thus this second stage of forgiveness can be more difficult to accomplish than the insight needed in the first stage. If, however, he chooses to listen to the Holy Spirit, he will realise that the healing of his jealous nature will take him further along the path of peace. Perhaps his wife will leave him but he has prepared the way to be with people who do not mistake jealousy for love.

Our little willingness to change, to shift our perception, opens the way for the third stage of forgiveness. In this final stage our guilt is undone by the Holy Spirit as we allow His light and peace to shine away our guilt. The following prayer from the Course contains within it the three stages of forgiveness. The Course urges us to use it whenever we are not joyous.

*I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.*

*I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.*

*I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.*

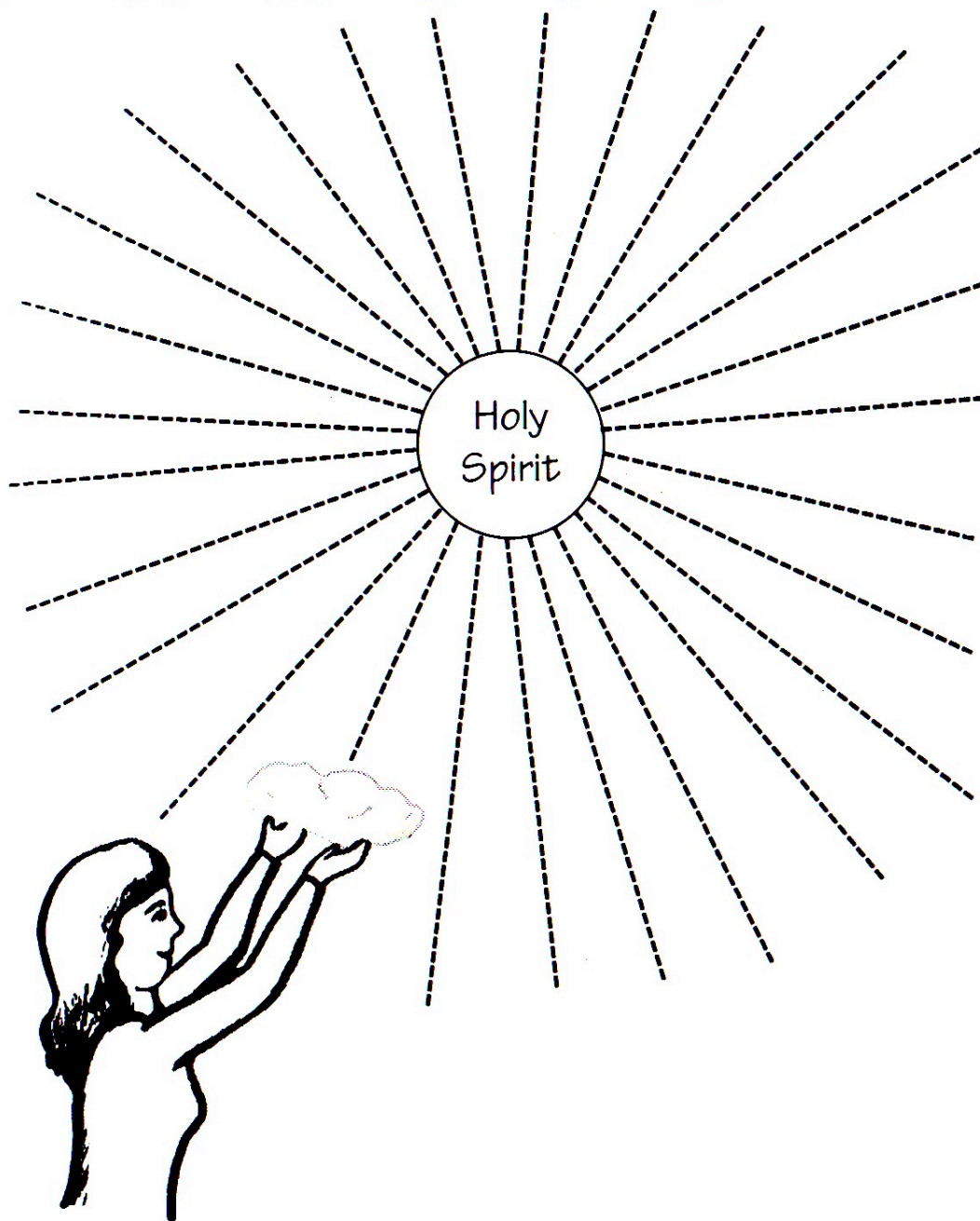
*I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.*

*I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.*

(T83; T-5.VII.6:7-11)

The first two sentences of the above prayer describe the first step of forgiveness and how we must take responsibility for the way we feel. If our peace has gone, it is because we have given it away and not because it has been taken from us. The third sentence of the quotation reflects the second step of forgiveness, when the decision is taken to see our sins as errors which can be corrected. In this step we stop listening to our ego's counsel that we are guilty and deserving of punishment and choose instead to have our errors healed. The last sentence of the quotation describes how the Holy Spirit will come to heal our mind once we have invited Him in. See Figure 5.4

## The Third Stage of Forgiveness



The Holy Spirit asks of you but this: bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to the darkness if you make the darkness open to him.  
T268; T-14.VII.6:1-4

Fig 5.4

The first two steps of this forgiveness process are taken by us. In the first step, we take our projections back and stop judging the world. In the second step, we stop judging ourselves and ask for help. This now makes way for the third step that is taken by the Holy Spirit. We have invited His light into the darkness of our guilt and He shines it away by His very presence, just as a dark room cannot remain dark when light is brought into it. In this analogy we can recognise that light is real, and that darkness is simply the absence of light. We cannot bring a 'lamp of darkness' into a lighted room and make the room dark but we can bring a light into a darkened room and make it light.

Whenever we agree to invite the Holy Spirit into our mind, the ego's world of darkness must disappear into the nothingness that it really is. It is often difficult to remember that there is always the Holy Spirit's love waiting to respond to any genuine call for help. It is easy for us to fall into the trap that we have to sort out all our problems ourselves. Our ego firmly believes it knows how to do this. In contrast, the Course tells us that the ego only knows how to create problems and we must get help from outside its thought system if we are to experience peace. The third step of forgiveness reminds us that we can only be helped by the Holy Spirit. Our only responsibility is to understand that we have given our peace away and that the errors in our thinking can be corrected by the Holy Spirit, once we invite Him in.

An experience I had some time ago illustrates the above three stages of forgiveness. I had been experiencing a pain in my chest for two days. It was not unfamiliar to me as I had experienced this feeling many times before in my life. It would come when I perceived myself as being unfairly treated and sometimes would last up to three days. The pain weighed me down with an intense feeling of sadness and heaviness. As I lay on my bed wondering why I was going through this all again I decided to look honestly at the 'advantages' I knew I must be gaining for holding on to the pain.

My new willingness to look at myself soon revealed the sweet pleasure of self-pity and the desire to close my heart so I would not be expected to give so much to others. I felt inside that I no longer wanted to carry this pain around and was ready to release it and accept the increase in self-responsibility which now did not seem like a sacrifice. It was not serving me any more and I could give it away. I brought my awareness and acceptance to the heart area and offered the pain to the Holy Spirit. I asked Him to take it, knowing that it would give Him joy to receive it. To my own astonishment the pain disappeared in under a minute. In fact I worried that the pain would return at any moment. But it didn't, nor have I suffered such long periods of chest pain again.

I remember seeing advertisements on billboards saying, 'Cast your burdens on the Lord'. I thought this an impossible idea and knew it could not work. It was surely up to me to sort everything out in my life. As my perception and awareness of the Holy Spirit grew, I realised what love He must have for us and that He views our activities as a mother would her child having a nightmare. She would not condemn the content of her child's nightmare but seek gentle ways of waking the child up. How much more then would God love to take away our self-created nightmares if only we would let Him. To practise forgiveness we must first stop judging the world and then stop judging ourselves. As we do this, our ego defences are lowered and automatically the love and the light of the Holy Spirit will shine our guilt away.

When we allow ourselves to wake up from our ego nightmares by practising forgiveness, we shall discover that we are still as God created us, perfect and eternal, and that nothing can harm us. What then will there be to forgive? As the Course says: 'And that in complete forgiveness, in which you recognise that there is nothing to forgive, you are absolved completely.' (T298; T-15.VIII. 1:7) This realisation that forgiveness is an illusion does not come until the end of the process of forgiveness. Whilst we believe we are separated from God, forgiveness is a helpful illusion that will awaken us from all illusions.

## **Our Resistance to Forgiveness**

It is often thought by people new to studying A Course in Miracles that their lives will become more peaceful as they begin to practise its teachings. However this does not always follow. In fact things may seem to get worse, not better. Before practising the principles of the Course, they will probably have heeded the ego's counsel and denied the guilt they feel and projected it onto others. Now they attempt to bring their unconscious mind to consciousness, which starts the process of undoing denial, bringing their guilt to the light of the Holy Spirit to be forgiven. To become aware of the ego's darkness in the mind is not an easy process.

The principles of forgiveness as described in the Course are relatively simple to understand and bring us great rewards if we apply them. It is also true that most of us find it very difficult to own our pain and ask for help. To help us understand why this is so, the Course goes to great lengths to show how subtle and devious the ego really is. We are largely unconscious of the way it operates owing to the wall of denial we have constructed. The Course encourages us to look behind that wall and learn to laugh gently at what we find there.

As we practise forgiveness, at the same time we shall be lessening the importance we have given to the ego. Having identified so strongly with the ego's thought system, it seems as if we are sacrificing something very dear to us. As we bring our darkness (illusions) to the light (truth) the Course states that we will experience 'periods of unsettling'. These are times of discomfort and anxiety that we must inevitably feel in the process of shifting from the ego's thought system (wrong-mindedness) to the Holy Spirit's thought system (right-mindedness).

*First, they (God's Teachers) must go through what might be called 'a period of undoing'. This need not be painful, but it usually is so experienced. It seems as if things are being taken away, and it is rarely understood initially that their lack of value is merely being recognised.*  
(M8; M-4.I.3:1-3)

This quotation is taken from a section which describes the six stages in the development of trust. Jesus cautions us that four of these stages are normally experienced as difficult and thus we should not underestimate the challenges involved in spiritual growth.

It would be helpful to take a closer look at our investment in the ego and what it seems to offer us. As we start to question the 'gifts' it holds out to us, our practice of forgiveness will become easier. Our ego will tell us that we are the most important person

in the world. We have special needs which must be fulfilled and we feel justified in using whatever means are necessary to achieve this. The Course tells us that the source of this justification comes from an insane belief stored in our unconscious mind. This belief states that we are lacking the things we need because they have been stolen from us. (See 'The Laws of Chaos' in Chapter 23 of the Text) This thought justifies the use of any means to get back what we feel is rightfully ours in the first place. Forgiveness teaches the opposite of this and states that we have given away our remembrance of our spiritual reality in exchange for the experience of individual uniqueness — the need to feel special and different from others.

When we decided to forget our true state of unity within the One Mind of God, competition and judgement had to follow. To maintain a sense of individuality we must continually compare ourselves to others and look for differences. If we meet someone who seems better than us in some way, then we must make them into our enemy or put them onto a pedestal and appear to look up to them. However, at a deeper level of our mind we will hate them for being better than us. The Course states: 'Only the special could have enemies, for they are different and not the same. And difference of any kind imposes orders of reality, and a need to judge that cannot be escaped.' (T465; T-24.I.3:5-6) When we come across someone whom we judge as inferior, there will be a desire to keep this person the way they are so we may appear superior by contrast. The Course describes this dynamic as follows:

*Against the littleness you see in him you stand as tall and stately, clean and honest, pure and unsullied by comparison with what you see. Nor do you understand it is yourself that you diminish thus.*

(T466f; T-24.II.1:6-7)

This quotation reminds us that when we compare and attack our brothers we are also attacking ourselves. Our attacks are always centred on another's body or their behaviour and thus our belief in the reality of the body is strengthened and our awareness of spirit is weakened.

The Course states: 'You would oppose this course because it teaches you you and your brother are alike.' (T466; T-24.I.8:6) Forgiveness teaches us that our egos are all the same, as is our Christ nature. This is the last thing our ego wants to hear. For the ego to retain its desire for specialness, it must perceive differences between itself and others. If someone goes to a party, the last thing they want to find is someone else wearing the same outfit as them.

Our original desire to be separate and different from God is perpetuated in our continuing desire to be separate from others. Forgiveness would undo this thought and eventually return to our awareness our oneness with each other and God. This is perceived by our ego as an act of treachery which deserves punishment. To welcome the state of unity back into our awareness means the death of the ego and this it must fight with all its resources.

*The ego is deceived by everything you do, especially when you respond to the Holy Spirit, because at such times its confusion increases. The ego is, therefore, particularly likely to attack you when you react lovingly, because it has evaluated you as unloving and you are going against its judgement. The ego will attack your motives as soon as they become clearly out of accord with its perception of you. This is when it will shift abruptly from suspiciousness to viciousness, since its uncertainty is increased.*

(T164; T-9.VII.4:4-7)

We might experience a day when we feel open to the love of the Holy Spirit and feel a deep sense of peace and well-being. We may even think this state could last forever. However, we might wake the following day feeling depressed and alone and wonder why things have changed so much. To allow this shift to occur, we must be persuaded by our ego that to continue listening to the Holy Spirit is dangerous. The ego reminds us that it is safer to stay as we are as change will involve sacrifice and, even worse, there is an avenging god awaiting us at the end of our journey ready to punish us for our many sins. We are told that if we follow the path of forgiveness, we shall have to look at all the horror and darkness within our mind, and that we shall not survive this experience. The journey of forgiveness is not an easy one, but its success is guaranteed by God, for it is His will that we return to Him.

### **False Forgiveness**

*No gift of Heaven has been more misunderstood than has forgiveness. It has, in fact, become a scourge; a curse where it was meant to bless, a cruel mockery of grace, a parody upon the holy peace of God.*

(S9; S-2.I.1:1-2)

The Song of Prayer pamphlet describes a number of false concepts about forgiveness which are called 'forgiveness-to-destroy'. (S11f; S-2.IIf) Firstly, there is what might be called the 'holier than thou' form of forgiveness. In this, the offended person adopts a posture of spiritual superiority and seeming charity and decides to 'forgive' the inferior individual who has offended him. The person is effectively saying, 'Out of the kindness of my heart I forgive you for what you have done to me, but don't do it again.' With this form of forgiveness the 'forgiver' does not see the problem is within him and loses an opportunity to heal himself of what the other person is mirroring to him.

*Forgiveness-to-destroy has many forms, being a weapon of the world of form. Not all of them are obvious, and some are carefully concealed beneath what seems like charity.*

(S11; S-2.II.1:1-2)

Another form of false forgiveness can be described as that of the 'martyred saint'. In this form, a person believes he is a sinner and deserves God's punishment, which he accepts with apparent humility and lack of defence. However, this is a statement of belief in the ego and not in God, for only the ego counsels us we have sinned. We may actively

seek to be martyred so we can display our 'saintliness' to others. However, behind an exterior of smiling acceptance lies the anger and bitterness we feel towards the other person. Thus the ego uses false forgiveness to reinforce our belief in it.

A further form of 'forgiveness-to-destroy' is based on bargaining and compromise. As long as another person is meeting most of our ego needs, we are willing to forgive their transgressions against us. When our needs are no longer met, there is no reason left to forgive them and our denied hate now rises to the surface in the form of an attack.

## **Holy Relationships**

*As you come closer to a brother you approach me, and as you withdraw from him I become distant to you. Salvation is a collaborative venture. It cannot be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me. God will come to you only as you will give Him to your brothers.*

(T63; T-4.VI.8:1-4)

Relationships are necessary to show us what needs healing under our barriers of denial. This is true for all forms of relationship. Every time we come into contact with another person we have an opportunity to look within and forgive the illusions we hold about ourselves. Without the mirroring of others, it would be impossible to find all the guilt we have denied. This guilt which we all carry is buried deeply within our mind and protected by a wall of denial. As a further defence we project what we deny onto the world and especially onto other people.

The ego tells us that it is not we who have a problem but the people with whom we enter into some form of relationship. However, in the eyes of the Holy Spirit these very same people are our teachers, for without them it would be impossible to see what we have denied. We need something outside our closed mind to show us what is really inside it. When we are shown something we do not like about ourselves, our ego tells us to attack the other person. This is the same as throwing a brick at a mirror because we do not like the reflection we see.

In earlier times, messengers were used to convey important news to heads of government. It was not uncommon for the messenger to be executed if he brought news which was upsetting. Not wishing to take responsibility for the effects of the message upon themselves, the rulers projected the cause of their pain as an attack by the messenger. In the same way, our friends, enemies, parents, lovers, employers or children will continuously bring us messages about what we have denied about ourselves and have blamed on them instead.

Any time we feel even the slightest irritation in someone's presence, our hidden guilt is being triggered. If at that moment, instead of attacking the other person, we asked the Holy Spirit to help us find peace again, we would, in that instant, undo the ego's thought system. There would be a shift from desiring a special hate relationship to desiring a holy relationship. The other person has now become our teacher and no longer our enemy.

Without other people acting as mirrors to what is locked away in our unconscious mind, we would find it very difficult to uncover all that needs forgiving in ourselves. As we take responsibility for our own feelings, we begin to see, with the Holy Spirit's help,



that what disturbs us in the world is nothing but a reflection of what disturbs us about ourself.

If our attitude to another person can be one of self-responsibility, truth, forgiveness, joining, defencelessness and shared interest (i.e. awaking from the dream of separation), then we have created what the Course calls a holy relationship. We have invited the Holy Spirit into our relationship. This is a very difficult attitude to maintain, for it is opposite to that advised by the ego. However, we can have the goal of a holy relationship, accepting that many times we will take our ego's advice and attack again.

This is especially true at the start of a holy relationship when the ego tries to convince us to return to the special relationship of love or hate that we once had. As the goal of our relationship begins to shift from special to holy, it will often feel that we have lost something important. 'Where has the romance and passion gone?' a lover may exclaim. A son or daughter may say, 'My parents were everything to me but now they no longer seem so special!' As our desire to have special people in our lives begins to disappear, the ego warns us to return to what once seemed to work for us.

*The holy relationship, a major step toward the perception of the real world, is learned. It is the old, unholy relationship, transformed and seen anew . . . the only difficult phase is the beginning. For here, the goal of the relationship is abruptly shifted to the exact opposite of what it was . . . This is accomplished very rapidly, but it makes the relationship seem disturbed, disjunctive and even quite distressing . . . Many relationships have been broken off at this point, and the pursuit of the old goal re-established in another relationship . . . You will find many opportunities to blame your brother for the 'failure' of your relationship, for it will seem at times to have no purpose. A sense of aimlessness will come to haunt you, and to remind you of all the ways you once sought for satisfaction and thought you found it. Forget not now the misery you really found, and do not breathe life into your failing ego. (T337f; T362f in 2nd ed.)*

Kenneth Wapnick has stressed it is important to realise that as the holy relationship is an attitude we develop towards other people, it only takes one person to have a holy relationship. What helps me recognise the truth of his statement is to imagine myself trapped alone on a desert island. Would it be impossible for me to have a holy relationship as there are no other people around? Would this opportunity for growth now be lost to me? If I realise, however, that what is important is my attitude of mind to the memories I hold about people, I realise that all the forgiveness I need to practise is still necessary. In the same way, if a person I hated suddenly died I could still achieve a holy relationship with that person if I learned to forgive myself.

Your partner may not share your spiritual path and may even be hostile towards you. However, you can still have a holy relationship with them. Learning to be at peace around an angry person will produce accelerated growth. This is not to say we must remain with anyone with whom it no longer feels right. The Holy Spirit has no concern for the form of the relationship, whether we stay together or part from each other, but is concerned with how we will best learn our lessons of forgiveness.

Jesus has a holy relationship with everyone, whether they have one with him or not. Because of this he was able to be at peace during his capture, trial and crucifixion. Even as the soldiers hammered nails into his body, he could only see sleeping Sons of God asking

for his love. This he gave by not attacking them or defending himself. Knowing himself to be eternal, formless spirit and not the body, he knew he could not be attacked and therefore there was no need for defence. It is only when we identify with our body that we feel we need to defend ourselves. As we come to realise our true reality and that 'nothing real can be threatened' (Intro, Text), we will experience the peace that Jesus knows.

I was once told a story that illustrated in a powerful way what forgiveness and a holy relationship really is. During the liberation of a particular concentration camp at the end of the Second World War, the allies discovered a prisoner who seemed in particularly good shape considering the conditions he had lived under. They presumed he had lived in the camp only a short while. When he told them he had been there for four years, they suspected him of collaboration with the Germans. However, when they saw how the other inmates treated him with respect, they knew there must be another explanation. They asked him for his story and this is what he told them.

During the time of the uprising of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto, he and his wife and children were captured. The soldiers shot his family in front of him but did not shoot him. He asked to be shot as well but they refused, saying he had language skills which they could use in the concentration camp. At that moment he knew that unless he forgave them, and therefore himself, he would become like Hitler. With this act of forgiveness, he could see the fear in the soldiers and saw it as an appeal for his love. He had accepted the judgement of the Holy Spirit. During his years in the camp, he perceived no difference between the victims and the victimisers. Both groups were in fear and thus were asking for his love. He did not take sides, seeing everyone as the same. This enabled him to retain his sense of inner peace and strength by maintaining a holy relationship with all whom he met. This story also illustrates how everything in this world is neither good nor bad but simply neutral. Everything can be used by the Holy Spirit as a classroom in which to learn forgiveness, peace and joy.

*You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgement.*  
(T42; T-3.VI.3:1)

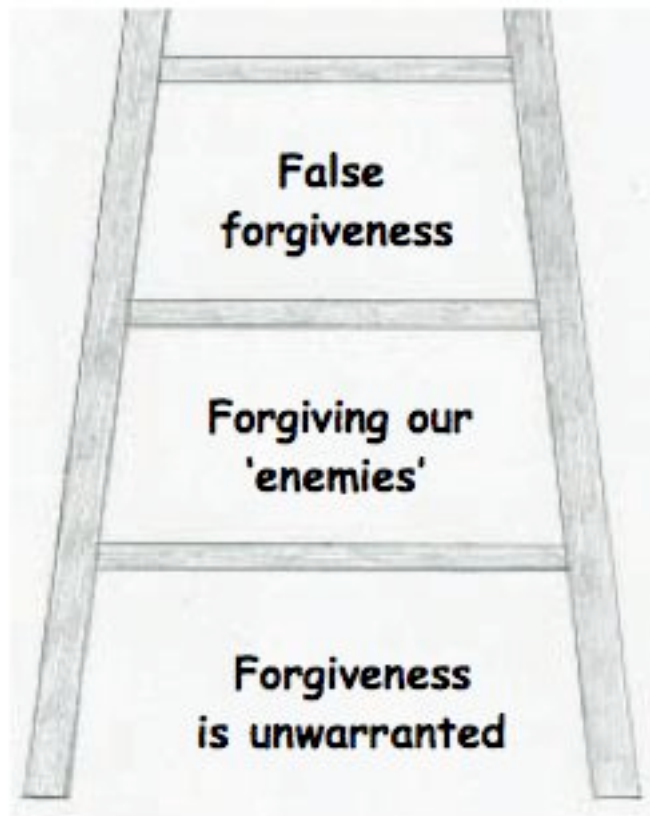
*When the ego tempts you to sickness do not ask the Holy Spirit to heal the body for this would merely be to accept the ego's belief that the body is the proper aim of healing. Ask rather that the Holy Spirit teach you the right perception of the body, for perception alone can be distorted. Only perception can be sick because only perception can be wrong.*  
from *A Course in Miracles* (T146; T-8.IX.1:5-7)

## Chapter Three

Excerpted from *The Findhorn Book of Forgiveness*.

Michael Dawson. Findhorn Press

### The Ladder of Forgiveness - the First Rungs



#### FORGIVENESS is UNWARRANTED

Let us review the meaning of "forgive," for it is apt to be distorted and to be perceived as something that entails an unfair sacrifice of righteous wrath, a gift unjustified and undeserved, and a complete denial of the truth.

The first obstacle that must be overcome before we can even start to climb the ladder of forgiveness is the thought that forgiveness is unwarranted. As long as this thought is held forgiveness is seen as an undeserved act which prevents a justified punishment being meted out to our aggressor. Instead, the Old Testament injunction to give "an eye for an

eye, and a tooth for a tooth” is thought to be the appropriate response to others’ transgressions.

Why is it so hard to forgive? What is the attraction to holding on to our anger? Observations of young children indicate that their anger lasts only a short time. They fight with each other and then usually make up and become friends again. True anger is comparatively short-lived. If it continues over a long period it has been transformed into “justified vengeance”. Now we cannot let go our anger otherwise we will let our enemy “off the hook” and the justified punishment we eventually hope to administer will no longer be forthcoming.

Withholding forgiveness provides us with an excuse not to take full responsibility for our lives if we have suffered sometime in our past. Although painful at the time the memory of the event is deliberately maintained throughout life. Now we can say to the world, “Don’t expect too much of me for I have suffered in the past and will carry the scars until I die”. The case study below illustrates this point and the joy experienced when the old tape in the mind is finally discarded.

There is a deeper and more fundamental reason why we prefer attack to forgiveness. To forgive means to realise that we are similar to the person we accuse - a theme we have explored in previous chapters. Our lack of forgiveness protects us from looking within our own mind to the uncomfortable truths about ourselves. If we cannot forgive we are forced to judge the other person to justify our own lack of forgiveness. To prevent the discovery of such truths about ourselves we will do anything to pin the blame on the other person. Truth will now mean nothing as the unforgiving mind tries desperately to maintain its projection onto its enemy. Our minds become closed to any other way of viewing the situation otherwise the awful truth about ourselves will rise to consciousness. The other person is the sinner and not me and sin deserves punishment.

*If you hate a person, you hate something in him that is part of yourself.  
What isn't part of ourselves doesn't disturb us.*

Hermann Hesse

It may further be thought that to forgive our enemies would be perceived as an act of weakness and would only encourage further attack. To practise forgiveness does not mean we cannot defend ourselves; what is important is the motivation behind our acts. If our country is being attacked by a cruel, sadistic dictator it is very likely that after trying all other methods we may be forced to defend ourselves. But here our aim will be to resolve the conflict as soon as possible with minimum loss of life. Assuming we win the conflict our aim would be to restore the attackers’ country to a state of harmony, leaving a legacy of goodwill towards us and not the seeds of future conflict.

On some level of our mind we realise we are being dishonest for we are only accusing another of what is in us. This awareness now serves to increase the guilt we feel still further. If we turn to the ego for help it will tell us that we can get rid of this guilt by

getting even more angry at the other person. In this way we have the desperate hope that by increasing our projection onto the other we will solve the problem. A further outburst of anger might feel good temporarily but will always be followed by further depression as the guilt mounts inside us.

As we look at and judge our enemies we will deliberately filter out the good in them. A black and white world is much more easier to deal with. "They are wrong and I am right", is a comfortable thought we would rather not challenge lest it reveal what we would prefer not to look at in ourselves.

The media are well aware of our needs for enemies. A quick glance at the tabloids, the best sellers of our newspapers, soon reveals an abundance of stories featuring the misdeeds of others. Banner headlines reveal the crimes of the famous and are usually accompanied by words such as "evil", "monster", "liar" and so forth. Now we can gloat over their evils and wish them the punishment we secretly feel we deserve. We are off the hook as another enemy has been found to project our guilt onto. Following this advice of our egos we may feel a temporary relief from the burden of guilt we carry as we believe we have magically off loaded it onto another. But this effort, based on a lie to ourselves, is short-lived. Our guilt increases still further from this dishonest act and our ego counsels us again to get rid of it by finding more enemies to project onto. Thus is perpetuated the ceaseless vicious cycle of guilt and attack which we looked at in Chapter 2.

But what if sin could be seen as error instead? If, on looking within our own mind, we could view what we find so distasteful about ourselves and see it simply as error and not 'sin' the road to forgiveness would be open to us. If we can have compassion for our errors we will also have compassion for similar errors in another. What we give to ourselves we will also give to others. What we withhold from ourselves we will withhold from others.

One definition of sin is that it is simply looking for happiness in the wrong directions. This is a liberating concept for it describes the lives of most of us. Even dictators are labouring under the illusion that grabbing what they want by force will eventually give them happiness. We would see how alike we are to one another if we could honestly look at ourselves without judgement.

Our attraction to anger is that it seems a way in which we can control the behaviour of other people. Our hope is that by applying sufficient pressure they will become guilty and conform to our expectations. If we believe attacking another will give us what we want we must also believe others think like we do. This is why we live in fear of being attacked for we believe people will try and do to us what we try to do to them. However, if we choose forgiveness as our path and drop our investment in anger we will lose our sense of vulnerability and find peace instead. To withhold forgiveness from another automatically means we will withhold forgiveness from ourselves. As we give so shall we receive, whether it is love or hate.

## Case Study - Forgiving Abuse

During my stay at the Findhorn Foundation, I worked for about three years in the healing department. One day I was nervously approached by a woman in her thirties. She said she has some problems and perhaps I could help her. It soon became apparent that she was quite nervous around men and she was quick to admit that she'd been sexually abused by her father when she was five years of age.

Her immediate problem was that for some time her hair had been falling out. We decided to work together on this issue. Early in our session, she saw an image of herself when she was five years old. The child appeared happy and playful and on seeing this she started to cry. This picture reminded her that she had known little happiness since the time of abuse by her father. She had developed a hatred for men which had been ongoing for over 30 years. It was like a tape that she had in her mind. Each morning she would wake up and start that tape. She could not see that she was using the memory of that abuse to justify the way she felt about life, particularly men. The abuse had become something precious to her that she needed to hold onto. No-one puts themselves through such pain if they did not think there was some 'benefit' to them.

In her vision the little girl took her, the adult, by the hand and led her to the entrance of a house. She was taken upstairs to room and then told to go inside. Awaiting her was her father. She immediately became angry and sat up. "How could he have done this to me!," she exclaimed. "My mother knew this was happening but she did not stop it!" She had switched on her 'hate tape'. I said she was free to stop this healing session if she wanted but here was an obvious chance for her to work with something she had so painfully held onto for so long. I suggested she might try dialogue with her father, asking him why he had done this to her. She decided to carry on with the healing session and proceeded to question her father. He replied that, at that time, as well as being married to her mother, he also had two mistresses. He felt intimidated by all three women and the only place he could demonstrate any form of power was with her.

For the first time she had some explanation of why the abuse had occurred, and with this realisation was able to relax more. Suddenly, she became very quiet and still, and it felt very right to leave her in that space. After about five minutes she started to smile and recounted to me her experience. She said that she had gone to a time before she was born where she was in communication with her father to be. They had a great love for each other. In her next life she wanted to learn more about love, forgiveness and compassion. It was agreed between them that when she was born to him he would sexually abuse her. In this way she would be given a major life lesson of forgiveness and healing. She was obviously very happy at this insight and felt it was right for the healing session to end there.

About two weeks later I saw her again. She approached me and gave me a hug. The caution and fear I had experienced at our first meeting was gone. She told me that her hatred of men had ceased, her hair had stop falling out and her anger towards her father had gone. I had not healed her but simply given her an opportunity to face perhaps the major lesson of her life, to look at her hatred and to let it go, or forgive it.

\* \* \*

## FORGIVING OUR 'ENEMIES'

*We have met the enemy, and it is us'n.*

Pogo

To move from the position that forgiveness is unwarranted to the attempt to forgive our enemies is a major step forward. For the first time the concept of forgiveness, albeit in a distorted form, has entered the mind. At least there is now a concept that can be corrected, whilst before climbing to this rung our minds were closed to anything accept vengeance.

To arrive on this rung we have perceived the hopelessness of an "eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" and would agree with Mohandas Gandhi when he said, "An eye for eye only ends up making the whole world blind." But we are left with difficult problems as we try to maintain our new approach. We may be seemingly successful at 'forgiving' our enemies for their first transgressions against us, but what if they continue in their attacks? At some point our patience will be lost and righteous anger will rise once again to the surface and demand justified retribution.

Praying for our enemies may seem a noble action on our parts, but what is our motivation? Are we asking God to heal the evil ones so they can join the ranks of us, the innocent? We would do better to pray for ourselves so that we no longer see our brother as an enemy.

The prayer for enemies thus becomes a prayer for your own freedom. Now it is no longer a contradiction in terms. .... Let it never be forgotten that prayer at any level is always for yourself. .... Pray truly for your enemies, for herein lies your own salvation. Forgive them for your sins, and you will be forgiven indeed.

We may say, "I will forgive them, but never forget what they have done!". This is a contradiction in terms, as to forgive is to immediately forget for we have seen and accepted related behaviour within ourselves. Our sins are perceived as errors and overlooked, which means we must also overlook the errors of our enemy.

There is no answer to our failure to maintain forgiveness whilst the enemy is still seen outside us. We want enemies so we can put our sins onto them and so save ourselves the painful awareness of realising how alike we are.

Our investment in needing enemies is huge. Anything and anyone will do to act as a shield to stop us discovering the painful truths of what Jung called our shadow side. We cherish the idea we are innocent because at a deeper level we feel we are not and we fear to see this. Our 'innocence' must be defended at all cost and dividing the world into good and bad, guilty and innocent (with me on the innocent side) serves to protect our belief in our innocence.

In treading the path of forgiveness instead of attack we will come to realise that our enemies can become our saviours instead of our scapegoats. Without their help it is very difficult to see what's hidden in our minds that needs healing. There is nothing like having enemies to bring up all the unforgiven thoughts in our minds. They become a superb mirror for what we have tried to bury in our subconscious. In fact, if you are brave enough, it would be very educational to spend time with those you normally avoid and try and watch your reactions to them without judgement. If you find yourself judging what you discover about yourself you have let the ego return through the back door of your mind. Whether you judge yourself or another does not matter as either will reinforce the guilt you feel and prevent forgiveness.

It is impossible to forgive another, for it is only your sins you see in him. You want to see them there, and not in you. That is why forgiveness of another is an illusion..... Only in someone else can you forgive yourself, for you have called him guilty of your sins, and in him must your innocence now be found. Who but the sinful need to be forgiven? And do not ever think you can see sin in anyone except yourself.

## FALSE FORGIVENESS

The idea of forgiving our enemies can also be included on the next rung of the ladder - false forgiveness. It has been discussed separately as it represents a major step, signifying some willingness to look differently at attack upon ourselves.

The Song of Prayer (supplement to A Course in Miracles) describes four different types of false forgiveness. This supplement refers to them as different forms of "Forgiveness-to-Destroy". It makes the point that although at times some of them appear charitable they are all forms of attack and have nothing to do with true forgiveness.

### 1. Holier Than Thou

In this form of false forgiveness we take up a position superior in relation to those we regard as transgressing. We are the better people and from our elevated position we decide to act graciously and forgive others who are perceived as below our 'holy' status. In this attitude of arrogance we feel our generous offer of forgiveness is really undeserved but out of charity we bestow it upon less worthy others. The true motivation behind this form of 'forgiveness' is to prove that we are superior, more spiritually evolved than those we forgive. If there is not sufficient gain to ourselves then forgiveness will be withheld.



In this form of false forgiveness sin is always seen in another and never in us. No responsibility is taken for ourselves for the other is solely to blame. The bad behaviour others exhibit is certainly not in us we say and so we take the high ground and generously forgive them, although they really don't deserve it. Thus we are safely protected from seeing how similar we are to others and can continue to maintain our comfortable image of 'holier than thou'.

## 2. We Are Both Miserable Sinners

In this form we no longer assume a superior position to others. Instead we see ourselves just as sinful as our enemies and both worthy of punishment. This way of thinking can be mistaken for true humility and may produce a 'spiritual competition' over who is the most sinful and humble. Not yet in our awareness is the concept of seeing sin as error that simply needs correction and not judgement and punishment.

## 3. Martyred Saint

This form of false forgiveness is related to the 'holier than thou' form discussed above. We put on a face which shows forbearance and meekness when under attack by others. The image we portray to the world is saintly and kindly as we bravely put up with the unjustified attacks upon us. We may even seek opportunities to be martyred under the impression that we are doing God's work as He is asking us to sacrifice ourselves on His behalf. The road to heaven is perceived as one demanding suffering that must be bravely borne with a gentle smile.

"No pain, no gain" is a modern statement of this thought. Although it is very true that we have great opportunities to learn and grow in times of crisis, is it also true that a loving God would demand pain and sacrifice before we could return to a state of peace and joy? Is not this idea of God merely a projection of our own mind, a God created by us based on our own ideas of punishment towards those who upset us?

Beneath the mask of the martyred saint lies feelings of bitterness and pain at the outrage inflicted. "Here am I doing good work and just look at what others are doing to me!" is the silent cry of the martyr. Their suffering face is really an accusing finger pointing at others which declares them guilty and sinful and worthy of God's punishment. Once again evil is seen outside the mind and having nothing to do with ourselves. The very fact that we are feeling angry shows we believe in attack even though we do not openly carry it out.

## 4. Bargaining and Compromise.

Here we seek to get something in return for our 'gift' of forgiveness. If we find a partner being unfaithful to us we may decide to forgive as long as their behaviour is not repeated. If the partner is caught being unfaithful again the previous bargain that was struck between you both has been broken and could now result in a withdrawal of forgiveness.

We do not see that what we give we also receive for we must always reinforce in our minds the thoughts we believe in. For example, if we believe we need to cheat to get what we want we must also believe that others value cheating and will try to cheat us. We now

spend our lives trying to protect ourselves from others cheating us. If, however, we see that what we do to others we will also do to ourselves we will realise that to give forgiveness unconditionally to others will mean that we will also give it to ourselves.

## A. THE WAY OF A COURSE IN MIRACLES

The way of the Course is to progressively deliver us into the hands of the Holy Spirit. His guiding Voice will become the only Voice we listen to. At the journey's end all decision will cease and we will know peace at last. His Voice is always with us but through fear we blot it out. With His help we will remove those barriers to His presence. This is the way of forgiveness. As we hold His hand we look together, without judgement, at the contents of our mind. As suffering arises in our mind through contact with the world he gently asks us to look within instead. Here is the only cause of suffering that can ever be found. He reminds us that the world is only a mirror to what is in our mind. What is unforgiven in our mind is seen as something fearful in the world - something to be attacked and destroyed. Come back to the source of pain He calls for only here can it be undone. Release your blame of others, release your blame of yourselves and surrender your pain to me He gently reminds us.

And slowly we come to learn that there is no better way than His. So little He asks of us, so much He has to give. His light slowly dawns upon our minds, our faith begins to deepen, and we grasp His hand more tightly. His way works, ours does not. Forgetting the past and letting go the future we begin to become content with the moment. We understand that He can safely lead us home and we no longer desire any other journey.

The dream of separation starts to fade until at last God lifts us back to the awareness of our perfect oneness with Him and we are home at last.

## B. HEALING - MIRACLE OR MAGIC?

*When the ego tempts you to sickness do not ask the Holy Spirit to heal the body for this would merely be to accept the ego's belief that the body is the proper aim of healing. Ask rather that the Holy Spirit teach you the right perception of the body, for perception alone can be distorted. Only perception can be sick because only perception can be wrong. T-8.IX.1:5-7*

When our body is in pain or is not functioning properly, it is very tempting to focus our attention on the symptoms and seek a change at that level. This is an example of what the Course calls magic. Magic is an attempt to heal something at the wrong level. We might try pills, rituals, charms, crystals, Bach flowers, visualisation, surgery etc. The Course is not against us using magic to relieve our pain but tells us this is not healing. We seek to fix up something "out there" which appears to be the cause of the distress. "Out there" includes our body, other bodies (relationships) and situations in the world. Our magical belief is that something other than our thoughts is the cause of our pain and if we can change that sufficiently, we will be at peace. This is at the root of all our anger. We believe that attack will get us what we want. For example, you might have a difficult relationship with someone and find that you often develop a headache when you are with them. You might even get into the habit of carrying a pill with you to relieve your headache. Both the

anger you use to try and change the person's behaviour, by attempting to make them guilty, and the pill you swallow are magical attempts by your ego to change something outside of your mind. Thus magic is an attempt to change on the level of effect as opposed to cause.

*"Cure" is a word that cannot be applied to any remedy the world accepts as beneficial. What the world perceives as therapeutic is but what will make the body 'better.' ... He is not healed. He merely had a dream that he was sick, and in the dream he found a magic formula to make him well. Yet he has not awakened from the dream, and so his mind remains exactly as it was before*

Lesson 140

The quotation at the beginning of this article stresses that the cause of all our pain - physical or psychological - is due to the way we perceive the world. What we see in the world is what we see in our mind - "projection makes perception" as the Course states it. We first look within before we look without. If we only perceive our fearful and attacking ego in our mind, this is all we can see in the world.

Trapped within our ego thoughts, we can only come up with ego solutions which will treat the symptoms but not the cause. Perhaps we will succeed for a while in changing our bodily condition or the way another relates to us. However, our success in tinkering with effects will be short lived and our problems will return in a similar or related form. Our ego will then suggest another solution and we are forced to start all over again.

To see the world differently and be at peace we must heal our perception. To do this, we need help from outside the ego system. It is a mistake to think we can heal ourselves without the help of Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

*So do we lay aside our amulets, our charms and medicines, our chants and bits of magic in whatever form they take. We will be still and listen for the Voice of healing, Which will cure all ills as one, restoring saneness to the Son of God. No voice but This can cure. Lesson 140*

As we begin to realise that our own magical efforts cannot bring us lasting peace, our prayers turn away from effects ("Please heal my body Jesus") to the cause ("Teach me how to forgive"). Realising that the cause of all our pain is in our mind and not the world, we start the process of taking our projections back off the world and begin to look with the help of the Holy Spirit at all that we have denied in our mind. We do not simply "give everything to the Holy Spirit" for first we must recognise and acknowledge the ego's thought system of attack hidden in our mind. The Course is not about affirming truth and love but discovering and ...."removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence. (intro, text)

As we begin to discover the extent of the anger and hate in our mind, the ego will counsel us to feel guilty for in this way, we will continue our allegiance to it. We can only feel guilty if we still believe that what we discover in the darkness is really us. At these times,

Jesus asks us to turn to him for help. Only his light can dissolve our darkness. He is ever waiting to stretch out his hand to us if we but call to him for help. As we start to allow his light to fill our mind, we too can help him heal others through us. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our mind reminds us that we are still children of God. In the same way, our example of peace will remind others who we meet that they can choose to see differently.

*The only meaningful contribution the healer can make is to present an example of one whose direction has been changed for him, and who no longer believes in nightmares of any kind. The light in his mind will therefore answer the questioner, who must decide with God that there is light because he sees it. T-9.V.7:4-5*

This is not to say we do not continue to use magic for ourselves and others, for few have reached the stage where they can immediately change from wrong perception to right perception on every occasion. It is not a sin to have a toothache and a visit to the dentist would be a wise decision. However, our goal needs to be the healing of our mind and to do this, we must acknowledge the darkness - albeit illusory - of our ego mind and sincerely ask for the light of the Holy Spirit to shine it away. As we learn to hold the hand of Jesus more and the hand of the ego less we will be encouraged by the joyful results to trust him more and more.

### C. OBSTACLES TO TRUTH

The Course tells us that the truth cannot be taught, but will be revealed to us if we do our part of forgiveness. To forgive is to look past our perceptual errors and thus not judge ourselves or others. Truth was given to us in its entirety at our creation, it was not learned. Thus we cannot learn truth as this implies time, and our creation was outside of time. Our task is to accept truth back into our awareness again. As we meet the necessary conditions required truth will automatically start to dawn upon our minds all by itself.

*All that is asked of you is to make room for truth. You are not asked to make or do what lies beyond your understanding. All you are asked to do is let it in ; only to stop your interference with what will happen of itself; simply to recognize again the presence of what you thought you gave away.*  
T-21.II.7:6-7

We are afraid of truth as it will dissolve our sense of separation by revealing the oneness of God's creation. When truth comes the ego is extinguished. Truth is of the mind and not the body. It resides with the Holy Spirit in our split mind. To avoid this threat to its existence the ego always counsels us to stay well away from the mind and focus on the physical world. Spirit cannot make connection with matter and thus the ego is safe.

"Sickness is a defense against the truth" (Lesson 136) the Workbook tells us. As truth begins to dawn upon our mind the ego counsels us that we are in great danger. He tells us that truth will reveal the depths of our sin against god and lead us back to his just punishment of us. To avoid this very fearful situation the ego may counsel us to get sick so we can divert our attention from the mind, where truth can be found, to the body. Now we are safe from god, back in the hiding place of matter.

The ego is always wrong. As we learn to hold the hand of Jesus and look without judgement and blame at the content of our mind we begin to learn that joy and not damnation await us. As we dismantle the barriers we have built to the presence of truth it will automatically flow into our mind with no help from ourselves.

Long ago we decided to block the awareness of truth so we could play our game of separation. Tiring of this painful game we begin at last to lift the barriers to its presence and find that its still there, unchanged, perfect and joyfully waiting to embrace us again.

## D. WHO AM I?

When we close our eyes and meditate we are immediately confronted with the thoughts of our ego mind. They declare themselves important and ask for our attention. A procession of desires and fears appear before our awareness and there is a strong attraction to identify with them. Its easy to become the desires and fears and get lost in them. These thoughts seem important, the contents of our consciousness - the very fabric of our life. What does the Course say of these thoughts we seem to cherish so much?

These thoughts do not mean anything...None of them ("good" and "bad" thoughts) represents your real thoughts, which are covered up by them. The "good" ones are but shadows of what lies beyond, and shadows make sight difficult. The "bad" ones are blocks to sight, and make seeing impossible. You do not want either. Lesson 4

Its easy to forget the ego mind is just another sense organ having thoughts as its object and identify with its contents. When we smell a rose we don't say we are that smell. The sound of a bird does not make us believe we are one. But the thoughts about ourselves we do believe. We say "I am a body", "I am old", "I am alive", "I am a parent" and hardly stop to question these "I am" thoughts. The Course reminds us that the thoughts we think we think are not real and obscure the real thoughts we think with God. Our real thoughts are located in our right mind, the mind of the Holy Spirit. These are the thoughts of love,peace,joy etc. Ego thoughts are based around the concept of a separate "I" which thinks good and bad thoughts. However, the Course informs us that both good and bad thoughts obscure spiritual vision. These incessant thoughts of our ego mind are a very effective block to the awareness of the Holy Spirit in our right mind, which requires us to be quiet to hear Him.

We are not who we think we are. Our constant belief in a separate "I" with all its special attributes is the source of all our pain. To escape this pain we pursue pleasure which only leads to further pain. Until we start to question and investigate who we really are we are trapped in the vicious circle of avoiding pain and pursuing pleasure. The ego thoughts of "I am this or that" keep us routed in our false sense of individuality. All our thinking is based on the past (see lesson 7 in the Workbook) and our sense of self depends on nothing else. We are literally a collection of memories, habits, patterns and conditionings. Without the illusion of time our personalities would dissolve. Memory keeps the illusion of personal identity alive. Whilst our mind is preoccupied with the past, or its projection into the future the Course tells us that our mind is actually blank!

*My mind is preoccupied with past thoughts....The one wholly true thought one can hold about the past is that it is not here. To think about it at all is therefore to think about illusions. Very few have realised what is actually entailed in picturing the past or in anticipating the future. The mind is actually blank when it does this, because it is not really thinking about anything. Lesson 8*

Nothing is actually happening although it does not seem that way to us. The ego mind has made up the thought of "I" but it is just another thought amongst its collection of mind objects. In Heaven there are no "Is". Our self concepts cannot exist "there" and this is what frightens us. The ultimate goal of the Course is to show us we are not bodies, parents, children, teachers, students etc. but the formless, limitless, eternal, perfect thought of God. Preferring to be "right than happy" we cling to the concept of a separate self, or "I", which identifies with the body as its home. In the Workbook we are encouraged in many places to try and go beyond, or beneath, these obscuring ego thoughts of "I am this or that" to the thoughts we think with God. To touch these thoughts is to open up to a new world utterly unlike the one we are familiar with. We will discover there a love and wisdom that will guide us on our journey to the real world. When this is reached our only identification will be "I am the Holy Son of God Himself" (Lesson 191) for every other identification will now be meaningless.

*I am not a body. I am free.*

*For I am still as God created me. Lesson 191*



## E. WHAT IS OUR TASK?

To give love or remove the blocks to its presence?

It is an easy and popular thing to say we must love those around us. That the solution to the problems of the world is to love more and therefore we should make more effort to love. Can we make an effort to love? Is love to be forced out or does it simply shine on its own with no effort? If we were created in the image of God, who is all love, why are we not radiating it all the time? We must have a good reason not to. A Course In Miracles states that the presence of love in our mind will shine away our ego, our sense of separation, which we dearly love to maintain. Love is deadly to our egos and must be guarded against at all costs.

We can pretend to love but this will always be dualistic. We will choose a particular object or person to "love" and exclude all others. A Course In Miracles refers to this as special love and this is simply a mask for special hate for we must always hate what we depend on. Our ego teaches us to use others as substitutes for our true relationship with God. If love is exclusive it is not love and as the Course teaches, what is not love is hate. This does not mean we abandon relationships for they can be made to serve the important function of mirrors to our denied ego's thought system. We can start to learn that what annoys us in others is always in ourselves.

If we are not loving its because we choose to be that way. Special love seems preferable to unconditional love which has no object. To encourage others to give out love will only increase their level of guilt for they must consistently fail. Rather we should honestly look at how much we judge, compare, criticise and hate others for here we will find the blocks to love.

*Be not afraid to look upon the special hate relationship, for freedom lies in looking at it. It would be impossible not to know the meaning of love, except for this. T-16.IV.1:1-2*

While we cover this awareness with false ideas of love we can never discover the blocks we have erected to loves presence. Until we learn to look without judgement at the full extent of the ego's murderous thought system we will fool ourselves that we can offer love to others. This is not an easy task. Here effort, vigilance and a sense of humour are needed. To see how we really think, to view the extent of our guilt and hatred is painful and embarrassing. We need to invite the non-judgmental presence of the Holy Spirit or Jesus to be with us as we uncover the many layers of the ego.

Jesus encourages us to smile at our egos, and not take them seriously. This is not to foster denial of the ego, for denial is a major defense mechanism of the ego. We need to learn not to feel guilty that we do not love, otherwise we will try and compensate by false displays of love. Instead we can try to be aware in our day to day life how many times we want to attack others and gradually learn to smile at these thoughts. Kenneth Wapnick has often

made this point stating that we need to see these ego thoughts as "no big deal". In this way we can slowly undo the grip of the ego's thought system of attack and listen more to the Voice of love in our mind. As the sun's rays must be experienced when the clouds have gone so will we, without effort, extend the love of God into this world when we have learnt to forgive ourselves.

*The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught. It does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance.*Intro, Text. A Course In Miracles

## F. DOES IT TAKE TIME TO DO A COURSE IN MIRACLES

*Salvation is no more than a reminder this world is not your home. Its laws are not imposed on you, its values are not yours. And nothing that you think you see in it is really there at all. This is seen and understood as each one takes his part in its undoing, as he did in making it. He has the means for either, as he always did.*

T-25.VI.6.

Undoing the world is a process, whereby we let go our attachments and fears in connection with the ego's world. Instead we start to see the world as a classroom where our teacher is the Holy Spirit or Jesus, where the activities of our day are lessons in which we can learn to change our perception and forgive. Process implies time, a journey we take. The Course tells us that we are still at home and thus our journey is without distance. On hearing words like this we can be tempted to believe we can jump in one go and realise immediately that we are the Christ. This has lead some Course students to think that we only have to say "I am the Christ" and they will instantly arrive at enlightenment. In theory that is possible and one day we will all make that step. However, this realisation comes at the end of the spiritual path and comes at the "cost" of our individuality, uniqueness, specialness and self image. Are we ready to say "I am not a woman/ man/ body/ parent/ child etc?" Unless we are ready to release our illusion of separation our fear will always block this realisation.

It is pointless to ask the Holy Spirit for enlightenment now when he knows we could not survive the shock. The Holy Spirit would never give us anything that would increase our fear. Jesus is well aware of this when he says, "Fear not that you will be abruptly lifted up and hurled into reality. Time is kind, and if you use it on behalf of reality, it will keep gentle pace with you in your transition." T-16.VI.8.

It takes a time to go back home to God; a process is needed. However, we can make it as slow or fast as we choose. If we use the sun as an analogy for the the ever-present Christ in our mind, then obscuring clouds are like the ego thoughts - both good and bad - that block the awareness of our spiritual reality. Our task, with the help of the Holy Spirit, is to remove the clouds. To look, with acceptance, within our mind at all our murderous ego thoughts is a difficult and unpleasant task. Denial and projection seem's a more comfortable alternative to the vigilance the Course asks for. If we could easily choose enlightenment Jesus would not have given us a workbook of mind training that takes at least a year to complete.

We do not have to work at creating love, joy or truth because that is how we were created. That which is given to us by our Creator was not given in time and therefore cannot be learned. Learning implies time. God does not know of time - that is one of our miscreations so we could experience separation. Most of us are very invested in this space-time illusion and although we are beginning to tire of it, (otherwise we would not be

interested in a spiritual path), it can be easy to mistake our readiness for enlightenment. Not wanting to put in the hard work involved we can be tempted, with the help of peer group pressure, to imagine we have made the jump and put on a false display of spiritual achievement. A permanent "plastic smile" can be one of the unfortunate outcomes of this illusion.

Nisargadatta Maharaj, an eastern teacher of non-duality, likened the process of growth and enlightenment to that of a fruit growing on a tree. It takes time for the fruit to ripen and when it is ready it suddenly drops to the ground, never to return. The fall of the fruit would be analogous to us being ready to let go of the ego and enter the real world. If a fruit is nearly ripe a sudden wind could dislodge it. Similarly, if a person was close to awaking from the dream of separation, an encounter with an advanced teacher of God may precipitate a sudden shift into the real world.

The Course has over a 100 references to the word step and uses the analogy of the ladder to indicate gradual progress. To climb the ladder back home does require work, effort and time even though the final state will be one without effort where we will be guided what to say, where to go and what to do. There will be no one left to make decisions, no doer of actions and our life will be one of spontaneous activity guided by an internal wisdom. To help us awaken to that state we need to put our foot on the the first rungs of the ladder back home, remembering to smile gently each time we fall off.

## G. PEACE OF MIND.

*Forget not that the motivation for this course is the attainment and the keeping of the state of peace. Given this state the mind is quiet, and the condition in which God is remembered is attained. T-24.Intro*

Happiness is living in the space between two thoughts. Into that space the Holy Spirit is invited and guides all activities. In that space "I need do nothing".

*To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides.*

T-18.VII.7:7

The past and future no longer exist. Memories, knowledge - once thought essential to judge and evaluate each moment - are released to let this higher power take charge of your life. Decisions are gone to be replaced by certain knowing. The ego warns that all will be chaos without its help but instead, all is peace. We are told to resign as our own teacher as we have been badly taught (T-12.V.8). How humbling, and to the ego, how insulting. "Is not all my past experience of great value?," it cries. "No", replies the Holy Spirit, for every moment is fresh and requires a unique response and only the Holy Spirit knows which one. And this response will benefit all for He can only give to all. "But how can the future be safe!" cries the ego. "Future is your concept," replies Spirit. "There is no time, only the present moment, and I can tell you exactly what you need to do to give you peace and joy. But reliance on memory-based thought must cease before I am made welcome and this includes your so called 'good thought' as well as your attacking thoughts".

As students of A Course In Miracles should we be working for world peace? Is it selfish of us to only concern ourselves with inner peace? The Course tells us that this entire universe is but a projection of a thought of separation onto the screen of space-time.

*The world was made as an attack on God. It symbolizes fear. And what is fear except love's absence? Thus the world was meant to be a place where God could enter not, and where His Son could be apart from Him. Here was perception born, for knowledge could not cause such insane thoughts. W-pII.3.2.*

It is built into the very structure of this planet that discord and problems must exist here. The ego is a murderous thought system, kill or be killed, and so it must be mirrored here. Just to exist at all means we must kill something to eat - whether animal or vegetable. All ideas of achieving a utopia must therefore fail. If there is a world there must be an ego projecting it. When all separated beings finally decide to let the ego go (the Last Judgement) there will be peace, but there will not be a universe left to project. So our concern is not achieving peace in the world, not sending light to troubled areas, but learning to find inner peace through daily

forgiveness. When the mind attains peace the memory of God will return and we will become a healing presence in the world. Some people will be drawn to our peace and they in turn will be encouraged by our example to choose forgiveness instead of attack. We will have no motive to change and influence others, for the mere presence of a teacher of God has the potential to heal others. By being at peace ourselves the greatest good can be accomplished.

The ego mind is constantly thinking, planning, scheming, defending and attacking. This is a very effective smokescreen for obliterating the thoughts of God. We cry out "Where is God?" whilst all the time making sure we do not leave Him a gap to enter. Can we give God a gap? Or do we believe God can't hit a moving target so let's live a life of constant thought and action and then we will be safe from Him.

*I am willing to recognize that my thoughts do not mean anything, and to let them go. I choose to have them be replaced by what they were intended to replace. My thoughts are meaningless, but all creation lies in the thoughts I think with God.*

W-p1.51.4:6

To find the peace of God we must reach the point when we see "The world I see holds nothing that I want". (Lesson 128) Whilst we still believe we know what's best for us we will continue to scheme and plan for the ultimate relationship, career, etc. Peace, and therefore the memory of God, will elude us whilst we pursue the idols of the world. A point must come when we willingly surrender to the fact that we don't know anything about how to be truly joyful and at last step aside and let the Holy Spirit lead the way.

*Only be quiet. You will need no rule but this, to let your practicing today lift you above the thinking of the world, and free your vision from the body's eyes. Only be still and listen. W-p1.125.9*

## H. HOW DO I FORGIVE?

*It is impossible to forgive another, for it is only your sins you see in him. You want to see them there, and not in you. That is why forgiveness of another is an illusion.*

from *The Song of Prayer*. S-2.I.4:2-5

### **What is forgiveness?**

We can only begin the process of forgiveness when we start to realise how much alike we are to the person we wish to forgive. When we cannot forgive someone it is because we cannot forgive ourselves for the same problem, albeit in another form. For example, a woman may hate her husband for his loud aggressive outbursts of anger whilst she may never have made him suffer in this way. However, her anger is just as strong as his but is given a different expression by her. When she feels angry she may withdraw herself and cut off from him emotionally. Her husband's anger but mirrors her own which she has not forgiven in herself.

The Course teaches that forgiveness recognises that what we thought was done to us we truly did to ourselves, for we can only deprive ourselves of the peace of God; therefore we forgive others for what they have not done to us, not for what they did. True forgiveness recognises an attack as a call for love and correction (T-12.I.8). Forgiveness is letting go of the past, is letting go of whatever we think people, the world, or God has done to us as well as whatever we think we have done to them. Forgiveness is a shift in perception. Everyone is our brother or sister coming from love or fear. Their attack, which comes from fear, is a plea for our love. Our only problem is the belief in separation from God, our only healing is by joining with each other through forgiveness.

### **The three stages of forgiveness**

Kenneth Wapnick has identified in the Course three stages or steps on the path of forgiveness which I find helpful in understanding what true forgiveness is.

1 - Firstly we must take back our projections onto the world and take responsibility for our own pain. We must stop pointing our fingers at people and situations and accusing them of hurting us and see that they are mirroring to us the areas we have not healed/ forgiven in ourselves. In fact these people and situations merit our thanks for showing us what is in our unconscious for without them we would not see the forces that drive us.

*The secret of salvation is but this: that you are doing this unto yourself.*

T-27.VIII.10:1

2 - After realising that there is nothing to blame "out there" we normally fall into the trap of feeling guilty on finding that the problem is in us. Our ego believes it has separated from God and wants to stay that way. It tells us we should feel guilty for our sins for in this way we come to take this world of separation seriously. Guilt always demands punishment and this prevents us from releasing our pain. During this second stage of forgiveness we come to see how deeply attached we are to our guilt. Guilt is the sum total of the negative thoughts we have about ourselves. It appears as a sacrifice not to feel justified in being a victim and the desire is to hang onto our anger, jealousy, greed etc. Although guilt is painful it is what we are familiar with and we prefer it to the increase in self-responsibility we know will come to us when we lose our attachment to being a victim. We can now choose to decide that guilt no longer serves us and that we would like it to be undone. This shift needs help from outside the ego thought system for we cannot do it by ourselves. Our little willingness to change, to shift our perception, opens the way for the third stage of forgiveness.

3 - In this final stage our guilt is undone by the Holy Spirit, Who was always there behind the barrier of our guilt, and peace returns to our mind. However, until we perform the first two steps He cannot take the third. Our steps can be likened to making a hole in our protective barrier we have erected to God's love allowing His love to pour in and dissolve our guilt.

The following prayer from *A Course In Miracles* contains within it the three stages of forgiveness. The Course urges us to use it whenever we are not joyous.

*I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.  
I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.  
I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.  
I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the  
consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.  
I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.*

T-5.VII.6:7-11

At the deepest level of experience we will come to realise that we are not our ego but still "at home in God dreaming of exile" (T-10.I.2:1.) We will discover that we are still as God created us, the one Christ, perfect and eternal and that nothing can harm us. What then will there be to forgive?

*..... in complete forgiveness, in which you recognise that there is nothing to forgive, you are absolved completely.* T-15.VIII.1:7



## I. NOT MAKING THE ERROR REAL

In our day-to-day lives we are surrounded by challenges that need resolving. The ego is quick to jump in and take everything very seriously and declare any errors we have made as real and then tries to 'solve' them. By making errors real the ego ensures that we keep our focus firmly on the time/space illusion he has created and away from the source of real help - the Holy Spirit.

*You do not understand how to overlook errors, or you would not make them. It would be merely further error to believe either that you do not make them, or that you can correct them without a Guide to correction. And if you do not follow this Guide, your errors will not be corrected...the way to undo them, therefore, is not of you but for you. T-9.IV.2:2-7*

To help us understand the nature of the problem, and how it is resolved, we can turn for help to the analogy found in dreams. Imagine you are asleep and having a nightmare. In the dream you are caught in a situation where you appear to be in danger from other people. It all seems very real and the ego is busy 'helping' you deal with the situation. This help will, of course, be some form of denial and projection resulting in defence or attack. The nightmare seems so real that you start to shout aloud and wake your partner who turns on the bedside light. In your dream you become aware of the light, realise you are having a nightmare, and wake up. You look around the familiar room and breathe a sigh of relief. "Thank God none of that was real!", you say to your partner. "I thought I was such a sinner in that dream and that I had no other recourse but to attack to save myself".

Did the light come into your dream and protect you? Did the light attack your enemies? Did it do anything except remind you that it was a dream and nothing was really happening - that you made it all up? You feel no guilt about what you did in the dream as no sin was committed. The errors were not real and the light coming on reminded you of that.

Now you appear to be back in 'reality'. But are you?

*All your time is spent in dreaming. Your sleeping and your waking dreams have different forms, and that is all. Their content is the same. T-18.II.5:12-14*

The Course informs us that there is no difference between sleeping dreams and 'waking dreams' where we think we are a body in need of protection by our ego. Even the slightest tinge of irritation tells us we believe something real has happened to disturb our peace and our anger will now restore the situation to what we want by attempting to make others feel guilty (T-15.VII.10). We have made the error real again. However, the same solution awaits us as it did in the nightmare. We cannot heal ourselves but we can invite healing from the One who can give it. There is a light in our mind, the Holy Spirit, who is the memory of who we really are.

*A memory of home keeps haunting you, as if there were a place that called you to return, although you do not recognize the voice, nor what it is the voice reminds you of. Lesson 182*

If we can put aside the urge to fix ourselves up and realise we only know how to create problems and not heal them, we can create the gap in our defences for the light of the Holy Spirit to shine away our pain. The external situation that was thought to be responsible for our pain may be unaltered, but our perception of it will now be different and we will be at peace. A miracle has occurred. Did the light of the Holy Spirit do anything? Did it act in the world and affect form? No, it simply reminded us that there was another way of seeing the situation. Light does not attack darkness. Darkness is simply the absence of light. When you switch on a lamp in a darkened room the dark does not hide under the carpet. The Holy Spirit reminded us that the error we perceived is not real. It is of the same nature as the nightmare.

*The Voice of the Holy Spirit does not command, because it is incapable of arrogance. It does not demand, because it does not seek control. It does not overcome, because it does not attack. It merely reminds . It is compelling only because of what it reminds you of. It brings to your mind the other way, remaining quiet even in the midst of the turmoil you may make. T-5.II.7:1-6*

Sometimes in a dream you realise you are dreaming but still continue to dream. This is called lucid dreaming. At the moment you realise you are dreaming any problems you might have been having immediately disappear in the happy realisation that you are making up all the content in the dream and your reaction to it. And now you can change your response.

The journey we take with *A Course in Miracles* shows us that with the Holy Spirit's help we can change our response to any circumstance, now matter how seemingly dire, and accept the miracle the Holy Spirit is always extending to us.

## J. INVESTIGATING THE SELF

*Nothing real can be threatened.*

*Nothing unreal exists.*

*Herein lies the peace of God*

intro,Text

A Course in Miracles asks us to challenge our conventional wisdom about who we think we are and what the world really is. Until we do this we are walking around asleep and suffering will be our constant companion. The above quote states that, "Nothing unreal exists", which means if something is not eternal (i.e. never born) its nature is that of a dream. In the Workbook Jesus states, "There is no world. This is the central thought the course attempts to teach." W-p1.132.6:2-3

If it is the 'central thought', then we need to pay close attention to it.

So what does exist? A man walking at dusk mistakes a coiled rope for a poisonous snake and is terrified. He sees what appears to be a real problem that needs an urgent solution and he will not hear otherwise. It might take considerable persuasion from someone who knows the truth that there is nothing to fear in this situation. The 'snake' is a projection of the man's mind and has no inherent existence. Some Buddhist schools would say it is empty and "does not exist from its own side", and that everything we perceive or think is likewise empty or void, without any inherent reality or existence.

I believe the Course agrees with this, referring to the ego as a dream that will disappear back into nothingness when we so choose just as darkness vanishes (not hides) when the light appears. Whilst we identify with the ego we make it real and therefore we insist we exist as an individual. To maintain the illusion of individuality we need to defend against the truth by concentrating on the unreal - a world empty of any inherent existence.

So who am I? This trunk with four limbs and a head? Do I feel diminished if I trim my nails and have a hair cut? Or lose a limb? No - the 'I' thought remains. What of our thoughts and the emotions they generate? We can watch them come and go, we can stand back and observe them or their absence so we can't be them. Are we a collection of our body parts, thoughts and emotions? Again no, for if we can't be found in the parts we cannot exist in the collection.

*The thoughts of which I am aware do not mean anything because I am trying to think without God. What I call "my" thoughts are not my real thoughts. My real thoughts are the thoughts I think with God. I am not aware of them because I have made my thoughts to take their place. Lesson 51*

The concept of an individual self is made up by the mind - it is just another thought taken as important. Our body, mind and feelings are just like the coiled rope and have no inherent existence. We have simply given a meaning to them or labelled them as 'me'. The early Workbook lessons emphasise this point. Lesson 1 states: "Nothing in this room

means anything". In the review of Lesson 1 (see Lesson 51) it says, "The reason this is so is that I see nothing, and nothing has no meaning. It is necessary that I recognise this, that I may learn to see". In Lesson 7 Jesus uses the example of a cup saying, "What do you know about this cup except what you learned in the past? You would have no idea what this cup is, except for your past learning. Do you, then, really see it? Look about you. This is equally true of whatever you look at." This is another way of saying we label everything we perceive and give it meaning it does not possess of and in itself.

*What God did not create does not exist. And everything that does exist exists as He created it. The world you see has nothing to do with reality. It is of your own making, and it does not exist.*

#### Lesson 14

When the first letter of the alphabet was written on the board, in our first reading class as children, we did not see an 'A'. Perhaps we saw a tent or a mountain. We had to be taught to label it an 'A' and that is how we now see it. But it is not an 'A' in and of it itself but a series of strokes. Even the word 'stroke' is a label.

Imagine for a moment that through self-forgiveness we let go of our personal identity as a man, woman, parent, child, worker, etc. Who is left to want gain, praise and a good reputation? Who is left who wants to avoid loss, blame and a bad reputation? Then we will know the peace of God and finally remember who we are - not an individual but Christ - the one eternal, formless spirit that God created in His Mind.

## K. THE AAA APPROACH TO FORGIVENESS

Awareness - Acceptance - Asking for help.

### AWARENESS - The Undoing of Denial

*Conflict must be resolved. It cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind, if it would be escaped. W-pII.333.1:4*

For the process of forgiveness to begin we need to realise the problem is in our mind and not in the world where our ego asserts it is. If we get upset at dictators like Hitler it is because we have a Hitler in our own mind. It is uncomfortable and painful to realise what we have kept covered in our minds and we resist this process. However, until we realise what needs to be forgiven we are destined to keep our problems. Further, if we allow our ego defences to be undone, the Holy Spirit would enter our minds and shine away the ego, and this is our greatest fear - the end of our uniqueness and specialness.

*It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false. TT-16.IV.6:2*

The main thrust of the Course is not in affirming the light and love within us but discovering and forgiving the ego blocks we have built to love's presence. When they are removed in the process of forgiveness the light and love of God will automatically dawn upon our minds. Jesus asks us to use our relationships as mirrors to discover all that is unhealed in us. For this we need awareness and this is our responsibility. As Jesus reminded Helen Schucman You are much too tolerant of mind wandering, and are passively condoning your mind's miscreations. T-2.VI.4:6

### ACCEPTANCE - Not Taking Our Ego Seriously

*It is sin's unreality that makes forgiveness natural and wholly sane, a deep relief to those who offer it; a quiet blessing where it is received. It does not countenance illusions, but collects them lightly, with a little laugh, and gently lays them at the feet of truth. And there they disappear entirely. W-pI.134.6:1-3*

When we discover, through awareness, that the problem is in us, the ego tries to regain its lost ground by using our newfound insights to accuse us of our sin. There is a great temptation to believe this and our accusing finger now points at our own head. Our response makes the ego's world real again. However, this drama of ours is still occurring in the dream of separation from God and nothing is really happening. Just as you awake from a nightmare to realise nothing actually occurred, so Jesus asks us to learn to laugh gently at our ego dreams. Nothing we do can harm our Christ nature - otherwise sin would be possible.

To look at our guilt with acceptance is the shift of perception the Course calls a miracle. Anything we resist persists, but that which we accept will be healed. The Course is asking us to look into the darkness of our minds and accept without judgement what we find there. We are not asked to suppress our anger or transform it but to simply to watch it with gentle acceptance, waiting patiently for the time when it will no longer be there. The cause of all our pain comes from our desire to maintain the seeming separation from God and thus keep our individuality preserved.

*He bids you bring each terrible effect to Him that you may look together on its foolish cause and laugh with Him a while. You judge effects, but He has judged their cause. T-27.VIII.9:3-4*

#### ASKING FOR HELP - Offering Our problems to the Holy Spirit

*The Holy Spirit asks of you but this; bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to darkness if you make the darkness open to Him. But what you hide He cannot look upon. T-14.VII.6:1-5*

When we decide to be happy and not right we are inviting the Holy Spirit into our minds to shine away the guilt we have been grasping onto.

It is important to realise that it is not ourselves that heal our mind - we simply allow the blocks to God to be removed by the Holy Spirit. We don't need to understand how this happens. Our work is in the first two stages of this process - Awareness and Acceptance. To be healed we need help from outside our ego thought system. This help must wait until it is called for as it would never force itself upon us against our free will.

Next time you feel you have lost your peace it can help if you stop a moment and become aware of where in your body you feel uncomfortable. This area is a reflection in your body of an unforgiveness in your mind. Place your hand on this area in a gesture of simple acceptance and tell yourself it all right to feel this way. When you feel ready, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see the problem in your life a different way.

## L. COLLAPSING TIME

*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.V.13:2-4*

To achieve the goal of the Course we need to practise forgiveness. To understand the Course we need a knowledge of its metaphysics which includes time. Forgiveness collapses time, speeding the moment of spiritual awakening when we finally accept the Atonement - the awakening from the illusion of time and space.

Jesus states we need new ideas about time but also says how difficult it is for us to understand these ideas. Linear time is what we take as the truth, whilst Jesus tells us that time is holographic - everything is happening in one moment. However, we can at least understand time's purpose and allow our deeply rooted ideas of time and space to be shaken a little. As we proceed along the Course's path of awakening we will encounter experiences that will seem shocking and fear-provoking to our egos. It will be helpful therefore to meet these times with some foreknowledge so that awe and not fear is experienced. (T-1.VII.5)

The ego uses time to preserve itself. It tells us that in the past we decided to separate from God and achieved this. To save us from the resulting overwhelming guilt it advised us to deny this ever happened. This imagined sin in the past is experienced in the present as guilt leading to a fear of punishment in the future. All our fear stems from this unconscious guilt from a separation that never really happened.

In contrast the Holy Spirit reminds us that the "tiny mad idea" (see below) of separation was undone by the Holy Spirit the moment it was thought.

God gave His Teacher to replace the one you made, not to conflict with it. And what He would replace has been replaced. Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity. And so is all time past, and everything exactly as it was before the way to nothingness was made. The tiny tick of time in which the first mistake was made, and all of them within that one mistake, held also the Correction for that one, and all of them that came within the first. And in that tiny instant time was gone, for that was all it ever was.

*What God gave answer to is answered and is gone. T-26.V.3:1-7*

In that "tiny tick of time" the whole universe was born, evolved and died along with all the thoughts we experienced.

"All thinking produces form at some level." (T-2.VI.9:14), and so all these thoughts manifested in time and space. This is somewhat similar to parallel universes hypothesised

by some quantum physicists - that all possible results of an experiment exist and the participating scientist chooses one of them to manifest. Although everything was corrected in that 'original instant' we have chosen not to accept the Holy Spirit's correction and perversely continue as if we are still special individuals separated in space and linear time.

*The world of time is the world of illusion. What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach. Because your will is free you can accept what has already happened at any time you choose, and only then will you realize that it was always there. For we but see the journey from the point at which it ended, looking back on it, imagining we make it once again; reviewing mentally what has gone by.*  
TM-2.3:1-5

To help make this a bit clearer I will use a couple of analogies. There are currently available fiction novels which give the reader a choice of which plot to develop. At the end of each chapter you choose from a choice of plots; for example, if the hero gets married or decides to stay single. You are then directed to the appropriate page and the story continues based on your previous choice of plot. A multiple, but not infinite, story line. In that original instant of seeming separation we also had an enormous, but not infinite, number of stories which we now reviewing in our time and space theatre.

Dr Kenneth Wapnick, in his excellent book, *A Vast illusion - time according to a Course in Miracles*, uses the analogy of the VCR. The sleeping son of God or decision-maker is sitting there watching video tapes of what occurred in that "tiny tick of time". He has a choice between two huge and equal piles of video tapes - the ego tapes and tapes of their correction by the Holy Spirit. One of the correction tapes is entitled 'Atonement' in which the sleeping son of God finally wakes up and joyfully realises he never left his Father's home and that time and space are illusions. At this point he stops the pointless practice of viewing videotapes of what has already occurred.

It is important to realise that the way of awakening, like everything else, has already happened and can't be changed.

*The time is set already. It appears to be quite arbitrary. Yet there is no step along the road that anyone takes but by chance. It has already been taken by him, although he has not yet embarked on it.* W-pI.158.3:1-4

But when we decide to view that tape is not.

*This is a course in miracles. It is a required course. Only the time you take it is voluntary. Free will does not mean that you can establish the curriculum. It means only that you can elect what you want to take at a given time.* T-in.1-5



*As the course emphasizes, you are not free to choose the curriculum, or even the form in which you will learn it. You are free, however, to decide when you want to learn it. And as you accept it, it is already learned. M-2.3 : 6-7*

That is the purpose of the spiritual path - to speed the time of awakening. As Jesus states a few times in the workbook, we could save thousands of years (many reviews of ego tapes) if we did a particular lesson correctly. Thus time can be collapsed through forgiveness. As an example, your partner may suddenly die and leave you heartbroken. In that original instant you may have had two thoughts - to turn to drugs to alleviate the pain or dedicate your life to finding a peace that no death can take away - the choice of two videos to review. If you turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance He will urge you to review the latter and so save time.

Due to our fixation with linear time it is hard for us to realise the all our problems are solvable instantly. The correction video has always existed and we need not delay in reviewing it.

*I seem to have problems only because I am misusing time. I believe that the problem comes first, and time must elapse before it can be worked out. I do not see the problem and the answer as simultaneous in their occurrence. That is because I do not yet realise that God has placed the answer together with the problem, so that they cannot be separated by time. The Holy Spirit will teach me this, if I will let Him. And I will understand it is impossible that I could have a problem which has not been solved already. W-pI.90.3.*

This also relates to the teachings in the text about the Laws of Chaos where it states there is no hierarchy of illusions, no order of difficulty in miracles. Any problem, irrespective of its seeming magnitude, has already been corrected and is simply waiting acceptance. Our job is to turn to the Holy Spirit and ask His advice on what video to review thus speeding the time to when we review the Atonement video.

*To you who still believe you live in time and know not it is gone, the Holy Spirit still guides you through the infinitely small and senseless maze you still perceive in time, though it has long since gone. You think you live in what is past. Each thing you look upon you saw but for an instant, long ago, before its unreality gave way to truth. Not one illusion still remains unanswered in your mind. Uncertainty was brought to certainty so long ago that it is hard indeed to hold it to your heart, as if it were before you still. T-26.V.4*

## M. FINDING THE PEACE OF GOD

*Forget not that the motivation for this course is the attainment and the keeping of the state of peace. Given this state the mind is quiet, and the condition in which God is remembered is attained*  
A Course in Miracles.T-24.in.1.

Below you will find selections from A Course in Miracles which will help you to return to the peace of God. They are intended as reminders to what you have studied and practised in the Course.

### 1 - Purpose of your day

As you awake in the morning set the purpose of your day to find the peace of God in all situations you encounter. For example, if you need to talk to your boss about a pay rise you think you deserve the first priority is to try and be at peace with your boss and the outcome of the interview - whether you get a raise or not. Thus in all situations that require some practical steps to be taken you approach on two levels. Level one, the first priority, is to seek and find peace in the situation. Level two, the second priority, is achieving the goal - if possible.

*The peace of God is everything I want. The peace of God is my one goal; the aim of all my living here, the end I seek, my purpose and my function and my life, while I abide where I am not at home.*  
Lesson 205

Another example could be sickness. You try different ways to get better (second priority) but seek, with the help of Jesus or the Holy Spirit, to remain at peace (first priority) no matter if you get better or not .

Attaining and the keeping of peace now becomes the PURPOSE of everything you do during the day. It does not matter what happens to you as you now view all happenings as classrooms where you can learn forgiveness, truth and therefore peace. You could even find yourself in disastrous circumstances (according to your ego) such as a car crash, but with the purpose of peace as your first priority you could turn that situation into a blessing. This is not easy to do as your ego will encourage you to view such a situation as a justified victim.

*It takes great learning to understand that all things, events, encounters and circumstances are helpful. M -4.I.4:5*

This is the message of the crucifixion (Text - 6.in). Jesus was not upset about what happened to him and would like us to use his example to encourage us to find peace in

less demanding trials.

## **2 - Start the day with God**

*.... as soon as possible after waking take your quiet time, continuing a minute or two after you begin to find it difficult. You may find that the difficulty will diminish and drop away. If not, that is the time to stop. M -16.4.7:9*

This section in the Manual asks you to join with God and foster quiet thoughts about Him. In four below Jesus stresses that remembering three things about ourselves is particularly important.

- 1 - That God has created us peaceful
- 2 - That God has created us joyful and
- 3 - A thought of limitless release

Thus in your quiet time with God you can remind yourself of who you really are - joyful, peaceful and without limit, and that you have an ever present source of help in Jesus or the Holy Spirit. It can be a time of joining with God in gratitude for what He created - an eternal, formless, loving Christ, and for the Help to return you to that realisation. After this period of quiet thinking it may feel natural for your mind to remain relatively quiet and receptive to God's love for you.

## **3 - End the day with God**

*.... just before going to sleep is a desirable time to devote to God. It sets your mind into a pattern of rest, and orients you away from fear. If it is expedient to spend this time earlier, at least be sure that you do not forget a brief period,--not more than a moment will do,--in which you close your eyes and think of God. M -16.5.6:8*

Here you are being asked to repeat two above but now at the end of the day.

## **4 - Remember God throughout the day**

*There is one thought in particular that should be remembered throughout the day. It is a thought of pure joy; a thought of peace, a thought of limitless release, limitless because all things are freed within it. M-16.6.1:2*

Jesus is encouraging you to maintain the current of remembering Who you are and joining with God that you started the day with. Remember you are fully protected by God's love in all situations today and that a Guide accompanies you in all situations you have dedicated to peace, truth and forgiveness.

## 5 - Guidance

*The presence of fear is a sure sign that you are trusting in your own strength. W-pI.48.3.1*

If the presence of fear is felt during the day it is showing you that you must be relying on the ego's guidance and not the Holy Spirit. Whenever you lose your peace Jesus asks you to consider the following:

*I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.*

*I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.*

*I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.*

*I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.*

*I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.*

T-5.VII.6.7:11

It is not necessary for you to ask for guidance on every detail of your day. Instead ...

*If you have made it a habit to ask for help when and where you can, you can be confident that wisdom will be given you when you need it. Prepare for this each morning, remember God when you can throughout the day, ask the Holy Spirit's help when it is feasible to do so, and thank Him for His guidance at night. And your confidence will be well founded indeed. M-29.5.8:10*

## 6 - Understanding Anger

Throughout your day irritations and anger will often arise to take your peace away. When this takes place, unhealed and unforgiven aspects of yourself are being mirrored back to you from your environment. For example, if you get upset about someone's seemingly unfair treatment of yourself, then the situation is showing you that you are capable of treating others unfairly, albeit perhaps in different forms.

*Learn this, and learn it well, for it is here delay of happiness is shortened by a span of time you cannot realize. You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own. Whatever form his sins appear to take, it but obscures the fact that you believe them to be yours, and therefore meriting a "just" attack. T-31.III.1.4:6*

When a difficult situation arises in your life the ego is quick to draw on your past experience and immediately label the situation as negative. This provides the justification for anger and attack. However, Jesus reminds us:

*Perhaps it will be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact. It is always an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions, regardless of their seeming justification by what appears as facts. Regardless, too, of the intensity of the anger that is aroused. M-17.4.1:3*

Whenever you lose your peace, a hidden and denied aspect of yourself is asking to be healed. If you can take back your projections of anger from the world and not judge yourself for finding the cause in your own mind, you open yourself to healing from the Holy Spirit.

*The Holy Spirit asks of you but this; bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to darkness if you make the darkness open to Him. But what you hide He cannot look upon. T-14.6.1:5*

*Prayer is a way of asking for something. It is the medium of miracles. But the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven have everything. T-3.V.6.1:3*

## **7 - Humility**

Little progress can be made along the path to peace unless humility is developed. Your ego mind is arrogant, believing it knows the best course of action in all events. It bases its judgement on memory, thinking that the more experience it has gathered the better it can judge present circumstances. In contrast, the Course reminds you that if you think you are a body, operating in time and space, you are insane! And how can the insane know what is best for them? Instead, Jesus counsels us to resign as our own teacher and seek guidance from the Holy Spirit:

*You Understand Nothing*

*When your peace is threatened or disturbed in any way,  
say to yourself,*

*"I do not know what anything, including this, means.  
And so I do not know how to respond to it.  
And I will not use my own past learning as the light  
to guide me now."*

*By this refusal to attempt to teach yourself what you do not know, the Guide Whom God has given you will speak to you. He will take His rightful place in your awareness the instant you abandon it, and offer it to Him. T-14.XI.6.6:11*

## **8 - Rules for Decision**

At the start of Chapter 30 in the Text will be found a set of very practical rules on how to achieve a peaceful day. Actually, only the first rule is needed and reminds you, once again, that you only have a choice of listening to two counsellors in your mind - the ego or the

Holy Spirit. And only the Holy Spirit's counsel will give you peace.

#### *Rules for Decision*

*Rule 1 - Today I will make no decisions by myself.*

*Rule 2 - If I make no decisions by myself, this is the day that will be given me.(peaceful)*

To help reinforce your learning Jesus uses rule 2 as a reminder, to be used throughout the day.

*Rule 3 - I have no question. I forgot what to decide.*

A major problem to be avoided is setting up your own answers to a problem which you then ask the Holy Spirit to choose between. See the previous notes on humility.

*Rule 4 - At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now.*

Rules 4 to 7 are ways to return to your goal of a peaceful day if you have started listening to the voice of the ego again.

*Rule 5 - And so I hope I have been wrong.*

*Rule 6 - I want another way to look at this.*

*Rule 7 - Perhaps there is another way to look at this.*

*What can I lose by asking?*

### **9 - Don't fight yourself**

*I want the peace of God.*

*To say these words is nothing. But to mean these words is everything. If you could but mean them for just an instant, there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form; in any place or time. Heaven would be completely given back to full awareness, memory of God entirely restored, the resurrection of all creation fully recognized.*

W-pl.185.1.1:4

Although one part of yourself is looking for another way to find peace and joy there is still a powerful identification with the mind of the ego - the desire to keep your specialness. By specialness is meant the attraction to being a separate, unique individual that is different from others and wishes to be self-sufficient and in sole control of its life. This is how the seeming separation from God began - the desire for specialness instead of the oneness of Christ.

As you attempt to follow these steps to finding the peace of God the desire to remain special will always act in opposition and attempt, often successfully, to draw you back to the advice of the ego which is terrified of the new direction you are undertaking. For as you move along on this journey eventually God's love will shine the ego, and therefore your specialness, away. Thus Jesus kindly states:

*And if you find resistance strong and dedication weak, you are not ready. Do not fight yourself.*

T-30.I.6:7

Instead, forgive yourself for not forgiving. Forgive yourself for not wanting peace and preferring specialness. You are not as far along the spiritual path as you perhaps once thought. From this the path of humility can open up and you can learn to smile at your ego and its desire to separate from God. This is wonderful progress as this approach will diminish the guilt that keeps you from finding God's peace.

## N. FORGIVING JESUS

- from the perspective of *A Course in Miracles* -

*I have great need for lilies, for the Son of God has not forgiven me.*

*A Course in Miracles* T-20.II.4

### **Why Do We Need To Forgive Jesus?**

This may sound a strange question for Christians taught that Jesus sacrificed and suffered on our behalf thus lifting our sins away. Should not this earn our gratitude and love instead of attack? This question might be more understandable for Jews as they have often been accused of murdering the Christ and have suffered persecution and rejection as a consequence.

The Bible portrays Jesus as God's one son whilst we, in St.Paul's words, are only adopted sons ( Ga 4:4, Ep 1:5). Jesus has been given a special position in God's eyes which has been denied us. Being second best must produce, albeit denied, a feeling that we have been unfairly treated which we will then project onto Jesus. Although we are happy to be identified with such an exalted figure there must follow a resentment that only Jesus is getting this extra-special treatment. Jesus is placed on a pillar existing in a state forever unattainable by us.

Jesus appeared to set us an example that suffering atones for sin and leads to salvation. When we are told we must suffer to get something of value we must be left with mixed feelings. "Yes I do want this thing of value (or I think I do) but do I really have to suffer to get it?" These thoughts will produce an ambivalence towards the teacher. A secret anger mixes with our veneration for Jesus which can eventually lead to a complete reversal of the way we think of him. Rebelling against what is now perceived as a harsh teaching we proceed to bury him under the pillar we once put him on.

*I am constantly being perceived as a teacher to be exalted or rejected, but I do not accept either perception of myself. .... Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world. Forgive him your illusions, and behold how dear a brother he would be to you.*

*A Course in Miracles* T-4.I.6:7, C-5.5:7-8

The Gospels clearly show that Jesus's teaching and example aroused much hostility which finally led to his death. Yet his life was one of teaching the power of love and forgiveness and healing the sick. Why should this upset so many people? One example of this is when he told people to love the tax gatherer, a particularly hated figure in their society. His teaching went against the norms of the ego thought system which believed in real enemies, justified anger and persecution of the guilty. "An eye for an eye" seemed a sensible and just doctrine given to them from the Old Testament. Jesus's teaching was 'against the stream' and very threatening to their thought system. The insecurity created



by Jesus's teaching was perceived as a major threat to the ego and warranted the death of Jesus.

*The world must therefore despise and reject me, because the world is the belief that love is impossible.*

Ibid. T-8.IV.3:7

A Course in Miracles teaches that we choose against Heaven and unity and wanted separation, specialness and autonomy instead. Rebelling against our Father we have decided to go it alone without any need of God's help. As Jesus stands for God in our world we will also spurn his help, effectively telling him, "Thanks, but I don't need your help, I can do things much better myself".

*You have very little trust in me as yet, but it will increase as you turn more and more often to me instead of to your ego for guidance. The results will convince you increasingly that this choice is the only sane one you can make.*

Ibid. T-4.VI.3:1-2

Our egos believe that sin must be punished. Jesus becomes a screen on which we can project our denied sins so he can be punished instead of us. If Jesus can be made to die for our sins we are off the hook. In response Jesus states:

*I am made welcome in the state of grace, which means you have at last forgiven me. For I became the symbol of your sin, and so I had to die instead of you. ... No one can die for anyone, and death does not atone for sin.*

Ibid. T-19.IV.A.17:1-2,8

## **Jesus's Equality With Us**

*Equals should not be in awe of one another because awe implies inequality. It is therefore an inappropriate reaction to me. An elder brother is entitled to respect for his greater experience, and obedience for his greater wisdom.*

Ibid. T-1.II.3:5-7

Making Jesus into a special and only son of God robs us of the lesson he tries to teach. He trod the same paths as we now tread and learnt the same lessons we must learn. His example to us is that he succeeded and so can we. In the end we will all become like him, it is only a question of time.

*There is nothing about me that you cannot attain. I have nothing that does not come from God. The difference between us now is that I have nothing else. .... The name of Jesus is the name of one who was a man but saw the face of Christ (the Course's symbol of total forgiveness) in all his brothers and remembered God. So he became identified with Christ, a man no longer, but at one with God.....Is he the Christ? Oh yes, along with you.*

Ibid. T-1.II.3:10-12, C-5.2:1-2, C-5.5:1

As we learn to take back our projections from Jesus and forgive we open ourselves to his help. Now he is perceived as an elder brother who only wants to heal our minds and asks nothing in return. Walking the path of forgiveness with Jesus as our teacher will eventually allow us to follow his request:

*Teach not that I died in vain. Teach rather that I did not die by demonstrating that I live in you.*  
Ibid. T-11.VI.7:3-4

The following true story gives a good example of our ambivalence towards Jesus.

### *The Voice of Jesus*

by Linda Chubbuck

(used by permission of Linda Chubbuck [www.lindachubbuck.com](http://www.lindachubbuck.com))

*The Voice of Jesus* has been published in  
The Holy Encounter and Miracle Worker magazines.

A few weeks ago, my 10-year old son and I were chatting about A Course in Miracles. I told him how it came (without mentioning a source) and read him the introduction. He was enchanted.

The next day, he asked another question about it. I answered.  
The following day, I noticed him flipping through the Course himself. Strange, I thought.  
"August, what is it about the Course that especially interests you?" I asked.

He replied, with a sense of wonder, "It's the Voice! It's gentle, but commanding.... like Aslan!"

I felt a shiver of awe pass through me. He is currently devouring each of the books in the Chronicles of Narnia series, by CS. Lewis. And Aslan, the Lion, is known to be Lewis's metaphor for Christ. August had recognized the Voice of Jesus in the Course as familiar to him, and as loving and powerful.

My childhood experience of Jesus was the opposite. By the time I was a young woman, I wanted no part of Jesus. His very name made me feel nauseated and repelled. It conjured up images from childhood sermons of suffering, bloody thorns on his head, and my own guilty part in the crucifixion.

Too willful to come to Jesus out of obedience and fear, I instead rejected, by my early 20's,

the whole business - God, along with his scolding, judgmental Son, and all the rules which would almost certainly condemn me to hell. If I didn't believe in them, they couldn't hurt me, could they?

By my mid-30's, my defiance caught up with me. Though living an apparently successful life, I was coming apart at the seams inside. In great humility, I came to know God through the simple medium of prayer. My journey had begun.

My resentment of Jesus, however, continued. Eventually, I found myself offering Jesus himself a simple prayer - "Sorry, Jesus, that I can't stand you. I know it's not your fault, all the things people have done in your name. But I just get along better without you. Thanks for understanding." I continued on my way.

Living in the Bible Belt, I was reminded regularly of His presence. "Jesus" bumper stickers.... "How crude! Just the sort of people to try and cram Him down your throat, no doubt!" "Jesus Died for Your Sins" road signs - I could hardly bear to look at them, they irritated me so.

A few years after my re-connection to God, I was given a gift of A Course in Miracles. Intrigued, I opened it, and tried. But as soon as I understood that Jesus was a part of it, I closed it again. No way. Sorry, but my stomach turned again. The book sat on my shelf.

I began, however, to read authors who wrote of the Course - Jerry Jampolsky, and later, Marianne Williamson. They wisely, I thought, omitted any annoying mention of Jesus. So I could take it. I savoured their books.

Then in November of 1993, in an emotional crisis, I was led to a staunch and very compassionate Baptist woman, to whom I poured out my fears of the church, Jesus, and hell. She listened lovingly, and offered to pray with me. She asked if I wanted to invite Jesus into my life. Terrified and in tears, I agreed. We prayed together, and I did so.

I drove home in a panic. What had I done? This Man, this symbol of fear and judgment and hell and suffering - I had invited Him into my life? Did I have to stop all sin instantly? Would I go to hell? What did I have to believe now? I was sobbing.

I came to my computer, weeping, and wrote out all the questions... poured them out. As the questions ended, a Voice at my left shoulder, with the power to be heard over all my fears, spoke: "There are answers."

It was so loving, so powerful. I knew it was Jesus speaking, and I understood that He meant the answers would unfold ahead of me, and that I need not be afraid. I was comforted.

An hour later, I picked up the Course, and this time, did not set it down. I devoured the Text, then began the lessons over the next few weeks. I hungered for it, and cried and wept

as I took in His words, His love. Here were the answers I had asked for.

Looking back, I know that I was pulled by His power, over the wall of my distrust, into His arms. For quite some time, I preferred to pray to the Holy Spirit, while acknowledging Jesus' place in the whole system. The more abstract form of God seemed "safer" somehow. But recently, I have realized that true intimacy is linked to forgiveness - and forgiveness is Jesus' realm.

The Voice that I heard at times, but preferred to call the Holy Spirit, or my angels, I now address as "Jesus." That Voice is, as my son put it, always "gentle, but commanding." Never scolding, shaming, or condemning - but always very, very intimate and tender and personal.

Last week, I told my son a bit about my former repulsion for Jesus, and asked how he (raised outside the church) thought of Jesus, when he thought of Him.

He replied, not surprisingly I guess, "Like Aslan."

I still find myself carrying shame and embarrassment as I use the name of Jesus. Or my cynical ego voice will berate me that I am losing my sanity, listening to "voices!" But the consistency, and the compelling quality of His Voice reassure me.

If Jesus can speak through different humans, and still be lovingly recognized by a child... that is the Voice I want to hear forever.

## O. GROW AS THE FLOWER GROWS

*Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes.*

*The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all.*

*A Course in Miracles. Lesson 188*

### **The Futility of Seeking**

If there is something wrong with our body we attend to it. For example, if a finger is cut we would cover it with a plaster. We normally would not try to pretend it was not bleeding. But if there is something wrong in our minds we often seek to escape from the problem. For example, we might turn to alcohol to try to escape from sorrow. To heal the mind we must stay with the problem so it can be healed through forgiveness.

One escape from the pain of living in the ego's judgmental mind is to seek the light or God. It is not easy to see that the pain in our mind and the object of our search are both created by the ego. Now the solution to the suffering in our mind may appear to lie somewhere in the future instead of in the present moment, the only place where the Holy Spirit can help us with the aid of the holy instant or miracle.

We think by searching we can find truth/God which also implies we will recognise it when we find it. We can't search for something we cannot recognise - otherwise how will we know when we find it? It must be similar to something we already know. But what if God is totally beyond what we are familiar with, as the mystics have assured us it is? We are then doomed never to find the goal of our search. "Seek and do not find" (T-12.IV.1:4) is the ego's dictum.

So don't seek to become free of desire or "achieve" enlightenment. Become present. Be there as the observer of the mind. 'The Power of Now: A guide to spiritual enlightenment' by Eckhart Tolle.

*You can do nothing to bring (the awareness of God) about, but you can avoid creating obstacles.*  
*'I Am That' by Nisargadatta Maharaj*

*When the mind is no longer seeking, no longer breeding conflict through its wants and cravings, when it is silent with understanding, only then can the immeasurable come into being.*  
*'Commentaries on Living. Third Series' by J Krishnamurti*

### **The Trap of Dependence**

During this hopeless search for God we may be tempted to depend on a guru or teacher to lead us to truth. This reminds me of a story from Anthony de Mello's book 'One Minute Wisdom':

To a visitor who asked to become his disciple the Master said, "You may live with me, but don't become my follower."

"Whom, then, shall I follow?"

"No one. The day you follow someone you cease to follow Truth."

Jesus asks us to follow his guidance which becomes clearer as we practice our daily forgiveness lessons. We can, of course, learn from other teachers and spiritual disciplines but should not forget we carry our teacher with us in our right minds. Our task is to remember that we can always turn to this teacher instead of the ego.

### **God Knows The Way To Us**

It is the arrogance of the ego that thinks it knows the way to God. Jesus reminds us gently that we are but confused children lost in our dream of separation and driven mad by guilt. Put that way it perhaps make sense not to trust our own good intentions!

*Is it not He Who knows the way to you? You need not know the way to Him. Your part is simply to allow all obstacles that you have interposed between the Son and God the Father to be quietly removed forever. God will do His part in joyful and immediate response.*

A Course in Miracles. Lesson 189

Thus Jesus is telling us to relax and stop striving after God. Let us just do our part and then God will do His - but in His own time, not ours.

*When one finally gives up one's futile attempts to make reality conform to one's own wishes, and allows it to unfold on its own terms, all the energy that was tied up in foolish attempts to manipulate the universe is freed up.*

*'Halfway up the Mountain - the Error of Premature Claims to Enlightenment'*

by Mariana Caplan. Hohm Press

### **Realistic Goals**

In reading the lives of saints we can discover people who seem to have reached exalted states and we can be tempted to desire the same for ourselves. After all, who would not want to be one with God? However, can the unenlightened judge who is truly enlightened or are they forced to always be dealing with their own ideas and projections of what the enlightened state is? Is a permanent union with God a realistic goal and is it actually possible whilst we still desire to exist as bodies?

Sometimes a teacher of God may have a brief experience of direct union with God. In this world, it is almost impossible that this endure. It can, perhaps, be won after much devotion and dedication, and then be maintained for much of the time on earth. But this is so rare that it cannot be considered a realistic goal. If it happens, so be it. If it does not

happen, so be it as well. All worldly states must be illusory. If God were reached directly in sustained awareness, the body would not be long maintained. M-26.3.1:8

The body, which was created so we could hide from God, could not last long in the presence of what it was originally designed to hide from.

The goal of A Course in Miracles is peace, brought about by forgiveness. With peace the memory of God returns and who we really are - the formless, eternal Christ. This is a realistic goal and one that is promised to all of us.

### **Daily Practice**

Once we begin to realise that seeking the light is but an escape from facing our pain and that we cannot know the path to God, we can really begin our journey home. When we realise the movement away from what is actually happening in our minds to the pursuit of some far-off solution is a false and useless journey, we can start the real work which will lead to peace of mind and the return of the awareness of God's love for us. Every day we are presented with fresh opportunities to look at our self-created pain, accept it and let it go with Jesus's help. The ego's advice to deny our guilt and project it onto others can now be chosen against. A constant vigilance or awareness of our ego thoughts is required so we can give them to the Holy Spirit for healing. This is not easy, as indicated in this remark to Helen Schucman by Jesus, "You are much too tolerant of mind wandering, and are passively condoning your mind's miscreations." (T-2.VI.4:6 ) When we fulfil our part in the plan for salvation we will experience peace.

*Deepen and broaden your awareness of yourself and all the blessings will flow. You need not seek anything, all will come to you most naturally and effortlessly.*

'I Am That' by Nisargadatta Maharaj

Our yearning for permanent peace and happiness can now be set aside and this energy directed into the daily classroom of our relationships. And we can smile gently at our desire to be enlightened in this life and leave the timing of that in God's hands.

*Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the Eternal. But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth. For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity: in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature.*

'Light on the Path' by Mabel Collins

For further quotations on this theme see [The Enlightenment Trap](#)

## P. DEDICATING YOUR DAY TO PEACE

*Would You Rather be Right or Happy?* T29.VII.1:9

The purpose of *A Course in Miracles* is to teach us how to be at peace no matter what is happening around us. It also teaches us that this is the last thing we want. One look at the state of our lives and the world will bear this out.

Why would we not want peace? There must be something we are very afraid of here - and there is. It will cost us everything we cherish. Our individuality, our specialness, our need to be right, the seeming control over our lives or, in a word, our ego. The Course defines the "ego" as the thought of separation, our desire to separate from God and do our own thing. The egos song is "I did it my way". The ego believes it knows everything needed to find happiness in the world and does not require any inner guidance thank you. Jesus points out that we could progress quickly on the path to peace and happiness by listening to the ever-present help of the Holy Spirit, but we find the idea personally insulting (M-9.2:4). It implies that all our hard-won knowledge and experience in life counts for nothing when it comes to finding real joy. He goes further and states that if we believe we are bodies then we are insane. And how can the insane possible know how to find peace? They obviously need help from outside their deluded thought system. We are all psychotic to Jesus and all need his help to extricate ourselves from the pain and loneliness we are in.

I remember a period in my own life when I felt little trust in anyone, thought everything was up to me to do and arranged my life so that I was self-sufficient. I bought a camper van so that I always had a home and the ability to go where I liked. Now I needed help from no-one. My illusion of self-sufficiency was soon shattered, however, when the camper van developed an illusive starter motor fault. The only way I could start the van was to get a push. This meant asking for help, and not just from one person but two as the van was too heavy to be moved by one person. I found this embarrassing to do and quickly took the van to the garage for repair. Each time I did this they could find nothing wrong. Nonetheless the van still managed to break down on a regular basis, forcing me to ask for help. Looking back I see what a good lesson that was for me and I gradually learned a little about asking for help.

The only way we can return to peace is to willingly give up the ego through the practice of forgiveness and turning within for help. But the ego is our creation, an idea the sleeping Son of God once thought was a very good idea (and still does). However, as the Course points out, our "tolerance for pain may be high but is not without limit." (T-2.III.3:5). To maintain the seeming separation from God is very tiring. To be at home in Heaven but pretend we are in time and space takes a lot of effort and we slowly begin to think there must be "another way".



Each day we have a choice to make. We can say, "I want to be right and happiness is unimportant," or we can say, "I want to be happy and peaceful, I don't need to be right." We should never underestimate our desire to be right. This is how the seeming separation from God started. We thought we knew how we could have something even better than Heaven. The idea of separate beings who could play at being God sounded right. What we have discovered is a loss of peace and joy, but we don't want to admit to that, and continue to try to find that elusive happiness here in the world. We are right but no longer happy. I will give a story from my own experience here that illustrates some of the points raised here.

One night shortly before going to sleep, Salice (my late wife) and I had an argument. My ego told me I had been unfairly treated and I should separate from her by not communicating. Salice's ego had apparently given her the same advice, for neither of us was now talking to the other! I got out of bed and went to the bathroom. I saw a pack of Workbook Lesson cards and felt the impulse to take one. The title of the Lesson was "I could see peace instead of this." (Lesson 34) The significance of the Lesson was not lost on me and simultaneously another line from the Course came into my mind: "Do you prefer to be right or happy?" (T29.VII.1:9) For a moment I considered my two options and then said to myself, "Id rather be right" and put the Lesson card down again. Feeling miserable but justified in my pain, I returned silently to bed and fell asleep.

In the morning I woke up still feeling separated from Salice, as she did from me. I returned to the bathroom and remembered picking up the Lesson card from the night before. Out of curiosity I read the title again, 'I could see peace instead of this, and remembered the choice I had to be right or happy. I became still for a moment and this time I chose to be happy. I felt the impulse to share what was happening to me with Salice. She was sitting quietly at the table and as I sat down next to her I said, 'I want to let you know that Im not handling my side of this dispute very well. At this statement Salice began to cry and we began to share honestly with each other how we had been feeling.

Through this process we were able to understand each others fear and found ourselves quickly moving into a state of mutual openness, care and affection. In the language of the Course, we had joined and felt at peace. At these moments I always wonder why I choose to be right and not happy. However, I am also aware that it is taking me a shorter time to forgive than it has done in the past. What would upset me for days may only last a few hours now. I am also aware that some issues which triggered pain in me in the past no longer affect me. Progress on the spiritual path may be measured by how much of the day is spent listening to the ego compared to the voice of the Holy Spirit.

[reprinted from "[Healing the Cause - A Path of Forgiveness](#)" Findhorn Press. ]

At the start of Chapter 30 in the Text will be found a set of very practical rules on how to achieve a peaceful day. Actually, only the first rule is needed and reminds you, once again, that you only have a choice of listening to two counsellors in your mind - the ego or the Holy Spirit. And only the Holy Spirits counsel will give you peace.

## *Rules for Decision*

*Rule 1 - Today I will make no decisions by myself.*

We are always taking advice, either from the ego or the Holy Spirit. Here we are being asked to ask advice from the Holy Spirit.

*Rule 2 - If I make no decisions by myself, this is the day that will be given me (peaceful).*

To help reinforce your learning Jesus uses rule 2 as a reminder, to be used throughout the day.

*Rule 3 - I have no question. I forgot what to decide.*

A major problem to be avoided is setting up your own answers to a problem which you then ask the Holy Spirit to choose between. Humility is required of us here, a willingness to be open to any answer the Holy Spirit gives us - not just the ones we want to hear.

*Rule 4 - At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now.*

Rules 4 to 7 are ways to return to your goal of a peaceful day if you have started listening to the voice of the ego again.

*Rule 5 - And so I hope I have been wrong.*

*Rule 6 - I want another way to look at this.*

*Rule 7 - Perhaps there is another way to look at this.*

*What can I lose by asking?*

*I want the peace of God.  
To say these words is nothing.  
But to mean these words is everything.  
If you could but mean them for just an instant,  
there would be no further sorrow possible for you in any form; in any place or time.  
Heaven would be completely given back to full awareness,  
memory of God entirely restored, the resurrection of all creation fully recognized.*

W-pI.185.1.1:4

## Q. CREATING OUR OWN REALITY

I was recently asked the question "To what extent do we create our own reality over a lifetime?". This is an interesting topic and brings up the old issue of free will versus predetermination. A number of present day teachers stress that everything is predetermined; we are simply pawns in God's great cosmic play. Some people are created as murderers whilst others are their victims and neither one has any choice in the matter. The Course, however, stresses we do have choice although its not infinite. To understand the Course's position we need to go into its teachings on time which means looking first at the metaphysics of the Course. After that we can look at what the Course says about decision-making.

### Time

Jesus states we need new ideas about time but also says how difficult it is for us to understand these ideas. Linear time is what we take as the truth, whilst Jesus tells us that time is holographic - everything is happening in one moment.

The ego uses time to preserve itself. It tells us that in the past we decided to separate from God and achieved this. To save us from the resulting overwhelming guilt, it advised us to deny this ever happened. This imagined sin in the past is experienced in the present as guilt leading to a fear of punishment in the future. All our fear stems from this unconscious guilt from a separation that never really happened.

In contrast the Holy Spirit reminds us that the "tiny mad idea" (see below) of separation was undone by the Holy Spirit the moment it was thought.

*God gave His Teacher to replace the one you made, not to conflict with it. And what He would replace has been replaced. Time lasted but an instant in your mind, with no effect upon eternity. And so is all time past, and everything exactly as it was before the way to nothingness was made. The tiny tick of time in which the first mistake was made, and all of them within that one mistake, held also the Correction for that one, and all of them that came within the first. And in that tiny instant time was gone, for that was all it ever was. What God gave answer to is answered and is gone. A Course in Miracles T-26.V.3:1-7*

In that "tiny tick of time" the whole universe was born, evolved and died along with all the thoughts we experienced.

"All thinking produces form at some level." (T-2.VI.9:14), and so all these thoughts manifested in time and space. This is somewhat similar to parallel universes hypothesised by some quantum physicists - that all possible results of an experiment exist and the participating scientist chooses one of them to manifest. Although everything was corrected in that original instant we have chosen not to accept the Holy Spirit's correction and perversely continue as if we are still special individuals separated in space and linear time.

*The world of time is the world of illusion. What happened long ago seems to be happening now. Choices made long since appear to be open; yet to be made. What has been learned and understood and long ago passed by is looked upon as a new thought, a fresh idea, a different approach. Because your will is free you can accept what has already happened at any time you choose, and only then will you realize that it was always there. For we but see the journey from the point at which it ended, looking back on it, imagining we make it once again; reviewing mentally what has gone by.*  
TM-2.3:1-5

To help make this a bit clearer I will use a couple of analogies. There are currently available novels which give the reader a choice of which plot to develop. At the end of each chapter you choose from several plots; for example, if the hero gets married or decides to stay single. You are then directed to the appropriate page and the story continues based on your previous choice of plot. A multiple, but not infinite, story line. In that original instant of seeming separation we also had an enormous, but not infinite, number of stories which we now reviewing in our time and space theatre.

Dr Kenneth Wapnick, in his excellent book, *A Vast illusion - time according to a Course in Miracles*, uses the analogy of the VCR. The sleeping son of God or decision-maker is sitting there watching video tapes of what occurred in that "tiny tick of time". He has a choice between two huge and equal piles of video tapes - the ego tapes and tapes of their correction by the Holy Spirit. One of the correction tapes is entitled 'Atonement' in which the sleeping son of God finally wakes up and joyfully realises he never left his Father's home and that time and space are illusions. At this point he stops the pointless practice of viewing videotapes of what has already occurred.

The purpose of the spiritual path is to speed the time of awakening. As Jesus states a few times in the workbook, we could save thousands of years (many reviews of ego tapes) if we did a particular lesson correctly. Thus time can be collapsed through forgiveness. As an example, your partner may suddenly die and leave you heartbroken. In that original instant you may have had two thoughts - to turn to drugs to alleviate the pain or dedicate your life to finding a peace that no death can take away - the choice of two videos to review. If you turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance He will urge you to review the latter and so save time.

We do not wish to see the power of our mind for then we would know that we are choosing what happens in our lives. It would be impossible to feel a victim, blame others or to experience justified anger - all things our egos love and use to maintain the ego. The Course tells us that the ego overcomes this problem by first making a decision and then immediately denying it has made it. For example, faced with a difficult decision you turn to the ego for help. It might suggest you avoid the problem by getting sick. You, the decision-maker, decide it's good advice and choose to get flu and retire to bed and thus postpone the difficult decision. The moment you decide to get the flu you immediately deny making the decision. You can no longer be blamed for postponing the decision as you are the unfortunate victim of a flu virus and are no longer in a condition to make appropriate decisions.

Due to our fixation with linear time it is hard for us to realise that all our problems are solvable instantly. The correction video has always existed and we need not delay in reviewing it.

*I seem to have problems only because I am misusing time. I believe that the problem comes first, and time must elapse before it can be worked out. I do not see the problem and the answer as simultaneous in their occurrence. That is because I do not yet realise that God has placed the answer together with the problem, so that they cannot be separated by time. The Holy Spirit will teach me this, if I will let Him. And I will understand it is impossible that I could have a problem which has not been solved already. W-pI.90.3.*

This also relates to the teachings in the text about the Laws of Chaos where it states there is no hierarchy of illusions, no order of difficulty in miracles. Any problem, irrespective of its seeming magnitude, has already been corrected and is simply waiting acceptance. Our job is to turn to the Holy Spirit and ask His advice on what video to review thus speeding the time to when we review, the Atonement video wherein we awake from this dream of separation.

*To you who still believe you live in time and know not it is gone, the Holy Spirit still guides you through the infinitely small and senseless maze you still perceive in time, though it has long since gone. You think you live in what is past. Each thing you look upon you saw but for an instant, long ago, before its unreality gave way to truth. Not one illusion still remains unanswered in your mind. Uncertainty was brought to certainty so long ago that it is hard indeed to hold it to your heart, as if it were before you still. T-26.V.4*

Some of the above material has been extracted from an article entitled "[Collapsing Time](#)"

## **Decision Making**

I was recently asked if our house in Australia is to be the Australian Centre for Inner Peace? I replied that it was too small to be a centre although it could accommodate small workshops. I would like to use the theme of this article to explore this question further. Can I and should I start a centre for inner peace? Drawing upon the metaphysics of the Course I find I can only relive what occurred in the "tiny tick of time" If a 'video tape' of an Australian centre for inner peace does not exist there is absolutely nothing that anyone can do to create a centre for we can only review what has already happened. If there is a video tape existing I still have to choose to replay it. The only criterion for replaying it is if it would help or hinder my awakening. Jesus does not ask us to spread the word about A Course in Miracles but "to accept the atonement for ourselves" - that is, to awake from the dream of time and space and separation. I can't possibly know if it's in my highest interests to have a physical centre so I must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. If there is a rightness about the project I must wait for the right timing and opportunity. If there is to be a centre at some point I will become aware of something new in my life, some current or flow that is asking me to move in a particular direction and I need to embrace it and

flow with it. I have thus made a decision to accept this new direction although I do not know the final destination or the timing. The journey will be as important as the the destination on my path of forgiveness.

Every moment we are making decisions, in this we have no choice. Where we do have choice is with whom we make the decisions. No decision is made simply by ourselves. We always turn to the ego or the Holy Spirit for counsel.

*And yet, you cannot (underlined) make decisions by yourself. The only question really is with what you choose to make them. That is really all. .... You will not make decisions by yourself whatever you decide. For they are made with idols (ego) or with God. And you ask help of anti-Christ (ego) or Christ, and which you choose will join with you and tell you what to do. T-30.I.14:3-9*

It is here we create our own reality by choosing either the ego or the Holy Spirit as our advisor on which 'video' to review. The number of 'videos' we have to choose from is fixed and will depend on the number of choices we originally had in that "tiny tick of time". This is the predetermination part of the equation. Which 'video' we choose to review is where our free will comes into play. Our last act of free will will be to give it up and rely totally on the Holy Spirit's guidance. Only then will we experience peace as we drop forever our ego plans for happiness.

*A healed mind does not plan. It carries out the plans that it receives through listening to Wisdom that is not its own. It waits until it has been taught what should be done, and then proceeds to do it. It does not depend upon itself for anything except its adequacy to fulfil the plans assigned to it. It is secure in certainty that obstacles cannot impede its progress to accomplishment of any goal that serves the greater plan established for the good of everyone. Lesson 135*

To release control of steering our own boat through life and pass the tiller to a higher power is perhaps the hardest of our lessons to learn. Jesus says it was his final lesson:

*It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice (Holy Spirit) and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn. It is the final lesson that I learned, and God's Sons are as equal as learners as they are as Sons. T-5.II.3:9-11*

However, each day we can practise asking the Holy Spirit which 'videos' He would prefer us to review so that we can collapse time and speed the day we choose to review the wake up video of the atonement and remember our spiritual reality and our true home in heaven.

## R. OPENING TO THE LIGHT

*Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all.*

*from A Course in Miracles W-pI.188.1:1-4*

The light, love and joy of God are ever present and wait only our acceptance. We need not earn them as they were freely given at our creation. Nor is sacrifice or suffering required. So why do we rarely experience the light?

Within the illusion of time we long ago decided separation was preferable to oneness. We entered space and time seeking happiness outside ourselves. That we have not succeeded is obvious - one look at the world clearly shows this. However, we are still optimistic and carry on searching for that elusive peace and joy. At times we find it only to see it slip away from our grasp. Our ego encourages us to keep trying not mentioning its real goal is to ensure we never succeed.

*I have said that the ego's rule is, "Seek and do not find." Translated into curricular terms this means, "Try to learn but do not succeed." T-12.V.7:1-2*

The ego is the thought of separation that we, the sleeping Christ, have created. It lives as long as we give it power and we will continue to do this while we think it serves us. It wants to continue and thus seeks ways to keep us believing it's worth keeping. As we begin to slowly realise that following the ego's thought system of separation brings only pain we start to turn to the Holy Spirit in our mind for help. We start to open to the light.

*Tolerance for pain may be high, but it is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way. As this recognition becomes more firmly established, it becomes a turning point. T-2.III.3:5-7*

## OBSTACLES TO THE LIGHT

The ego becomes alarmed at the direction we are starting to take and counsels us to return to him. He warns us that the Holy Spirit works for God and don't we remember we broke up Heaven, took God's power and set ourselves up in time and space where we hope God will not find us and exact his just revenge!

I have watched participants on workshops having some form of experience that brings them closer to God's love and light and then a short time after they experience some fear, depression or sickness.

*As the light comes nearer you will rush to darkness, shrinking from the truth, sometimes retreating to the lesser forms of fear, and sometimes to stark terror. But you will advance, because your goal is the advance from fear to truth. T-18.III.2:1-2*

On the one hand we are starting to tire of the ego's ways of attack, judgement, justified anger and victimhood but are terrified of losing our sense of identity, specialness and individuality. We are strongly attached to thinking we are a body with important roles and ambitions in the world. The notion of spiritually advancing and finally sitting on the right hand of God is very appealing. But notice something about this picture. You are still there! Duality has crept into the oneness of Heaven. This is the ego's version of spiritual growth - you take him with you to God.

In the fifth stage of the "Development of Trust" in the Manual for Teachers Jesus tells us we will all go through a "Period of Unsettling". Although we are close to the top of the ladder of trust, the Real World, we may remain a "long, long time" at this penultimate stage. Why? We need to willingly release the sense of "I", of a "me" before we can return home.

Peace and joy exist only in the state of oneness or union with God. To know this means releasing our investment in the ego's thought system of separation. Our dilemma is illustrated in the following story.

A man is swinging on a trapeze. He knows this trapeze well but is starting to tire of it. He is not happy where he is and knows he must change something. Suddenly he sees an empty trapeze swinging backwards and forwards in front of him. On closer inspection he sees his name written on the bar. He knows he must let go of his familiar trapeze before he can grasp the new one. His fear of the new and the death of the old make him want to hold onto the old trapeze with one hand whilst trying to grab the new one. An impossible task. Likewise, the ego still has a powerful hold on us whilst we are being drawn ever more strongly to the light of the Holy Spirit.

The "Obstacles to Peace" in Chapter 19 of the ACIM Text spells out the various arguments the ego will use to persuade us to stay with him. He tells us the body is valuable for what it offers and that pain "proves" that it is real and the Holy Spirit is a liar when He says it's an illusion. Death is further "proof" that the body is real and separate from God. Our attraction to guilt, attack, hate and anger also act as a defense to experiencing the love of God, which would lead to the death of the ego. The ego warns us that God is waiting at the end of our spiritual path to exact his justified vengeance (so don't go there!) Better to get caught up in the world's ambitions, know the body is the only reality and don't rock the boat.

As we slowly start to desert our ego its cries will follow us until that day dawns when we finally give up all investment in its illusions.

And the illusions subtly change. Seeing through the cruder illusions of the e.g. (that materialism will bring us happiness), we then fall into the trap of spiritual materialism. Yearning for God and enlightenment can keep us trapped for a long time.



*The desire for truth is the highest of all desires, yet, it is still a desire. All desires must be given up for the real to be.....When all search ceases, it is the Supreme State.*  
from *I Am That* by Nisargadatta Maharaj.

Knowing we will experience fear and ambivalence on our journey is very helpful. The journey back to God is not sweetness and light. As the ego continues to rear its ugly head we can start to practise forgiveness.

## FORGIVENESS

*Forgiveness, on the other hand, is still, and quietly does nothing. It offends no aspect of reality, nor seeks to twist it to appearances it likes. It merely looks, and waits, and judges not.* W-pII.1.4:1-3

This quotation is asking us to look quietly at our ego and not to fix them or improve it. We are asked not to hate or love it for it is nothing, simply the absence of love which is awaiting our welcome. It must wait while we welcome the ego instead. The ego, not being real, merely needs to be observed without judgement. As we learn slowly to maintain a witness attitude to our ego's behaviour we remove our investment from it and it begins to fade. Starved of attention and guilt its food supplies shrivel and it must start to lose its grip on our minds. But as soon as we feel guilty about its behaviour or thoughts we are saying to it, "You are real, I believe in you".

This is our day in and day out practice. Not yearning for God or enlightenment. Just watching our mind and not judging what we see while asking the Holy Spirit/Jesus for help in seeing the situation peacefully. Slowly we start to smile at the ego's goings-on. "Oh, I see I want to throttle the driver who just cut me off on the road. That reminds me of the anger I felt yesterday when someone jumped the queue I was waiting patiently in. So what's new!"

Many times we will forget to forgive and ask for help. On seeing this we can still learn to smile at our lack of practice, to forgive ourselves for not forgiving.

I recently saw someone had summarised my AAA approach to forgiveness and include it below.

### 1. AWARENESS

What is denied cannot be forgiven. Awareness of our inner world is as important as awareness of our outer world. Our egos will fight our attempts to become more aware of our darker sides. Watch thoughts without judgment - develop a "compassionate witness." The ability to watch thinking means we are not our thoughts.

### 2. ACCEPTANCE

What you resist persists. Acceptance dissolves guilt. Acceptance invites healing and change. Change is feared and can block forgiveness.

### 3. ASKING FOR HELP

Awareness and acceptance are our responsibility. A genuine desire for peace invites healing. Our inner guide completes the forgiveness process and will choose the form forgiveness takes: our job is to surrender to its guidance.

Reprinted from [www.care2.com](http://www.care2.com) - adapted from *The Findhorn Book of Forgiveness*, by Michael Dawson

As we practise our daily forgiveness lessons the wall of the ego starts to fade revealing God's light behind it - a light incapable of destruction, only of being hidden. The fear of God's love for us, which will dissolve our egos, begins to fall away and we understand and follow Jesus's guidance at last:

*My brother, you are part of God and part of me. When you have at last looked at the ego's foundation without shrinking you will also have looked upon ours. I come to you from our Father to offer you everything again. Do not refuse it in order to keep a dark cornerstone hidden, for its protection will not save you. I give you the lamp and I will go with you. You will not take this journey alone. I will lead you to your true Father, Who hath need of you, as I have. Will you not answer the call of love with joy? T-11.in.4.*

## S. ANOTHER WORLD AWAITS US

*You dwell not here, but in eternity.  
You travel but in dreams, while safe at home. T-13.VII.17:6-7*

The above quote so beautifully tells us that this world is not our home. It is pointless to try to find permanent peace and joy in what the world has to offer. How can a dream satisfy? To pursue pleasure automatically brings pain. They are two sides of the same coin. First there is the fear that we will not attain what we crave. If we do attain it we will fear to lose it or grow tired of our prize and start searching over again. This very search for satisfaction blocks the awareness that God has given us everything at our creation.

The Course explains to us that in our desire for something different, to play at being God and become individuals we had to fall asleep in Heaven. It is only in the dream state we can achieve our desire for separation. To maintain the illusion that we have really achieved our goal of separation we need to make our dream seem very solid. The section in the Text on the Obstacles to Peace states how attached we are to the body, guilt, pain and death for they seem to make this world real. Just one look at what is portrayed in the media will show us what we give our interest to. There is nothing like pain to make this world true and what the Course states as truth a lie. We pursue our relationships of 'special hate' (choosing someone to project our guilt onto) and 'special love' (needy relationships used as a substitute for God's love) as they are are our best safeguard from waking up and returning to the awareness of God's love for us which would shatter our precious dream of individuality.

*All your time is spent in dreaming. Your sleeping and your waking dreams have different forms, and that is all. Their content is the same. They are your protest against reality, and your fixed and insane idea that you can change it. In our waking dreams, the special relationship is your determination to keep your hold on unreality, and to prevent yourself from waking. And while you see more value in sleeping than in waking, you will not let go of it.  
A Course in Miracles T-18.II.5:12-20*

Sometimes something happens to shake the reality of our collective dream and fear is the usual result. I can remember watching a play on television that had caught my attention. Suddenly part of the picture broke up and the face of the actor speaking became a series of small squares. I felt a fear go through me that what I was so intently watching a moment ago was simply an illusion. I used to teach electronics and understood how pictures are displayed on a cathode ray tube. I also knew how distortions could occur just like the one I had seen. But none of this knowledge prevent the small wave of fear that swept through me. What I had been reminded of was that what I had taken for reality had dissolved for a moment. I could sense that I did not want my everyday world to start shaking at the

edges, for the illusion to reveal itself as it is. As we start to awaken from the dream of separation and another world becomes apparent our egos become terrified. What should be an uplifting experience may well become a terrifying one. Jesus warns us early in the study of the Text that:

*This is a course in mind training. All learning involves attention and study at some level. Some of the later parts of the course rest too heavily on these earlier sections not to require their careful study. You will also need them for preparation. Without this, you may become much too fearful of what is to come to make constructive use of it. However, as you study these earlier sections, you will begin to see some of the implications that will be amplified later on.*

T-1.VII.4:1-6

In the film The Matrix we are shown a world after a war between humans and super intelligent robots where the robots are the winners. The robots still need the humans to live so they are bred in farms and kept asleep. The humans are programmed with a collective dream so they don't realise what's happening to them. The dream seems very realistic and they have no knowledge of their real state. Except for a few humans however, who have succeeded in waking up and escaping from the farm. These awake ones have found a way to enter the collective dream of the other humans and offer them the opportunity to awake as well. As you might imagine, the sleeping ones have a hard time believing the story of the awakened ones and are not sure if it's worth the trouble of waking up.

Jesus has taken on the same role of the awakened ones in The Matrix. He enters our dream (when we invite him) and attempts to teach us that we are asleep and that another world, what the Course call the Real World awaits us. He knows we would be petrified to wake up in one go, even though we may ask for this, and instead gradually leads us from nightmares to happy dreams of forgiveness until we can finally wake up to the perception of the Real World. Now we have become lucid dreamers where we know what we see is a dream and that nothing in it can harm us, become a cause for fear, give us peace or take it away. We see everyone in the dream through the Holy Spirit's judgement as either extending love or asking for it. The Real World is not Heaven but its reflection here in time and space.

*The path becomes quite different as one goes along. Nor could all the magnificence, the grandeur of the scene and the enormous opening vistas that rise to meet one as the journey continues, be foretold from the outset. Yet even these, whose splendor reaches indescribable heights as one proceeds, fall short indeed of all that wait when the pathway ceases and time ends with it.*

M-19.2:5-7

So how can we wake up from our present nightmares into the perception of the Real World? We simply have to want to above all else. And here lies the problem. Parts of our current dream are seen as undesirable and increasingly so. We gradually become disillusioned with what the ego's world has to offer although once we pursued it with great intent. We start to see the prizes that world offers us come at to higher price - our

peace of mind. But parts of the dream still appeal and these we still want. We may see through the deceptions of materialism, status, power, money, ambition, etc. but still be snared by other attractions including the so called spiritual. Perhaps we yearn for a spiritual soul mate, to be seen as spiritual, to find fulfillment in healing and teaching others. But as the Course warns:

*Anything in this world that you believe is good and valuable and worth striving for can hurt you, and will do so. Not because it has the power to hurt, but just because you have denied it is but an illusion, and made it real. And it is real to you. It is not nothing. And through its perceived reality has entered all the world of sick illusions.*

T-26.VI.1:1--5

Notice the use of the word 'anything'! Any dream, no matter how holy-sounding, is still a trap from waking up to who we really are - the one Christ, the formless eternal spirit that was never born and hence can never die. That is why Jesus never asks us to pursue some goal in the world but to wake up from the dream of separation (what the Course calls accepting the atonement for ourselves). All dreams must finally be given up and the illusion of sacrifice that usually accompanies this thought must be seen through as another ego ploy to delay our awakening.

*You cannot dream some dreams and wake from some, for you are either sleeping or awake. And dreaming goes with only one of these. The dreams you think you like would hold you back as much as those in which the fear is seen. For every dream is but a dream of fear, no matter what the form it seems to take.*

T-29.IV.1:7-8, T-29.IV.2:1-2,

For many of us, as we get older, the world has less and less to offer us and the message of the Course has an increasing appeal. But still there are aspects of the world that hold our attention and to let these go seems to be a sacrifice. The Development of Trust section in the Manual for Teachers highlights this. Of the six stages in gaining trust four are described as difficult with the illusion of sacrifice being the dominant hindrance to achievement of trust. At the fifth stage of the development of trust we are asked to let go the very individuality we prize so highly. The loss of 'I' is seen by our ego as committing suicide and our resistance to that step is enormous, a true dark night of the soul.

The world can teach no images of you unless you want to learn them. There will come a time when images have all gone by, and you will see you know not what you are. It is to this unsealed and open mind that truth returns, unhindered and unbound. Where concepts of the self have been laid by is truth revealed exactly as it is. When every concept has been raised to doubt and question, and been recognized as made on no assumptions that would stand the light, then is the truth left free to enter in its sanctuary, clean and free of guilt. There is no statement that the world is more afraid to hear than this:

I do not know the thing I am, and therefore do not know what I am doing, where I am, or how to look upon the world or on myself.

*Yet in this learning is salvation born. And What you are will tell you of Itself.*

T-31.V.17:1-8

Increasingly the world is simply seen as a classroom of forgiveness. A place where relationships of every sort reflects back to us what is unhealed in our own minds - the only place where forgiveness is needed. As we practise our daily lessons of forgiveness our sense of separation slowly diminishes along with our ego identity.

The attachment to being a separate individual is the last dream to let go before we awake to the everlasting peace and joy of the Real World and wonder why we delayed so long to enter it!

## T. RESISTING THE COURSE

Over the years that I have been teaching A Course in Miracles I have heard many accounts of people's difficulty in studying the Course. They illustrate the strong ambivalence many (all?) students have to studying and putting into practice its teachings. These include starting to study and then putting the book down and forgetting it, only reading the Workbook, and getting angry at the book (including destroying it or throwing it away). Some students try to change the Course to make it more acceptable to their egos. Examples include denial (where certain parts of the Course, especially the metaphysics, are not seen), reading Jesus out of the Course and altering its language. Other students may become preoccupied with such questions as "Why did the separation occur?", forgetting that if we practise our daily forgiveness lessons we will receive an experience that will answer all our questions (C-in.4:4-5).

Helen Schucman, who channelled the Course, also exhibited strong ambivalence to taking down the Course and practising forgiveness. She writes of this in her poem Bright Stranger:

*Strange was my Love to me. For when He came  
I did not know Him. And He seemed to me  
To be but an intruder on my peace.  
I did not see the gifts He brought, nor hear  
His soft appeal. I tried to shut Him out  
With locks and keys that merely fell away  
Before His coming. I could not escape  
The gentleness with which He looked at me.  
I asked Him in unwillingly, and turned  
Away from Him. But He held out His hand  
And asked me to remember Him. In me  
An ancient Name began to stir and break  
Across my mind in gold. The light embraced  
Me deep in silence till He spoke the Word,  
And then at last I recognized my Lord.*

*from The Gifts of God*  
Foundation for Inner Peace

This beautiful poem applies to us all. One part of us, our right mind, welcomes Jesus's help while another part of us, the wrong mind, wants to shut him out. Our egos happy to ask him for things of this world like health, the right partner, money, etc., but we don't want him to lead us out of this world to where he is.

Jesus is well aware that in studying his Course we will become fearful at times and actively resist it.

*This course has explicitly stated that its goal for you is happiness and peace. Yet you are afraid of it. You have been told again and again that it will set you free, yet you sometimes react as if it is trying to imprison you. You often dismiss it more readily than you dismiss the ego's thought system. To some extent, then, you must believe that by not learning the course you are protecting yourself. And you do not realize that it is only your guiltlessness that can protect you.*

*A Course in Miracles T-13.II.7:1-6*

*Your mind is no longer wholly untrained. You are quite ready to learn the form of exercise we will use today, but you may find that you will encounter strong resistance. The reason is very simple. While you practice in this way, you leave behind everything that you now believe, and all the thoughts that you have made up. Properly speaking, this is the release from hell. Yet perceived through the ego's eyes, it is loss of identity and a descent into hell.*

*W-pI.44.5:1-6*

I saw a cartoon once that showed two doors. Above the first was written "Lecture on Heaven". In front of this door was a long queue of people. The door next to it had the sign "Heaven" above it but no people queued to enter. The fear we have to enter Heaven is mirrored in our fear of studying and practising the Course.

The section in the Text entitled "The Fear of Redemption" gives a very clear explanation of why we resist the Course. As we progress with our learning we move ever closer to the love of God in our mind. This is the ultimate threat to the ego for it cannot withstand this love and survive. When the ego is finally shone away by God's love our precious individuality and specialness will also go and it is this which terrifies us. One part of us craves the peace of God whilst another part fears it. This translates into wanting to study the Course and leave this world behind (right minded thinking) and not wishing to have anything to do with the Course, seeking fulfillment only in the world (wrong minded thinking).

*You think you have made a world God would destroy; and by loving Him, which you do, you would throw this world away, which you would. Therefore, you have used the world to cover your love, and the deeper you go into the blackness of the ego's foundation, the closer you come to the Love that is hidden there. And it is this that frightens you.*

*T-13.III.4:3-5*

*Under the ego's dark foundation is the memory of God, and it is of this that you are really afraid. For this memory would instantly restore you to your proper place, and it is this place that you have sought to leave.*

*T-13.III.2:1-2*

Many of us start the Course hoping that we can learn to live more happily in this world. We look forward to finding the right partner or improving our existing relationship, to enjoying better health, to getting on better with people, etc. As we practise forgiveness we will see improvements in these areas eventually reaching "a period of settling down" (M-4.I.A.7), the fourth stage in the "Development of Trust" (M-4.I.A.), where we



experience a "reasonable peace". Many teachings have the goal of making our lives here more happy and fulfilling - the book stores are full of them. The Course, however, is not a coping philosophy but a transcendent teaching. In the Bible Jesus says that his kingdom is not of this world. The aim of the Course is to take us to this world, what it calls the Real World. But this means leaving our ego behind, our sense of "I". This leads to the next stage in the "Development of Trust" called "a period of unsettling" (M-4.I.A.7:1) which may last a very long time as we resist letting our individuality go and enter the Real World of oneness with God - the last step on the ladder of trust.

As we start to realise where the Course is leading us we can panic and resist its teachings. We may not realise we are resisting and point to the fact that we regularly read the Course, go to our A Course in Miracles study group and try to forgive. However, to look deeply into our ego thought system is not a pleasant experience. It's more comfortable to live on the surface.

*You may wonder why it is so crucial that you look upon your hatred and realize its full extent. You may also think that it would be easy enough for the Holy Spirit to show it to you, and to dispel it without the need for you to raise it to awareness yourself. Yet there is one more obstacle you have interposed between yourself and the Atonement....You are not really afraid of crucifixion. Your real terror is of redemption.*

T-13.III.1:1-3,10-11

To look without judgement at the hatred in our minds will take us to the darkest foundations of the ego's thought system. This is difficult enough for us to do but beyond this foundation is the love of God, our redemption, and this terrifies us even more as this love will dissolve who we think we are.

It is very helpful to realise we will fear and resist the Course as it prepares us for those moments when we just want to give it all up. Further, when we do start to get glimpses of the Real World with attendant loss of the ego we will understand better what is happening and will be less likely to succumb to fear.

Our ambivalence to the Course can become another chance to practise forgiveness. We might say to ourselves, "Here I go again, frightened of Jesus's love for me and running away again. What's new! I can learn to smile at this and wait patiently for the day when I can let him and his Course back into my life again".

*And if you find resistance strong and dedication weak, you are not ready. Do not fight yourself.*

T-30.I.1:6-7

The above quote illustrates well Jesus's love and understanding of us. He does not want us to beat ourselves up for being poor students at times but to be gentle with ourselves and our journey with him.

## U. DEALING WITH THE EGO

The Course defines the ego as the thought of separation from God. This was the "tiny mad idea" that crept into the mind of the one Christ at which it forgot to laugh (T-27.VIII.6). We asked, "Could there be something better than oneness?". "What if I became God instead of the second class son of God?" Such mad ideas could not be achieved in reality, so part of the Christ mind fell asleep so it could experience them. Not that it felt like a dream - for that would have defeated the purpose.

Time and space arose in which we could play out our desires of hiding from God whilst playing God, hoping he would never find us here and act out his justified revenge for us breaking up his heaven and leaving. In fact, we wanted an angry God for that would make our dream seem true. We could tell ourselves we had actually succeeded from breaking away from our father. In reality, however, God knows nothing of our childish dreams, for He can only know what is eternal. Sin would only be real if we could change the eternal, the Christ in us, and that is impossible. But in our dreams we feel we have much to be guilty about and the ego makes full use of this. Guilt is the food of the ego, without which it can not exist.

The ego dictates a steady stream of advice to help get us what we think we need, missing the point that the ego's real motive is "seek and do not find" (T-12.IV.1). The ego is our creation, our child, and wants to live. In giving us counsel that never works it forces us to return to him for more of the same. In time we start to suspect the motives of the ego - that he is our enemy and not our friend. This usually leads to the conclusion that the ego must be fought and overcome. Big mistake! This attitude makes the ego seem real - an example of what the Course calls "making the error real". Thus we need not try and change the ego or "improve" it. The greatest fear of the ego is not to be taken seriously. With no guilt to feed on the ego will simply "fade into the nothingness from which it came from" (M-13.1).

But if we fight (or love) the ego we have made it real. And what could fight the ego but the ego. The other counsellor in our mind, the Holy Spirit, never fights or opposes anything as He does not recognise the ego as real. The truth needs no protection from the false. Instead He asks us to simply look at our ego without judgement.

*Forgiveness, on the other hand, is still, and quietly does nothing. It offends no aspect of reality, nor seeks to twist it to appearances it likes. It merely looks, and waits, and judges not. He who would not forgive must judge, for he must justify his failure to forgive. But he who would forgive himself must learn to welcome truth exactly as it is. A Course in Miracles W-pII.1.4.*

The very seeing of what the ego advises us to do, which is always some form of attack upon ourselves (e.g. sickness) or others (e.g. anger), will eventually lead us to not following its advice. If we see that putting our hand in a flame causes pain we will not do it. No effort or practice is required.

One form of attack upon ourselves is not so easily seen. This is the ego's advice on how we can improve our image, perhaps to become more 'spiritual'. The Course teaches us we are created in the image of God. The only difference, which led to the idea of separation and hence to the birth of the ego, is that we cannot create God. He is the Father and we are His Son - the Christ. Apart from that one difference we share all of God's nature.

*The truth about you is so lofty that nothing unworthy of God is worthy of you.* T-9.VII.8.4

If we ponder this a moment we realise that any desire to improve ourselves, to be better people, is playing directly into the hands of the ego. Can we improve what God created? What we are trying to improve is our ego - our treasured image of individuality and specialness. This can only increase our sense of guilt as it reinforces the idea of separation believing what we have miscreated is superior to what God has created.

*All things you seek to make your value  
greater in your sight limit you further, hide  
your worth from you, and add another bar across  
the door that leads to true awareness of your Self.*

Lesson 128

*Deep within you is everything that is perfect,  
ready to radiate through you and out into the world.* Lesson 41

As we start to awaken from our dream of separation the ego becomes ever more subtle in its advice. We may have seen through the ego's ploy that we can achieve happiness by attacking others and pursuing material goals, but how easily he can snare us again by encouraging us to pursue spiritual goals. Looking with horror at all our character defects we vow to conquer the ego and become better, more spiritual people.

*Your worth is not established by teaching or learning. Your worth is established by God. As long as you dispute this everything you do will be fearful, particularly any situation that lends itself to the belief in superiority and inferiority.* T-4.I.7:1-3

The ego rubs its hands in glee as we take up the long path of fighting against all our newly discovered sins. The resulting guilt from our failures will be a rich source of "food" for the ego for a long time to come. Nor do we easily see that our fight to become 'good' is just a reaction to the guilt we feel at seemingly separating from our Father in Heaven. But the separation is an illusion, we are simply asleep in Heaven. There is no need for sacrifice, suffering or redemption. All that is required is a desire to wake up and leave the dream behind.

*Enormous effort is expended in the attempt to make holy what is hated and despised. Nor is a lifetime of contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at detachment from the body necessary. All such attempts will ultimately succeed because of their purpose. Yet the means are tedious and very time consuming, for all of them look to the future for release from a state of present*

*unworthiness and inadequacy. T-18.VII*

The spiritual self we are trying to cultivate will never feel adequate because it will still be the ego, but now wearing spiritual clothes. We are doomed to suffer a lack of self worth until we realise that what we are trying to create is false. How could we possibly improve on the perfection of our Christ self? It has ben nothing but a hopeless journey of arrogance.

*Do not strive for spirituality. If you do, you will block it.  
It will be prevented from coming into your life.  
That is the most difficult thing for most people to learn,  
not to get in their own way. It is already yours.  
It has always been so. Relax, be still, and you will see what I mean.  
It has never left you. Your mind, with all of its endless demands,  
has taken you away from that clarity.*  
Raymond Karczewki

Can we look at all our spiritual striving and smile at it?  
Can we learn not to take the ego seriously, which means we no longer try to change it - ours or anothers?  
Can we stop trying to be good and simply relax into a non-judgemental awareness of what our mind gets up to?  
Are we willing to say to ourselves, "I am no longer in charge of my spiritual journey. I know nothing. Please teach me."?  
Are we ready to awaken from the dream of separation which also includes releasing our attachment to the parts of our dream which do give us satisfaction?

If we can the Course promises us the peace of God. If we are not ready it counsels us not to fight ourselves (T-30.I.1.). The happier parts of the dream still call to us to stay asleep. This is not a sin, simply a painful mistake most of us are making. One day we will tire of all dreaming and finally let the hand of the ego go. Then the light of spirit will be allowed to shine in our mind, the ego will disappear and we will awake to our home in Heaven which we never left.

*The acceptance of the Atonement (waking from the dream) by everyone is only a matter of time. This may appear to contradict free will because of the inevitability of the final decision, but this is not so. You can temporize and you are capable of enormous procrastination, but you cannot depart entirely from your Creator, Who set the limits on your ability to miscreate. An imprisoned will engenders a situation which, in the extreme, becomes altogether intolerable. Tolerance for pain may be high, but it is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way. As this recognition becomes more firmly established, it becomes a turning point. T-2.III.3:1-7*

## V. DIALOGUE ON "I NEED DO NOTHING"

There is an important but oft misunderstood section in A Course in Miracles entitled "I Need Do Nothing" (T-18.VII). The following fictional dialogue between a student and teacher is designed to help make clear this section and deal with some of the misunderstandings that arise.

Q. I have been told there is a section in A Course in Miracles entitled "I Need Do Nothing" . Do you know the origin of this passage?

A. Originally that section was not in the Course. It was a message from Jesus to Helen regarding solving a non-existent problem. Helen was living with her husband on the 16th floor of an apartment block in New York. Lift operators were threatening to call a strike and Helen feared getting a heart attack climbing the stairs and being separated from her husband. She decided to stay at a nearby hotel for a week, not realising that the threatened strike was called off before it started. Jesus pointed out that she should have turned to him for the answer and not to her maladaptive solution to a non-existent problem. She needed to do nothing. (from "Absence from Felicity" by Kenneth Wapnick).

Q. Does doing nothing mean I can just sit back and relax from now on?

A. Your ego would love to see this passage as an excuse for idleness, passivity and spiritual inactivity. This is how the Course defines doing nothing:

*To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides. T-18.VII.7:7-8*

To make a place within you for the Holy Spirit is the Course's path of forgiveness. To be guided by the Holy Spirit requires the mind to be quiet so you can hear His voice. You cannot hear His voice if your mind is full of judgement, whether for yourself or others. Forgiveness is not easy. It requires vigilance, awareness and a recognition that the problem is in our mind and not in the world. This is not brought about by dozing in bed all day but in the 'classroom' of relationships.

Q. O.K, but maybe I need to do as little activity as possible during the day?

A. When the Course states you need do nothing it means that we allow Jesus or the Holy Spirit to do the doing and not us. We no longer do things on our own but allow spirit to work through us. I need do nothing does not mean you won't do anything. This could result in a very active life but as you are not the doer you no longer feel tired. Instead of working from ego energy your strength comes from a higher source. You will no longer do things from guilt and you will never be in a hurry. You will lose the sense of urgency in what you do.

Q. I am finding it hard to believe so little is being asked of me. Surely I need to pursue some worthy task in life like helping the poor or healing the sick?

A. This may be your forgiveness path in life but beware of being attached to results. If your peace is dependent on the outcome of your efforts you will know the ego is in charge and not the Holy Spirit

*Anything in this world that you believe is good and valuable and worth striving for can hurt you, and will do so. Not because it has the power to hurt, but just because you have denied it is but an illusion, and made it real. T-26.VI.1:1-2*

Q. This all sounds a bit selfish to me. Surely the Holy Spirit needs my help to make this a better world?

A. The only purpose the Holy Spirit sees in this world is as a classroom for healing ourselves.

*The sole responsibility of God's teacher is to accept the Atonement for himself. Atonement means correction, or the undoing of errors. When this has been accomplished, the teacher of God becomes a miracle worker by definition. M-18.4:5-7*

Our job is first to heal ourselves which will allow the Holy Spirit to then guide our lives making us a beacon of light and love in the world. We will then no longer be driven to fix things in the world: our mere presence will bring healing where it is needed. This does not mean we have to be perfect before we can be of help. Our work may already be in the helping professions. However, we realise that it is in this work we can learn to heal ourselves by learning to lay our egos aside and invite the Holy Spirit to work through us.

Q. But surely I will need to continue my spiritual search, my meditation and contemplation. And then there are all my faults I need to fight against.

A. Searching implies that something is hidden.

*Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all. Workbook Lesson 188.*

We were created perfect as Christ. The Christ is hidden by veils of judgement which can be removed by forgiveness.

*The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught. It does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance. T-in.1:6-7*

The workbook does contain some meditative exercises but this is not the main thrust of the Course. Forgiveness of our relationships is the main teaching of the Course with the Holy Spirit or Jesus as our guide.

*Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. .... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not.*  
W-pII.1.4:1,3

Meditation, contemplation and fighting against sin are paths but Jesus warns us they are long and tedious.

*Enormous effort is expended in the attempt to make holy what is hated and despised. Nor is a lifetime of contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at detachment from the body necessary. All such attempts will ultimately succeed because of their purpose. Yet the means are tedious and very time consuming, for all of them look to the future for release from a state of present unworthiness and inadequacy.* T-18.VI.4:8-11

Q. What about finding the way back to God? I must be responsible for the search.

A. Jesus tells us that if we think we are bodies then we are insane. That makes most us insane and how can the insane know anything of importance let alone the path back to God?

*Is it not He Who knows the way to you? You need not know the way to Him. Ask and receive. But do not make demands, nor point the road to God by which He should appear to you.* Lesson 189

We are told that our paths are highly individualistic and as such require the guidance of the Holy Spirit. By practising our daily forgiveness lessons we open more to His guidance and He will lead us home.

Q. I still need to make plans. Surely that's all right isn't it?

A. That depends on who is making the plans.

*A healed mind does not plan. It carries out the plans that it receives through listening to Wisdom that is not its own. It waits until it has been taught what should be done, and then proceeds to do it. It does not depend upon itself for anything except its adequacy to fulfil the plans assigned to it. It is secure in certainty that obstacles cannot impede its progress to accomplishment of any goal that serves the greater plan established for the good of everyone.*  
Lesson 253

When plans are needed they will be given at the right time and place. We are being asked to get out of the driving seat, to reduce the function of the thinking mind from trying to sort everything out and simply follow plans from a higher source.

J. Krishnamurti said that only confused people make decisions for there is only one right action at any given moment. The ego cannot know this but the Holy Spirit does.

Q. You seem to imply I know nothing of value and should give up all my efforts to improve myself.

A. Who are you trying to improve? If the Christ within you is already perfect that can only leave your ego to improve. If your ego is particularly dysfunctional such that you cannot survive easily then some work to make your ego more confident would be necessary. However, if you are capable of surviving satisfactorily why try and improve your ego. Surely that will only delay the time of awakening to the grandeur of your spiritual reality?

We have mesmerised ourselves into thinking we are bodies and afford them great importance. Most of our time is spent in satisfying their desires, protecting them and making them feel comfortable. Jesus refers to our body as the hero of the dream.

*To do anything involves the body. And if you recognize you need do nothing, you have withdrawn the body's value from your mind. Here is the quick and open door through which you slip past centuries of effort, and escape from time. T-18.VII.7:1-3*

Q. There does not appear that there is much for me to do. I am told I know nothing and my efforts are delaying my awakening. I am beginning to find all this rather personally insulting!

A. If it's any comfort Jesus agrees with you!

*You find it difficult to accept the idea that you need give so little, to receive so much. And it is very hard for you to realize it is not personally insulting that your contribution and the Holy Spirit's are so extremely disproportionate. You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is. Yet we have emphasized that you need understand nothing. Salvation is easy just because it asks nothing you cannot give right now. T-18.IV.7:3-7*

The Course states that all that is required of us is a little willingness. Not a big willingness, as that could be seen as an invitation to the ego to start offering his solutions (which are designed never to work). A little willingness means that we recognise problems are in our mind and not the world, that we can see them differently and find peace and this will happen once we invite the help of Jesus. Simply put, a little willingness means we look at our minds without judgement.

*You do not have to seek reality. It will seek you and find you when you meet its conditions. (Peace through forgiveness) ... You need do so little because your little part is so powerful that it will bring the whole to you. Accept, then, your little part, and let the whole be yours. T-8.IX. 2:4,5,9,10*



Q. I guess I am being asked to be more humble and confess how little I know of importance. I am beginning to sense the possibility of laying a large burden down. What a relief it will be to give up being in charge all the time! I am beginning to see my mind is a useful tool in the hands of the Holy Spirit but a weapon in the hands of my ego. Any last advice?

A. Let's finish from the section of the Course you first asked about;

*Save time for me by only this one preparation, and practice doing nothing else. "I need do nothing" is a statement of allegiance, a truly undivided loyalty. Believe it for just one instant, and you will accomplish more than is given to a century of contemplation, or of struggle against temptation. T-18.VII.6:6-8*

If you have sufficient humility, are happy to surrender to a power higher than your logical and reasoning mind and let the body lose its dominant importance in your life Jesus offers you a fast way to peace and joy.

## W. HOW CAN I HEAR MY INNER GUIDANCE?

### **What is the Holy Spirit ?**

This article is a continuation of the theme started in the last newsletter. In A Course in Miracles inner guidance is referred to as the communication to us from the Holy Spirit. Kenneth Wapnick's Glossary Index for A Course in Miracles gives the following definition of the Holy Spirit ;

the Third Person of the Trinity Who is metaphorically described in the Course as God's Answer to the separation; the Communication Link between God and His separated Sons, bridging the gap between the Mind of Christ and our split mind; the memory of God and His Son we took with us into our dream; the One Who sees our illusions (perception), leading us through them to the truth (knowledge); the Voice for God Who speaks for Him and for our real Self, reminding us of the Identity we forgot; also referred to as Bridge, Comforter, Guide, Mediator, Teacher, and Translator.

The Course is written on different levels. Sometimes the Holy Spirit is described as a comforting friend Who seems almost human. In other places He is described in a much more abstract way.

*(The Holy Spirit) is the Call to return with which God blessed the minds of His separated Sons..... (He) is God's Answer to the separation; the means by which the Atonement heals.....The principle of Atonement and the separation began at the same time. When the ego was made, God placed in the mind the call to joy T-5.II.2.*

The principle of the Atonement is that nothing has happened. We are still at home in Heaven dreaming of the separation (T-10.I.2:1). The function of the Holy Spirit is to awaken us from this dream, not to make the dream a better place by solving our practical problems here.

### **What the Holy Spirit does not do.**

*The Holy Spirit is not concerned with form, being aware only of meaning. T-9.I.10:4  
Bringing illusion to truth, or the ego to God, is the Holy Spirit's only function. T-14.IX.1:4*

In the bible, and mentioned in the Course, is the story of the prodigal son. Leaving his father's home (Heaven) in search of something more (this world) he eventually ends up disheartened in a pigsty. It would be tempting for him to pray to the Holy Spirit to improve his lot. He might ask for things to make the pigsty more comfortable and entertaining. If the Holy Spirit would grant such wishes, which is impossible, then it would only delay the joyous homecoming of the son to the father. This is an example of

trying to bring truth into the illusion and fix it up. The Course states that the only meaningful prayer is to learn forgiveness (T-3.V.6:3) for then we will discover we have been given everything and to ask for things only reinforces our sense of lack.

*You whose mind is darkened by doubt and guilt, remember this: God gave the Holy Spirit to you, and gave Him the mission to remove all doubt and every trace of guilt His dear Son had laid upon himself.*

T-13.XI.5:1

The above passage emphasises a loving God with no wish to pass judgement on His one Son who has simply fallen asleep and is experiencing nightmares. The Holy Spirit's only task is to gently steer the prodigal son back home.

*The Holy Spirit makes no distinction among dreams. He merely shines them away.* T-6.V.4:4

### **No sacrifice required**

*The Holy Spirit will direct you only so as to avoid pain.* T-7.X.3:1

There is no sacrifice involved in following the Holy Spirit's guidance except the sacrifice of our illusions. Our ego will counsel us that things will only get worse if we follow His guidance and we best rely on our experience in life to make decisions.

*(The Holy Spirit) will take nothing from you as long as you have any need of it.* T-13.VII.12:5

We particularly fear that we might have to give up our relationship, job or way of life. The Course points out that this is rarely asked. Instead we are counselled to change our perceptions of our world instead.

### **What is required of us?**

*The Holy Spirit asks of you but this: bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to the darkness if you make the darkness open to him.*

T-14.VIII.6:1-4

Our job is to be willing to look at everything in our minds without judgement. To bring all our dark thoughts into awareness so the Holy Spirit can shine them away. We cannot heal them, only the Holy Spirit. If we keep them hidden healing becomes impossible. It is not easy or comfortable to face the darkness in us as our ego will rush in to judge what we find. Jesus asks us to learn to smile gently at what we find. They are only nightmares, not sins. If we could damage the Christ in us then that would be a sin. However, our Christ nature is eternal, perfect and unchanging and thus it's impossible to be changed in any way.

*Do not leave any spot of pain hidden from the light (of the Holy Spirit), and search your mind carefully for any thoughts you may fear to uncover. T-13.III.7:5*

*(The Holy Spirit) cannot shine away what you keep hidden, for you have not offered it to Him and He cannot take it from you. T-12.II.9:8*

### **How do I know it's the Holy Spirit talking to me?**

*The Voice of the Holy Spirit does not command, because it is incapable of arrogance. T-5.II.7:1*

It is helpful to imagine the Holy Spirit as a light house in our mind ready to wrap its guiding light around any problem and show us how to be peaceful. Light houses do not do anything - they simply shine. It is up to us to avail ourselves of their help. Light houses do not command a ship to change course to safer waters nor punish those ship's captains who ignore them.

It is the ego that commands and insists we follow its advice and warns us of fearful consequences if we fail to obey it.

*It does not demand, because it does not seek control. T-5.II.7:2*

The ego always seeks to win at another's expense. Kill or be killed is its motto. The Holy Spirit wants a win-win situation where everyone benefits from His counsel. The Holy Spirit will never demand we follow its advice whilst the ego always will.

*It does not overcome, because it does not attack. T-5.II.7:3*

The ego believes we must fight to get what we want and thus reinforces our own feeling of inadequacy. The Holy Spirit does not attack because truth needs no defence, only illusions. The stronger the illusion the greater the ego defence.

*It merely reminds . It is compelling only because of what it reminds you of. T-5.II.7:4-5*

This is the true power of the Holy Spirit - the power to remind us of who we really are, the Christ. Once this memory starts to return we will laugh at the idea that attack can bring us what we want. The ego relies on argument and persuasion to get its way.

*It brings to your mind the other way, remaining quiet even in the midst of the turmoil you may make. T-5.II.7:6*

No matter how upset we become the Holy Spirit stands as a silent reminder of another way of being.

*The Voice for God is always quiet, because it speaks of peace. T-5.II.7:7*

In contrast the ego is loud and insistent. If we listen to it it will drown out the Holy Spirit's voice.

Guidance can come in many ways - a quiet knowing, a hunch, an inner voice (rare), a dream, a book, through a conversation etc.

When we first start turning within to hear the Holy Spirit 's guidance it can be difficult to hear it. The ego will dress up as the Holy Spirit and give us what we want to hear. We cannot be sure at the time if it is really the Holy Spirit and not the ego. We need a lot of practice to recognise the true voice and thus we need to be patient and gentle with ourselves otherwise the ego will return by the back door and judge you for being a poor Course student. It is only the ego that applies pressure to do things correctly.

The goal of the Course is inner peace. We need therefore to ask for guidance that will bring us peace. We will know later by observation if our decision takes us towards or away from peace. Of course, some guidance may initially lead to more challenge in our life, for example, if we feel guided to leave our relationships.

There is no point in asking the Holy Spirit to talk louder. Instead, become aware of the ego's voice of judgement and attack which are saying I would rather be right than happy. (T-29.VII.1:9) Justifying our anger blocks hearing the Holy Spirit as His guidance would counsel us thus;

*You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own* T-31.III.1:5

Our wanting to be right is our statement we rather listen to the ego than the Holy Spirit. As the ego's voice becomes quieter through forgiveness we can start to hear the Holy Spirit's voice clearer.

### **Some common traps in seeking guidance.**

At the beginning we will fool ourselves many times by getting the answers our egos want us to hear. When Helen Schucman asked for specifics e.g. the dates of death of her friends she was always wrong in the answers she received.

*It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn. It is the final lesson that I learned, and God's Sons are as equal as learners as they are as Sons.*

T-5.II.3:9-11

When we ask for guidance it is difficult to be open to any answer. Instead we are tempted to offer the Holy Spirit our choice of answers from which He can choose. However, if the correct answer is not within these choices no accurate guidance can be forthcoming.

St. John of the Cross (16th century) was quite familiar it seems with peoples illusions around guidance:

*“And I am appalled at what happens in these days — namely, when some soul with a penny’s worth of meditation experience, if it be conscious of certain locutions [voices] of this kind in some states of recollection, at once christens them all as coming from God.... This happens very commonly, and many persons are greatly deceived by it, thinking that they have attained to a high degree of prayer and are receiving communications from God. Wherefore, they either write this down or cause it to be written, and it turns out to be nothing, and to have the substance of no virtue, and it serves only to encourage them in vanity.”*

We are tempted to want to receive guidance that upholds our specialness, earthly wishes and individuality.

We need to beware of feeling enthusiasm when we think we have received guidance. Most likely we are just hearing what we wanted to hear. True guidance comes without a big fan fare - it's a quiet knowing what we must do.

Beware of signs. I may feel "guided" to go to India and seek a wise teacher feeling that would solve all my problems. In fact, I feel quite excited by the prospect. I then see a photo of India and take it as confirmation of my guidance. The ego will seek out these signs to reinforce its guidance to us.

Striving to be more spiritual is another block to hearing. The ego is back in charge. But we do not know the way to God, He does. Our job is to practise daily forgiveness, the awakening will then happen by itself.

### **Being Practical**

To ask the Holy Spirit to decide for you is simply to accept your true inheritance. Does this mean that you cannot say anything without consulting Him? No, indeed! That would hardly be practical, and it is the practical with which this course is most concerned. M-29.5

It is another trap to think we can't make any decisions without first asking the Holy Spirit.

*If you have made it a habit to ask for help when and where you can, you can be confident that wisdom will be given you when you need it.* M-29.5:8

The Course assures us that if we need plans they will be given to us at the right time. Thus there is no need to worry about the future. Jesus tells us we have been badly taught and need to resign as our own teacher (T-12.V.8:3). He also knows we find this personally insulting to be told we know nothing of true value and this will delay our progress until

humility starts to dawn in our minds.

If our days are dedicated to peace, kindness and forgiveness we open the door to being quietly led by the Holy Spirit through all of life's challenges. We are asked to have "a little willingness" to leave behind our desire to control all that happens in our lives, to stop holding the hand of the ego and instead pick up the hand of the Holy Spirit or Jesus.

*If you are willing to renounce the role of guardian of your thought system and open it to me, I will correct it very gently and lead you back to God. T4.I.4:7*

## X. SUMMARY OF A COURSE IN MIRACLES - 2

(See also [Summary of A Course in Miracles](#) from *Healing the Cause*)

### **A Course In Miracles and Forgiveness**

Reprinted from the *The Findhorn Book of Forgiveness*. Findhorn Press

by Michael Dawson [www.acfip.org](http://www.acfip.org)

#### **Origin of the Course:**

The Course came as an answer to a call for help from two people, Dr. Helen Schucman and Dr. William Thetford, professors of medical psychology at Columbia University's College of Physicians and Surgeons in New York City. They worked together in a prestigious and highly academic setting. Their relationship was difficult with each often blaming the other for their own lack of peace. One day, to Helen's surprise, Bill announced, "there must be another way" in which they could relate to each other. Helen agreed to join him to find out what this better way could be. This is an example of what the Course would call a 'Holy Instant' where, instead of seeking to separate from another, a decision is made to join in a common goal. Almost immediately Helen began to experience a heightened awareness, highly symbolic dreams and strange images which lasted three months and preceded the actual writing of the Course. She also started to hear an inner voice which she knew to be Jesus. This was a further shock to Helen who described herself as atheistic in belief. During October 1965 Jesus told Helen, "This is A Course In Miracles, please take notes". Helen described this voice in the following way:

*It made no sound, but seemed to be giving me a kind of rapid, inner dictation which I took down in a shorthand notebook. The writing was never automatic. It could be interrupted at anytime and later picked up again.* (Preface to A Course in Miracles)

Helen would take down what the voice said and the following day, before work started, Bill would type it up. This process lasted seven years with the Course being published in 1976.

#### **What the Course consists of:**

The Course consists of three books: Text, Workbook for Students and Manual for Teachers arranged in a self-study format. The text sets forth the thought system of the Course and is largely theoretical. The concepts in the text are practically applied through the 365 lessons of the Workbook, one for each day of the year. The Manual for Teachers provided answers to the more common questions a student might ask.

Two supplements to the Course were published later entitled Psychotherapy: Purpose, Process and Practice and The Song of Prayer.



### **What the Course says:**

The Course makes it clear that it is not the only spiritual path we should follow - There are many thousands of other forms, all with the same outcome (M.1.4:2). Although anyone can derive benefit from the Course it will not appeal to everyone. It is written on a high intellectual level and for most of us it requires a life time of patient study and practice.

Many Christian terms are used and there are over 700 references to the Bible. However, the Course uses many of these terms with entirely different implications. We are not depicted as sinful, guilty creatures who have displeased God and are thus worthy of punishment unless we sacrifice and atone for our sins. Instead our sinless, formless spiritual nature is emphasised. Jesus seeks to awaken us to this truth about ourselves through his path of forgiveness.

The Course's Christian context is often a problem for students. However, the Course emphasises we are never upset by what we perceive in the world but only the unforgiven content of our mind that the world is mirroring back to us. In this way we can even use the Course's language to help us with forgiveness.

A similar problem often exists for students with regard to Jesus being the author of the Course. As he says of himself:

*I am constantly being perceived as a teacher to be exalted or rejected, but I do not accept either perception of myself. .... Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world. Forgive him your illusions, and behold how dear a brother he would be to you.*

T-4.I.6:7, C-5.5:7-8

Here again we are being given an opportunity to see what the symbol of Jesus is reflecting back to us. For those wishing to explore this further please see my article [Forgiving Jesus](#).

The Course is written on two levels - metaphysical and practical. Metaphysics investigates what is truth and what is illusion. The following quotation is from the metaphysical level of the course.

*You dwell not here, but in eternity.  
You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.*

T-13.VII.17:6-7

The practical teachings of the Course seek to awake us to the reality contained in that statement.

Jesus teaches us that this universe is not our real home. What is true is eternal which means it was never born. Anything that has a beginning must have an end and as such is not real. As God is eternal so must His creations be. His creations exist outside of time and space and therefore can not be threatened by change or death. What we mistakenly take as real changes all the time and death can strike at any moment. The Course sums this up on

the first page of the Text:

*Nothing real can be threatened.*

*Nothing unreal exists.*

*Herein lies the peace of God*

T-introduction.2:2-4

Our true reality is really eternal, changeless, perfect formless spirit in complete oneness with God. What God did not create does not exist, apart from in a dream. In contrast our world is one of form, bound by time, is always changing and is far from perfect. Thus God could not of made this physical universe or know of its existence. What we take as reality, this time-space world, is really a dream from which forgiveness will awaken us. Its only value is as a classroom of forgiveness.

Of course, the world does not seem like a dream to most of us. But then our dreams last night also seemed real when we were dreaming them. Why does the Course refer to the universe as a dream? The symbology of the Adam and Eve story in the Old Testament can help us here. Adam and Eve were happy in the garden (Heaven) until an idea came that perhaps things could be even better if they ate of the forbidden fruit. This fruit is described in the Course as the thought of separation and is referred to as the ego. To be separate from God and do our own thing is impossible. But to dream of it is not. In our desire for autonomy and individuality the Course says we fell asleep so our wishes could come true in our dreams.

Into this dream we bring fearful thoughts of what we have done to our creator. Believing we have knocked God off his throne and stolen his power has left us with a strong thought that we have sinned. This thought must leave us feeling very guilty and we expect there will be a just punishment forthcoming from God. This is depicted in Genesis as God storming into the garden of Eden looking for the two transgressors who are trying to hide from his retribution behind a bush. On being caught they turn to their ego's for advice on how to handle this situation. The ego's advice is, as always, to deny and project. "It's not my fault," protests Adam, "It was Eve who tempted me". "But I was persuaded by the snake," protests Eve. It's love that makes Heaven "go around" but in our dream world it has become guilt.

Now "we travel but in dreams", forgetting we are "safe at home". We seem to have got what we wanted - separation in exchange for the oneness of God and His creation which the Course calls the Christ. Jesus describes himself in the Course as a man who remembered he was the Christ, as we all are. The Christ shares in the love and majesty of God for there is only a perfect oneness in Heaven. Heaven cannot be understood by us who only know time and space, it has to be experienced.

In this dream we strive to be happy believing that with enough time and opportunity the world will provide us with what we want. "If only I can find the right partner, earn enough money, maintain my health, live long, become successful in my job, etc. then I will

be happy," we say to ourselves. Even if all the conditions are met there will always be a lurking fear in the back of our minds that any of these conditions could so easily change. The stock market could crash, our partner may get sick, war could be declared and so forth. We seem to prefer all this uncertainty to honestly saying to ourselves, "I have been wrong. There can never be any lasting peace here. Perhaps there is another way." (T-30.I.12) And like the prodigal son, in the end all living things will decide to return to their loving Father in Heaven.

The world we have appeared to make is based on murder. We believe, in our unconscious, we had to kill God and take His power to make our world. This thought now manifests here in our dream as every living thing needs to kill something else to continue living and spend much of its time protecting itself or its young from being killed in turn. In the last century over 100 million people died in wars and many more were maimed, raped and tortured. We might say that we are vegetarians but still another life form must always die for us to continue. In contrast to Heaven (where need does not exist) ours is a world of scarcity where we fight over the resources. We need to ask ourselves the question, "Could a loving God have created such a world?" (T-13.in.3)

Forgiveness is the 'other way' which seeks to gently wake us from our nightmare of separation and murder and return us to the awareness of our true home in Heaven. This dream seems so real that without help we would never awaken. When the separation from God appeared to happen (it never did in reality) we took with us into the dream a memory of God (to borrow a phrase from Dr. Kenneth Wapnick) we could never quite forget. The Course calls this the Holy Spirit and without His help we cannot awaken. In this book I have referred to the Holy Spirit as our inner guide.

*The Holy Spirit is described as the remaining communication link between God and His separated Sons. In order to fulfil this special function the Holy Spirit has assumed a dual function. He knows because He is part of God; He perceives because He was sent to save humanity. C-6.3:1-3*

The Holy Spirit knows the truth of our oneness with God but also recognises our illusions so that He can teach us how to overlook them. Jesus is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit and is ever present to help us with our lessons of forgiveness if we but invite him in. As Jesus has transcended his ego his patience is infinite and he will stay with us until the end of time to help us all wake up.

After the seeming separation from God our minds became split into three parts, the ego, the Holy Spirit and the sleeping Son of God who has to decide which of the two voices to listen to. Although the Holy Spirit is always present in our minds ready to teach us another way of looking at the world, we fear to turn to Him for help. We think we have successfully abandoned God, broken up Heaven in the process and escaped into our self-made world where He cannot find us. To have God's representative in our mind, the Voice for God, is frightening and we prefer to turn to our ego for help. "After all, does not the Holy Spirit work for God," we exclaim! "And if we turn to Him for help He will punish us for our sins".

Without the Holy Spirit's help we are really lost as we have only the advice of the ego left. The ego is a thought we have made and, like any creation, wants to live. Its advice to us is only to ensure its own survival. Its counsel is that to escape from our dreadful feelings of guilt over the separation we need to deny the problem and project it onto the world. Until we learn to try another way we are doomed to repeat our errors. This reinforces our guilt which in turn maintains the ego thought system. The ego's 'food' is guilt and following its advice will always lead to creating more guilt.

Although we seemed to have achieved the goal of separation and individuality we are left feeling that there is something missing in our lives, we no longer feel complete. The Holy Spirit would tell us that what is missing is the oneness with all life and God. But fearing this Voice we have only the ego thought system to turn to. The ego tells us that there is something lacking in us and we can only find it by looking in the world for it. We try to fill the bottomless pit in ourselves by plunging into work, eating, drinking, sex, entertainment and above all by 'falling in love'. Another person or object now becomes our substitute for God - what the Course describes as a 'special love' relationship. As long as each person fulfills the needs of the other the couple remains content for a time. But soon as one breaks this bargain the old feeling of emptiness arises. The door over the inner pain opens again and we try desperately to close it. Our ego will counsel us to attack the other in the hope that s/he will become guilty enough to change his or her behaviour. If this fails the relationship is likely to end and another sought instead.

At this difficult time we could also turn to forgiveness instead of attack. The strife we are experiencing will seem all too familiar. We can ask ourselves, "Perhaps there is another way of looking at this situation. What can I lose by trying?" (Lesson 33) This is an invitation to bring the power of the Holy Spirit into our minds. Our partner can be transformed from enemy to saviour becoming a mirror to our guilt. The relationship is now transformed into the goal of a holy relationship where truth and forgiveness and not ego needs take first place. Nor does it take the other to think this way for it is our change of perception that will bring us peace. The relationship may still end but the forgiveness learnt will take us one more step to peace.

We do not have to learn about love, truth and joy for that was eternally given us and but awaits our welcome.(T-13.VII.9) What we do need to do is to remove the blocks to that awareness and that is the role of forgiveness. Our world is a world where perception rules. (This is unknown in Heaven - in perfect oneness there is nothing to perceive.) Our need is to correct our perception with the aid of the Holy Spirit or Jesus.

What we think is what we perceive. Believing separation to be real that is exactly what we perceive around us. But when we awaken from the dream and realise all is one we can only perceive everything as part of ourselves. To attack another will then be impossible as it will seem as if we are stamping on our own feet. Everyone here perceives a different world because no two people think exactly the same. We can observe this in ourselves when we change moods. When we feel happy the world looks a far nicer place than when

we are distressed.

Forgiveness teaches us that the world but reflects our thinking and therefore it is pointless to try to change the world to make ourselves happy. As I quoted earlier:

*Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. As a man thinketh, so does he perceive. Therefore, seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world.*  
T-21.in.1:1-7

Of course, we all have our preferences with regard to clothes, climate, food, etc., which is normally linked to our conditioning. There is nothing wrong in this. However, understanding that what we perceive in the world is mirroring our state of mind is the road to lasting peace and joy. Now we have the power, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, to change our mind about the world. We realise its foolish to blame people and circumstances for our unhappiness. Nobody and nothing has that power over us. Until this is seen we are forced to defend the world we have made up by using defence and attack. It takes a lot of work to prop up our illusions about ourselves. If we are invested in being a victim we are forced to see a world populated by persecutors just waiting to have a go at us. Our perception of the world becomes highly selective, filtering out what does not support our beliefs and selecting that which reinforces them. Life now becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

*Forgiveness is a process where we start to learn our perceptual errors and decide we wish to see things differently. As we correct our perceptions we begin to undo the blocks we have created and true perception or spiritual vision starts to dawn on our minds. The world we once saw as a hostile place out to attack us was but merely mirroring our own belief that attack will get us what we want. When we think anger would get us something of value we also believe others will be thinking the same. This must result in us feeling insecure for now we are waiting to be attacked. This is why Jesus asks us to teach what we want to learn. (T-6.I.6.)*

Forgiving this false perception immediately transforms the world we live in. Now, when others attack us we can see they think like we once did and do not realise they are actually reinforcing their own sense of vulnerability. Our new perception is that their attack is a call for our help. (T-12.I.5) Not that they are aware of this, which does not matter, it is that we are now aware of what they are doing as we have forgiven this behaviour in ourselves. Wishing to reinforce the love we feel growing within us we are happy to extend our love to those who attack us.

The form our behaviour will take we cannot know in advance, for what we have learned is under the direction of the Holy Spirit to which we are learning to turn more and more. If we are judged or attacked by another we may be guided to say something, to remain silent, to walk away - the appropriate loving response will be given if we are open to our inner guide.

To the ego the body is its home. How the body looks, what others think of it becomes of prime importance. When it is sick or in pain it is easy for us to focus on the seeming reality of the world. Now the Holy Spirit seems a liar as we say, "Don't tell me this world is not real. I am in pain!". But the body does not have a mind of its own. It must be told by the sleeping Son of God what it must feel, when it is to be born and die, whether to be sick or well. With the ego as our guide we play the game of making our body our reality. Once we change our allegiance to the Holy Spirit the body's function will change. Now the body is perceived as a loving tool of communication instead of as a weapon of attack. This will also produce gains in vitality and health. The purpose of the body will change, no longer being seen as who we think we are. Instead it becomes a vehicle in which we can learn our lessons in our daily classrooms of forgiveness.

How long this journey home takes is entirely up to us. All the answers to all our problems are existing in this present moment, just waiting to be accepted. The Holy Spirit sees time as an illusion we have made as we could have no separate world without it. The ego relies on its past experience to try and solve present problems, and always fails. The Holy Spirit's answers to our problems are like gifts just waiting to be unwrapped and received. We do not have to earn them or suffer or pray to receive them but simply want them with all our heart. The Holy Spirit will never go against our free will but will come instantly if He is made wholly welcome. (T-13.III.9) But while we think we know better and trust the counsel of our ego the gifts must wait for the day we are ready to accept them. These gifts are but various forms of forgiveness perfectly tailored to match the complexity of our problems. In time we learn His way works and will turn more and more to Him for help.

Step by step as we tread the path of forgiveness, we will be kindly and gently led from our nightmares to happy dreams of forgiveness. (T-13.VII.9) The world we once perceived as dark and threatening will start to be perceived differently. Former enemies are now perceived as our saviours as they offer us the chance to forgive what we have been projecting onto them. Our days become dedicated to finding peace through forgiveness. Our bodies gain vitality as they serve a holy purpose, no longer being perceived as our identity. When all our lessons are finally learnt we will perceive the Christ in all living things. We realise that there is nothing to forgive for what God created is perfect and needs no forgiveness. Further, having left our ego behind there is nothing unhealed to project and therefore nothing to forgive.

With forgiveness complete we enter what the Course calls 'the real world'. It is still this world but seen differently. Now we walk quietly in peace. Finding the Christ within our own mind it is now impossible to see anything else in the world. People are perceived as either giving love or asking for it. (T-12.II.1) This is the judgement of the Holy Spirit and so becomes ours. Whether the body lives or dies is not important. It will be known when it is time to lay it aside, just as everything else is known. Choice has gone to be replaced by an inner certainty and the need for forgiveness is over.

## Y. A FULL HEART AND AN EMPTY MIND

The title for this article comes from a book by J Krishnamurti.

*There is no path to truth, it must come to you. Truth can come to you only when your mind and heart are simple, clear, and there is love in your heart; not if your heart is filled with the things of the mind. ....This means that you must strip yourself of all those things and allow truth to come into being; and it can come only when the mind is empty,when the mind ceases to create. Then it will come without your invitation. Then it will come as swiftly as the wind and unbeknown. It comes obscurely, not when you are watching,wanting. It is there as sudden as sunlight, as pure as the night; but to receive it, the heart must be full and the mind empty. Now you have the mind full and your heart empty."*

*from The Book of Life: Daily Meditations with J. Krishnamurti*

This quotation contains important help on our path of spiritual awakening which I will explore in this article. An analogy found in other spiritual paths is connected with a bird flying. It cannot fly without two wings. In the same way we need to cultivate our heart qualities as well as quieting our minds. Perhaps if a bird had only one wing it would fly in circles - something to ponder on!

There is a story that illustrates the need for both kindness and insight. One day kindness and insight were walking along a river bank when suddenly a baby came floating past them. Kindness immediately jumped into the water and rescued the child. They continued their walk until a second baby was seen floating past. Again, kindness jumped in and rescued the child. No sooner had kindness and insight started to debate these strange happenings when a third child came floating by. At this moment insight ran off along the river bank. "Where are you going?" exclaimed kindness. "I am going to see who keeps throwing them in" replied insight.

A story told by Ramana Maharshi also illustrates the need for balance. A famous guru was particularly adept at quieting his mind for long periods. He had the ability to stay without thoughts for days at a time. One day he announced to his disciples that he was going into a trance for a long time and ordered water to be brought to him. However, before one of his disciples could return from the river he was already in deep meditation. As the days went by his disciples became bored and started to leave him. Eventually all deserted him. One day a few weeks later the guru came out of his thought free state and exclaimed with irritation "Where is my water!"

It is possible to achieve pleasant quiet states of mind in meditation but until the underlying judgements and grievances we all carry are exposed and forgiven the noisy mind will always return once our meditations have ceased. There is, of course, value in starting the day quietly with God. The Course recommends this in the section "How

should a teacher of God spend his day" (M-16). Starting the day this way helps us when we meet our first forgiveness challenge, which usually happens fairly quickly after the meditation ends!

When I was 16 my perception of myself and the world drastically changed. It's as if I took off my-rose coloured spectacles and saw the nature of myself and the world clearly. I was shocked to see how little love there was in me and in the world about me. Everyone seemed to be locked into their own self-interests. People said they fell in love but I clearly saw they were falling into needs. As long as those needs were met they stayed 'in love' otherwise they separated. Many years later I was to read about these dynamics in A Course in Miracles. Whilst Jesus described them in horrifying detail it was also obvious he had no judgement against the ego and its dynamics. However, my teenage awareness and insights were not tempered with kindness and compassion and I grew bitter and cynical with the world. This is an example of what the Course calls "making the error real". I was trying to fly on one wing through life and it was making me unhappy and isolated. Everyone here is looking for happiness, usually in the wrong direction, and I lost the opportunity then to extend kindness, gentleness and compassion to others as well as myself. I may have been right in my observations but certainly not happy as the Course points out (T-29.VII.1:9)

*My religion is very simple.*

*My religion is kindness.*

Dali Lama

## **An Empty Mind**

*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. (Lesson 189)*

*To learn this course requires willingness to question every value that you hold. Not one can be kept hidden and obscure but it will jeopardize your learning. No belief is neutral. T-24.in.2:1-3*

*The memory of God comes to the quiet mind. It cannot come where there is conflict, for a mind at war against itself remembers not eternal gentleness. T-23.I.1*

Identification with our thoughts is very strong. Without awareness and vigilance we will not get the insights we need to break the stranglehold of thought. Vigilant awareness leads to insight. When a child is first drawn to the beauty of a candle flame it is unaware of the dangers. It reaches out to touch the flame and is surprised and distraught at the pain it feels. The insight is immediate. She makes the connection between fire and pain and does not repeat the action. She does not turn to her mother and ask to read a book on how not to touch candle flames. She does not sign up for a workshop on the dangers of candles. She knows not to do that again. That is the power of insight. No one asks the how question



after an insight. This is why all genuine spiritual paths stress the need for awareness - to watch yourself without judgement, what the Course would call forgiveness.

*Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. .... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not. W-pII.1.4:1,3*

People caught in "how" questions can also fall into the trap of the "Yes but" mind game. No matter how many how's are given them to help their problems they are reluctant to change and continue to ask for more how's. But if they experience insight brought about by vigilant awareness of their activities there is no need for hows anymore. They simply won't repeat what's painful.

As insight develops the mind naturally becomes quieter and emptier. If you directly see that holding judgements and grievances cost you dearly in peace you will start to drop them. As space starts to be created in the mind truth has room to enter and guide your life.

*You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgment. T-3.VI.3:1*

*If you but knew the glorious goal that lies beyond forgiveness, you would not keep hold on any thought, however light the touch of evil on it may appear to be. For you would understand how great the cost of holding anything God did not give in minds that can direct the hand to bless, and lead God's Son unto his Father's house. T-29.V.6:1-2*

The realisation how little we know of importance leads the way to humility. Yes, we may know much about the ego's world of separation and how to 'succeed' here but what do we know about a lasting joy and peace that is not dependent on anything in this world? As we start to experience humility we allow the presence of the Holy Spirit to guide us out of our dream of separation and back to the awareness of our spiritual reality.

*You do not know the meaning of anything you perceive. Not one thought you hold is wholly true. The recognition of this is your firm beginning. You are not misguided; you have accepted no guide at all. Instruction in perception is your great need, for you understand nothing. Recognize this but do not accept it, for understanding is your inheritance. Perceptions are learned, and you are not without a Teacher. Yet your willingness to learn of Him depends on your willingness to question everything you learned of yourself, for you who learned amiss should not be your own teacher. T-11.VIII.3*

*If you are willing to renounce the role of guardian of your thought system and open it to me, I will correct it very gently and lead you back to God.*

T4.I.4:7

*Love begins when thinking ends.*

Meister Eckhart

## A Full Heart

*As you come closer to a brother you approach me, and as you withdraw from him I become distant to you. Salvation is a collaborative venture. It cannot be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me. God will come to you only as you will give Him to your brothers. (T-4.VI.8:1-4)*

*Let me not think that I can find the way to God, if I have hatred in my heart. Let me not try to hurt God's Son, and think that I can know his Father or my Self.*

Lesson 246

The above two quotes highlight the truth that you cannot return to peace in isolation from others. You may be able to achieve an empty mind in meditation but if your heart is not open to others, if you have not learned your lessons of forgiveness, you are a bird with one wing only.

Extending simple kindness, gentleness, compassion and forgiveness to yourself and others leads to the full heart. Practising these is a movement in the opposite direction to the ego and thus undoes the separation allowing the memory of God and who you really are to return.

*The bottom line is that kindness and gentleness to all people, regardless of their situation, should be our guiding principle.*

Kenneth Wapnick ([www.facim.org](http://www.facim.org))

The Course does not ask us to unconditionally love. To try that would only increase our level of guilt for failure would result. True love awaits us at the top of the spiritual ladder back home. We are either spontaneously capable of unconditional love like Jesus or not. There is no effort involved as it will naturally be there once the false idea of separation is gone. Until that wonderful day dawns we can make an effort to give kindness and gentleness instead of anger and judgement and we have the Holy Spirit to teach us how to do it. Effort is required until we reach the stage of no effort.

*The Holy Spirit is in you in a very literal sense. His is the Voice that calls you back to where you were before and will be again. It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn. It is the final lesson that I (Jesus) learned, and God's Sons are as*

T-5.II.3.7-11

As our heart grows we will need the wisdom that awareness brings. An open heart just wants to give but balance is needed. For example, a healer who cannot say no will eventually experience burn out. The Holy Spirit will guide us to who needs our help - He is the one who chooses which miracle we need to perform and to whom. Although someone may ask for our help the Holy Spirit will know if we are the best person to help

or whether another is better suited. We must remain vigilant to hear His guidance for us. Humility teaches us that He knows best and increasingly we pass decisions to Him. As our insight grows we realise "I need do nothing" (T-18.VII) and let Him lead the way.

*Your present trust in Him is the defense that promises a future undisturbed, without a trace of sorrow, and with joy that constantly increases, as this life becomes a holy instant, set in time, but heeding only immortality.* Lesson 135

## Z. WHAT CAN I DO WITH MY ANGER?

### The Cause of Anger.

When anger arises within us we normally respond in one of two ways, either we repress it or express it. If we choose to repress our anger we internalise its energy and project it onto our bodies causing sickness. If, on the other hand, we express our anger we project it out onto other bodies in the attempt to make them feel guilty for their actions toward us. In this way we hope to make them plead guilty for their behaviour and thus take responsibility and blame for our pain. This is summed up in the following way:

*All anger is nothing more than an attempt to make someone feel guilty.*  
*A Course in Miracles T-15.VII.10*

But if we look deeper at anger we see that underneath it is fear, and this is the real issue that must be understood. Fear is present in our minds when we expect punishment, and it is guilt that demands punishment.

Where does this guilt come from? Most of our guilt is buried deeply in our unconscious and we are not aware of it. Our guilt is like an iceberg, only a little shows in our awareness. Guilt is the total of all the negative beliefs we have about ourselves - our lack self worth, our self hatred, etc. We feel this guilt not only when we judge ourselves or others but also when we receive spontaneous appreciations and gifts. We believe we do not deserve to be treated this well. To feel guilt implies that we have judged ourselves as sinners.

*You are not really capable of being tired, but you are very capable of wearying yourself. 6 The strain of constant judgment is virtually intolerable. It is curious that an ability so debilitating would be so deeply cherished.*  
*T-3.VI.5.*

So, now we have discovered that what Dr. Kenneth Wapnick ( [www.facim.org](http://www.facim.org)) calls the 'unholy trinity' of sin, guilt and fear must lie buried in our unconscious. This trinity is the foundation of a thought system in our mind which can be called the ego. We created the ego when we first thought of trying to separate from God. The ego is literally the thought of separation and our belief that we have achieved this. Although this is impossible, we can dream that we have achieved this and that now we are in charge of everything! However, to believe that we have achieved this separation is also to believe we have greatly sinned against God - and this is the source of all our deep-rooted sense of sin. From this sense of sin comes great guilt at the thought that we are responsible for breaking up Heaven into pieces and walking out. This belief is mirrored in the bible story of Adam and Eve. When God discovers Adam and Eve have broken his command to not eat the apple Adam immediately projects the fault onto Eve and then Eve blames the snake. And it

seems the world has never stopped blaming from that moment!

God now becomes our enemy to Whom we can no longer turn for help and from Whom we expect a justified revenge for our actions. We cannot tolerate this guilt and in listening to the counsel of the ego we deny it and project it out of our minds. In this way we magically hope to get rid of the guilt in our minds by putting it elsewhere, either onto our own body or onto others. The problem of our guilt is now seen outside our minds and thus we have protected ourselves from consciously experiencing it. The problem of guilt is safely out there in the world and not in our minds. All this happens without our conscious awareness for it seems to us that we have been attacked and our anger is justified. We do not realise that our hidden guilt has been triggered by someone else and we react immediately by looking in the other direction for the cause - the world out there. Thus the ego's thought system is fully protected and our desire to remain separate from God is kept safe from inspection. Of course, the guilt is still there and will be increased when we project our guilt as anger onto another person, for at some level we know that our attack is unjustified and is designed to make another responsible for our sense of sin. Ultimately we want them to be responsible for the separation from God, not us. The ego is always looking for scapegoats.

*Anger cannot occur unless you believe you have been attacked, that your attack is justified in return, and you are in no way responsible for it.*

T-6.in.1

The increase in guilt which we feel after we have attacked someone may be felt as a state of depression. The counsel of our ego is to get rid of this guilt by further projection and thus the ego's vicious circle of guilt and attack is maintained. Our ego wants us to believe that the separation has really happened. If we ever find out that, You are at home in God dreaming of exile but perfectly capable of awakening to reality.T-10.I.2, it would be the end of our belief in the ego. As long as we believe projection will save us we will focus on the problems out there in the world, either our sick bodies or on the perceived attacks from others. Either diversionary tactic suits the ego for it prevents us looking into our minds where the source of the problem is - our guilt that is based on a false sense of sin. This explains our great investment in holding onto our anger. We think it saves us from looking at the horror of our sin and guilt that the ego has convinced us we have committed against God. While our problems are perceived outside our minds we can never be healed. Instead we demand the world changes to please us. If the world does not, we feel justified in getting angry at the person or situation 'responsible'. Our hope is that our anger will make them feel guilty and let us off the hook.

*Perhaps it will be helpful to remember that no one can be angry at a fact. It is always an interpretation that gives rise to negative emotions, regardless of their seeming justification by what appears as facts. Regardless, too, of the intensity of the anger that is aroused.*

M-17.4.

## **Healing Our Anger.**

The guilt we all carry is huge. We need to chip away at this iceberg bit by bit. Whenever we get angry, no matter what the reason, our guilt has surfaced. We now get another chance to either reduce it through forgiveness or increase it by projection, (See my article "How Can I Forgive?"). To condemn our anger plays into the hands of the ego for it will only increase our level of guilt.

When you next get angry try to accept the emotion and remind yourself that attack is never justified. And that would be great progress! I remember a time when I was registering participants in a workshop at the Findhorn Foundation. During a quiet time a colleague of mine came up to me and discharged the anger she was feeling about me and then left. I was left feeling fearful and angry and concerned about meeting the next participant in my workshop. Thinking that this was an ideal time to practise what I teach I grabbed a newspaper and held it in front of my face, pretending to read it. I then tried to accept fully the feelings I was experiencing without judging myself or my colleague. I became aware of physical sensations in my chest area and watched them with acceptance. After a while they began to move in my body and I simply watched them travel around until after a few minutes, all fear and anger had gone and I felt joyous. I even felt grateful to my colleague for a chance to practise acceptance!

*Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. .... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not.*  
W-pII.1.4

If you find yourself venting your anger at someone, try to tell them it's your problem, not theirs, and that for the moment you can't help yourself getting angry at them. In this way you are not giving so much importance to anger which means that you are taking your ego less seriously. After a burst of anger say to yourself "So what's new? I had another ego attack, that's all. It's no big deal."

As you continue to use these approaches you will steadily weaken the hold your ego has on you until you can start to laugh gently at it. When finally we reduce our investment in anger and allow our guilt to be dissolved with the aid of God's help, the love and peace of God will automatically fill our minds again. We will wake from our self-imposed dream of separation and the ego will vanish into the nothingness from which it came. And then we will realise that our anger was but a protection from the love of God.

*You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgement. When you recognise what you are and what your brothers are, you will realise that judging them in any way is without meaning. In fact their meaning is lost to you precisely because you are judging them.*

T-3.VI.3

## 1. SELF-WORTH AND SINLESSNESS

Many of us have been told, early in our lives, to make something of ourselves. We may be encouraged to perform well at school, academically or in the area of sports. Parents and friends are proud of us when we do well, especially if we excel in our studies and pursuits.

As we grow older this process continues. Now it moves to the area of our workplace. We are often encouraged to be ambitious and do well, and rise in our jobs. There is an implication in all of this that we are not perfect to start with. Otherwise, why should we try to improve what is already perfect?

This world evaluates us by how we look, how we perform, what our bodies and personalities can achieve. But what if our true reality is not the body or the personality? What if our true reality is actually perfect? What if the world has focused entirely on the wrong area and forgotten the spiritual reality of our existence?

If we are made in the image of God, and God is a perfect, eternal, formless spirit, then we too must share in those same attributes. A creator can only create like itself. Can we improve on what God has created?

*Salvation requires the acceptance of but one thought - you are as God created you, not what you made of yourself. Whatever evil you may think you did, you are as God created you. Whatever mistakes you made, the truth about you is unchanged. Creation is eternal and unalterable. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God. You are and will forever be exactly as you were created. Light and joy and peace abide in you because God put them there.*

*A Course in Miracles Lesson 93*

If we are eternally perfect there is no need to seek improvement. To do that is simply arrogance of the ego, which always thinks it knows better.

*Escape today the chains you place upon your mind when you perceive salvation here. For what you value you make part of you as you perceive yourself. All things you seek to make your value greater in your sight limit you further, hide your worth from you, and add another bar across the door that leads to true awareness of your Self.*

*Lesson 128*

This statement is so very different from what we've heard from the world. The Course asks us not to improve ourselves, otherwise it will get in the way of discovering who we really are. Attempts to make ourselves better will actually increase the delay before we truly realise who we are. So if we are perfect there is no need to seek improvement. The only thing we could seek to improve is our ego.

Every ego can be modified and people are very interested in improving their egos. One only has to walk through our bookshops, focusing on the New-Age section and self

development, and there will be a host of them offering to improve your ego - to make it more powerful, less fearful, more efficient, to be loved more, to succeed, to achieve power - the titles go on and on. Meanwhile the acceptance of our spiritual reality is waiting to be welcomed. While we seek to 'improve' our egos it must wait, until we see the falsity of our approach.

As children grow up they need to learn how to fit into this world, their egos have to be developed otherwise they would simply be autistic, and live in their own self-created world. At the beginning of our lives, it is normal and natural for the ego to develop so children can fit into society, leave home, go to work, make a living, etc. For those who have found they are unable to do this, a case can certainly be made for the need to develop the ego. If you find you have a great fear just trying to leave your house in the morning, then it is obvious that you need help to strengthen your ability to function in daily life. However, if you can go about your daily life in a reasonably competent way, then the ego is sufficient.

In time we may come to tire of the material values of this world. We may start to challenge the value of ambition, trying to get to the top of our jobs, and we might start to explore spiritual values. But further traps await us here. We may wish to look good in the eyes of others, by doing 'good works', becoming teachers, healers, write books, start centres, etc. There is nothing wrong with these things in themselves; rather, we need to look at the motive behind why we want to do these things. Do we see these activities as our particular paths of forgiveness, and therefore not special in any way, or has our ego become more subtle in its desire for recognition and praise. Have we simply moved from having a materialistic ego to a 'spiritual' ego?

*Your worth is not established by teaching or learning. Your worth is established by God. As long as you dispute this everything you do will be fearful, particularly any situation that lends itself to the belief in superiority and inferiority.*

T-4.I.7.

The Course does not ask us to perform good works, to go out and heal or teach or help the poor, unless we are guided by the Holy Spirit that these are to be our classrooms of forgiveness. The Course gives no guidance on behaviour. Instead, it asks us why we are doing it. Purpose is everything. Our only purpose is to wake up from the dream of separation from God. The earth is our classroom of forgiveness, nothing more.

The course continues:

*..... Again, nothing you do or think or wish or make is necessary to establish your worth. This point is not debatable except in delusions. Your ego is never at stake because God did not create it. Your spirit is never at stake because He did.*

T-4.I.7.



In the Text of the Course there is a section entitled "I Need do Nothing." In this powerful section we are told to lay the importance of our ego aside, and thus create a space in our mind that the Holy Spirit can enter. Here He would guide us and quickly wake us up to our spiritual reality. Doing nothing is not to be inactive and lazy but to do things with Spirit as our guide and not the ego.

The work that we are guided to do may indeed be looked upon by the world as those of good works, but we see them simply as classrooms of forgiveness. The Course reminds us:

*You are as God created you. All else but this one thing is folly to believe. In this one thought is everyone set free. In this one truth are all illusions gone. In this one fact is sinlessness proclaimed to be forever part of everything, the central core of its existence and its guarantee of immortality. You are as God created you. All else but this one thing is folly to believe. In this one thought is everyone set free. In this one truth are all illusions gone. In this one fact is sinlessness proclaimed to be forever part of everything, the central core of its existence and its guarantee of immortality.*

Lesson 191

The implication of this passage is that the ego does not exist. This is the thought form that most of us have identified with all of our lives and this is the thought that is asking to improve itself. The ego exists in a dream world, and so we can be deluded into trying to improve our dream. But the Course reminds us that we can leave the dream, as we are already perfect. There is nothing we have to do to improve ourselves because we are still as God created us.

*Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God. Over and over this must be repeated, until it is accepted. It is true. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God. Nothing can touch it, or change what God created as eternal. The self you made, evil and full of sin, is meaningless. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God, and light and joy and peace abide in you.*

Lesson 93

So our true identity, and the identity of all living things, cannot be changed or attacked. No one can take our peace away and nor can the world give us peace. We are already perfection, waiting to be revealed and accepted, when we are ready to allow it. While we seek to improve ourselves, to improve our image in other's eyes, we delay the time of this acceptance.

Only the ego can be improved, not what God created. So powerful is this illusion of separation from God, so powerful our belief in the ego and our desire to remain separate, that we must allow help from outside our deluded thought system, from outside the illusion we believe we are in.

Jesus states in the Course that if we believe we are a body we are insane. Thus we all live in an insane asylum that we are not normally aware of. We ask other people in the asylum, who are as insane as we are, what we should do to become more happy. There are many there to tell us.

What we sorely need is help from outside the asylum, from one who is sane and who could come in and point us in a quite a different direction. In the Course we have Jesus or the Holy Spirit as our guide waiting until the end of time to wake us up from the dream so we may remember that we are still as God created us.

*If you are willing to renounce the role of guardian of your thought system and open it to me, I will correct it very gently and lead you back to God.*

T4.I.4:7

We have readily available help to wake up from the dream of separation and restore our spiritual reality back into our awareness. Just think of the time this would now save us as we give up our own deluded efforts to find peace.

What a relief to finally stop worrying about what other people think of us. It's not that we do not listen to what they say as their feedback can be helpful to us. But now we are no longer trying to make something of ourselves. Now we are allowing ourselves to be guided to the realisation of who we really are, what God has created.

*Deep within you is everything that is perfect,  
ready to radiate through you and out into the world.*

Lesson 41

## 2. THE END OF SEEKING.

*Love waits on welcome, not on time,  
Release is given you the instant you desire it.  
Innocence is not of your making.  
It is given you the instant you would have it.*

*A Course in Miracles T-13.VII.9:7, T-18.VII.4:3, T-15.IV.9:3-4*

Sometimes when I am waking in the morning, I may receive some helpful advice. It's that time when one is partly awake, and partly asleep. The thinking mind hasn't fully started up, and this seems to give spirit a chance to get in. It seems spirit will take any chance that it is given! Recently, I was given a picture of the spiritual seeker on his journey back home. He was walking along this very long path, which eventually led to the top of a mountain. He was tired, but kept on moving. However, as he was moving along the path, there was a hand reaching down from above his head. This hand was trying to lift him up, into peace and joy. But the seeker could not see this hand, for he always had his eyes on the distant goal of the mountaintop. One day the seeker was so exhausted by his search he stopped on the path. He had surrendered, he had given up his search. It was then he looked up and saw the hand above him. To his amazement the hand reached down and lifted him back to heaven.

*Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all.*

Lesson188

When people cannot find peace and happiness following the goals of the material world, they often start a spiritual search. After all, if you don't search how can you find it? When I was in my 20s, I lived in London and had access to some of the best spiritual bookshops there were. I felt if I looked long enough, I would find a book that had the truth in it. I found that this searching was both pleasurable and exciting. All I had to do was follow this path and it will eventually lead me to the truth that I was seeking.

One of the teachers I was drawn to was Jiddu Krishnamurti. I had been following Buddhism for about five years before I first came across his books. As I was reading his first book I was delighted to see him putting organised religions into the dustbin. But then he put Buddhism into the dustbin! I found that very disturbing, as this thought system had given me security. Krishnamurti seemed to be against all forms of organised thought. Later I was to read the following:

*I maintain that Truth is a pathless land, and you cannot approach it by any path whatsoever, by any religion, by any sect. That is my point of view, and I adhere to that absolutely and unconditionally.*

*Truth, being limitless, unconditioned, unapproachable by any path whatsoever, cannot be organised; nor should any organisation be formed to lead or coerce people along any particular path. If you first understand that, then you will see how impossible it is to organise a belief.*

From part of the speech made by Jiddu Krishnamurti in 1929 when he dissolved the Order of the Star (his own organisation).

A path can only lead to a fixed object. What if truth is not fixed? What if truth is ever new? Our minds dislike things that cannot be labelled and categorised and nicely ordered. Minds like to be in control, it makes them feel secure.

Recently I received the following guidance:

We use our concepts of God to direct and redirect ourselves and the direction of our lives. It takes humans a long time to realize that there is no concept for God and no direction to Him. The oneness we crave dissolves the moment we set ourselves on a path. To stop in the oneness requires dissolution of ourselves, so we keep moving on our path hastily.

This guidance made it very plain that our identification with the ego - the idea that we are separate - is kept safely intact whilst we pursue the seeming noble search for God. As I get older I have a great respect for the cleverness and the subtlety of the ego. As the Course points out:

*.... the ego's maxim, (is) "Seek but do not find" T-16.V.6:5*

To seek something we must know what we are seeking, otherwise how would we recognise it? Truth is not objective, is not "out there". People who spiritually awaken, who have lost a sense of personal identity, are often surprised by what they find. It is not as they imagined.

The mind cannot know truth; it's not designed for that purpose. The mind is a wonderful tool for our day-to-day living. You could not be reading this now without its help. The American teacher Adyashanti refers to this type of mind as the "toolbox mind". If you want to study science then you will need to reach into your toolbox mind and get out the tools of reason and logic. You won't get far without them. If we try to use the toolbox mind to find truth, we will condemn ourselves to a lifetime of fruitless search and desperation.

I think most people who desire to discover their spiritual reality will embark on a spiritual search. I certainly did. By the time I was in my 30s I had collected about 1500 spiritual books. My mind had become a spiritual library. Books can be very helpful at the beginning, but at some point they become a block. This also applies to A Course in Miracles, as we can see from the following quotation from the Course:

*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.*

Lesson 189

Perhaps many of us do need to seek so we can discover that it's fruitless and put it aside. The sooner we can see the trap of spiritual seeking the happier we will be.

*This is the irony, the great cosmic joke, the great secret of "enlightenment." When the person who searches for enlightenment dissolves, then and only then is the object of the search revealed - having been obscured all along by the "me" who wanted it.*

*The discovery that "personal enlightenment" is a myth can be received as quite a shock. From my own experience I can verify that the mind and personality does not happily embrace this discovery when it is first glimpsed, for it makes one look somewhat ridiculous. All the searching, all the practicing, all the trying to "get" it, is seen as worthless, is seen as having perpetuated the illusion of "me," as having obscured what was and is already here, what all this striving and practicing is occurring in-one's own limitless Self.*

Surprised By Grace by Amber Terrell

If we are honest with ourselves we will see that we want to attain enlightenment. We want to add enlightenment to ourselves. I am now enlightened we say. In the Bible this is referred to as sitting on the right-hand side of God. Notice however that you are still there. Now it's you and God together in heaven. This is very comforting to the ego, because the ego is still alive. The ego has attained enlightenment. But enlightenment is the absence of the ego! Only when you, the me story, is gone can your spiritual reality dawn upon you. This is why we keep moving on the spiritual path. It's as if God can't hit a moving target. Seeking truth can become a game and we are happy to seek as long as we don't find it! We are no longer a material seeker but are now a spiritual seeker.

*Once you forget yourself, God remembers you: once you've become His slave, then you are free.*

Rumi

*One is more likely to awaken through surrender than through seeking to waken. The effort to awaken is the effort of ego, whereas to surrender is to give up all efforts and to place oneself in the hands of a vast force that is more powerful than any realization of non duality. When one finally gives up one's futile attempts to make reality conform to one's own wishes, and allows it to unfold on its own terms, all the energy that was tied up in foolish attempts to manipulate the universe is freed up.*

*Halfway up the Mountain - the Error of Premature Claims to Enlightenment*

by Mariana Caplan. Hohm Press 1999

All the above leads to the eventual conclusion that if you want to avoid truth, seek it! It is the ego's arrogance that thinks it knows the way to God. It first decides what God is, and

then designs a path to Him. The ego is happy for us to work with A Course in Miracles for it can make our desired goal appear a long way off and thus ensure we will remain faithful to the ego and its advice. The Course, however, thinks otherwise.

### **We don't know the way to God.**

From Lesson 189

*Is it not He Who knows the way to you? You need not know the way to Him. Your part is simply to allow all obstacles that you have interposed between the Son and God the Father to be quietly removed forever. God will do His part in joyful and immediate response. Ask and receive.*

We do not remove the obstacles, instead we become aware of the obstacles and agree to release them. These are the first two steps of forgiveness, the third is automatic - the removal of the guilt by spirit.

*But do not make demands, nor point the road to God by which He should appear to you.*

Our demand of God is to make us happy here in the ego's world. We resent God for not giving us what we want especially if we think we are faithful students of His Course

*The way to reach Him is merely to let Him be. For in that way is your reality proclaimed as well.*

We must forget about trying to change God into the one we want - a God who treats us special. Humility is needed - we have been wrong about everything - we know nothing about how to be in a constant state of peace and quiet joy.

*And so today we do not choose the way in which we go to Him. But we do choose to let Him come.*

We realise we have made a mistake in letting the ego be our teacher.

*And with this choice we rest. And in our quiet hearts and open minds, His Love will blaze its pathway of itself. What has not been denied is surely there, if it be true and can be surely reached. God knows His Son, and knows the way to him. He does not need His Son to show Him how to find His way.*

*Father, we do not know the way to You. But we have called, and You have answered us. We will not interfere. Salvation's ways are not our own, for they belong to You.*

We need to admit we have been wrong and we know nothing of the way to God. Our job is to find the obstacles to God and let them be removed.

## What can we do?

If seeking is going to get us nowhere what can we do? To we just give up? Is there anything we can seek? Yes! It's not the truth, but the obstacles to truth.

An ancient Zen master nicely summed it up when he said;

*Do not seek the truth, simply cease cherishing illusions.*

The Course states it this way:

*Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false. T-16.IV.6:1-2*

So here we are back on the seekers path! However, now we are seeking for something completely different. We are now seeking all that blocks the awareness to truth, love, joy and beauty. Thank God we can give up the search for the truth! That's what we already are. No need to find love, that's how we are created. What a relief!

*All that is asked of you is to make room for truth. You are not asked to make or do what lies beyond your understanding. All you are asked to do is let it in; only to stop your interference with what will happen of itself; simply to recognize again the presence of what you thought you gave away. T-21.II.7:6-8*

Of course, for our egos it's much more pleasant to search for truth somewhere in the future. Searching the obstacles to truth does not sound so glamorous. It's uncomfortable to look within and find anger, guilt, shame, fear, lack of self-worth, and a whole collection of unpleasant thoughts that the ego would want to deny and project onto the world.

*Conflict must be resolved. It cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind, if it would be escaped. It must be seen exactly as it is, where it is thought to be, in the reality which has been given it, and with the purpose that the mind accorded it. For only then are its defenses lifted, and the truth can shine upon it as it disappears.*

Lesson 333

*"Lead us not into temptation" means "Recognize your errors and choose to abandon them by following my guidance."*

T-1.III.4:7

The truth, peace and joy we all crave is there and will be revealed to us when we do our part. We cannot find this by our personal striving. Humility teaches us that we need help

from outside our ego's thought system. The ego wants to do everything by itself as it seeks to stay in control.

In the Course Jesus states that if you think you are a body then you are insane. The insane need help from the sane. We have that help and is just waiting for us to ask. It won't go against our free will. We do not even have to heal the obstacles we find. That will be done for us by spirit.

*Do not hide suffering from His sight, but bring it gladly to Him. Lay before His eternal sanity all your hurt, and let Him heal you. 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.7:3-6

We are being asked turn our daily life into a classroom of forgiveness. The seeker's path continues, and now it's in the mirror of relationships. Our daily interactions will often bring up what's unhealed in our minds. Underneath our unforgiveness lies the truth we have been seeking. It simply needs to be uncovered by forgiving the judgement that overlays it. Putting it simply, forgiveness is looking without judgement at our egos and other people's egos. We are not being asked to change our egos or other people's egos. That would be to make them real. Nor are we being asked to love our egos for that would repeat the same error. The ego is nothing but a thought that we still cherish. That thought is that we prefer separation and being a special individual to unity or oneness with all. However, it's only in unity we will find what we crave for.

The speed at which we return to the awareness of our spiritual reality is up to us. We could have it now if we wanted to. We need only let go the hand of the ego and hold the hand of the Holy Spirit. This would mean giving up our victimhood, judgement, justified anger, the desire to blame others, the desire to be separate and our individuality. Most of us are not ready to give up all that at once. Jesus is very aware of that and is happy to lead us step-by-step on our forgiveness path. To feel guilty that we still want to hold onto these "gifts of the ego" is to allow the ego to come back in again through a back door in our minds. Jesus asks us to gently smile at the ego and not to take it seriously.

With a sigh of relief we can now take off our truth seeker's hat and put it down. We still have something to seek, but it will be easy to find! As we notice these daily obstacles and learn to gently smile at them they will dissolve. And then the light that is underneath them will start to show through. This will encourage us to follow the path of forgiveness. No need to think anything more about enlightenment. That will come in God's time.

*Grow as the flower grows, unconsciously, but eagerly anxious to open its soul to the air. So must you press forward to open your soul to the Eternal. But it must be the Eternal that draws forth your strength and beauty, not desire of growth.*

*For in the one case you develop in the luxuriance of purity; in the other you harden by the forcible passion for personal stature. From Light on the Path by Mabel Collins*



### 3. REQUIREMENTS FOR SPIRITUAL AWAKENING

1. Desire awakening above all
2. Don't get in its way
3. Do not prepare yourself
4. Our job

The following are some of the more important requirements for spiritual awakening found in A Course in Miracles.

#### 1. **Desire awakening above all.**

What The Ego Desires.

*In this world, you believe you are sustained by everything but God. Your faith is placed in the most trivial and insane symbols; pills, money, "protective" clothing, influence, prestige, being liked, knowing the "right" people, and an endless list of forms of nothingness that you endow with magical powers.*

*A Course in Miracles. Lesson 50*

In the above lesson, Jesus lists the things that most people in the world desire and pursue. This is where salvation is thought to exist. We think that if only we had our health, enough money and nice place to live with friends to love us we would be happy. If we look at where we place most of our time and energy, we will soon see where we believe our salvation is. As that great teacher Nisargadatta Maharaj once said, if you are content to accept the lesser you will never go for the greater.

#### **True Desire.**

*How much do you want salvation? It will give you the real world, trembling with readiness to be given you. The eagerness of the Holy Spirit to give you this is so intense He would not wait, although He waits in patience. Meet His patience with your impatience at delay in meeting Him. Go out in gladness to meet with your Redeemer, and walk with Him in trust out of this world, and into the real world of beauty and forgiveness. T-17.II.8*

The aim of A Course in Miracles is for us to attain an inner peace and quiet joy that the world cannot give or take away. This is what the Course calls the real world. We could have it now if we truly wanted it. There is no need for us to suffer, sacrifice or atone for our "sins", we simply need to want it above all else. If we do not experience the real world it is because we prefer something else. We desire separation rather than union. But only in the experience of union or oneness with all living things will we experience that inner peace and joy. Our desire to be separate and special individuals blocks our spiritual awakening. In the text of A Course in Miracles there is a section on the Obstacles to Peace.

The first obstacle to peace is that we don't want it! To experience peace is to end the separation, and most of us deeply desire to be individuals.

### **Fear of awakening.**

We fear to awaken to our spiritual reality. We believe the cost will be too high. What we fear is the loss of our identity, our specialness and our individuality. The actual cost will be the end of our illusions.

*You are more afraid of God than of the ego, and love cannot enter where it is not welcome. T-13.III.5:4*

*The unforgiving mind is torn with doubt, confused about itself and all it sees; afraid and angry, weak and blustering, afraid to go ahead, afraid to stay, afraid to waken or to go to sleep, afraid of every sound, yet more afraid of stillness; terrified of darkness, yet more terrified at the approach of light. Lesson 121*

The only thing that will give us the peace we desire is to awaken from the dream of separation from God. To wake up is a decision that we must make. When we start to see that nothing in this world can give us the peace we desire we are ready to work with forgiveness, confront our fears and start the journey back home.

*The holy instant (spiritual awakening) is the result of your determination to be holy. It is the answer. The desire and the willingness to let it come precede its coming. You prepare your mind for it only to the extent of recognizing that you want it above all else. T-18.IV.1:1-4*

*Love waits on welcome, not on time, and the real world is but your welcome of what always was. T-13.VII.9:7*

*Release is given you the instant you desire it. T-18.VII.4:3*

## **2. Don't get in its way**

*All that is asked of you is to make room for truth. You are not asked to make or do what lies beyond your understanding. All you are asked to do is let it in ; only to stop your interference with what will happen of itself; simply to recognize again the presence of what you thought you gave away. T-21.II.7*

I had a friend once who was rather impatient. When we went out for a drive together I first had to unlock the passenger door. He had a habit of trying to open the door while I was trying to release the door lock from inside the car. His action invariably led to the door re-locking in itself. I had to ask him to please stand back and do nothing while I let him in.

*You make it difficult, because you insist there must be more that you need do. You find it difficult to accept the idea that you need give so little, to receive so much. And it is very hard for you to realize it is not personally insulting that your contribution and the Holy Spirit's are so extremely disproportionate. You are still convinced that your understanding is a powerful contribution to the truth, and makes it what it is. Yet we have emphasized that you need understand nothing. T-18.IV. 7.*

In our daily lives we believe that the harder we work, or the more that we study, the greater the reward we will receive. Generally speaking, this is true. If we carry this attitude onto our spiritual path we soon run into trouble. Certainly effort is required. To practise non-judgemental awareness, or forgiveness, and asking within for help requires earnestness. However, if we decide to add more to that our ego has taken over the direction of our spiritual practice. In the Course Jesus states that if we believe our reality is a body then that is a clear indication we are insane. How can the insane possibly know the way back to heaven? Our job is to realize that we know nothing, to become as little children, and allow ourselves to be led home. And each one's path is not the same as another.

*(There is, however, no set pattern, since) training is always highly individualized. M-9.1:5*

*Is it not He Who knows the way to you? You need not know the way to Him. Your part is simply to allow all obstacles that you have interposed between the Son and God the Father to be quietly removed forever. God will do His part in joyful and immediate response. Ask and receive. Lesson 189*

In this last quote we are told what our work is, and also what our work is not. We are asked to become aware of the obstacles to peace and agree to release them. This release or healing is not done by us, but by the Holy Spirit. These are the three stages of forgiveness. Firstly, we recognize the problem is in ourselves and not in the world. Secondly, we decide we no longer want this problem even though it may well have been our identity. With this decision, the third and automatic stage of healing takes place.

*But do not make demands, nor point the road to God by which He should appear to you. Lesson 189 cont.*

Our temptation here is to ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit to make us happy in our ego's world. Our prayers can be mistakenly directed to the welfare, comfort and security of our body. The Course tells us that the highest prayer is to learn forgiveness. Or we may design our own spiritual practice and insist God follows our path to us.

*The way to reach Him is merely to let Him be. For in that way is your reality proclaimed as well. And so today we do not choose the way in which we go to Him. But we do choose to let Him come. And with this choice we rest. And in our quiet hearts and open minds, His Love will blaze its pathway of itself. What has not been denied is surely there, if it be true and can be surely reached.*

*God knows His Son, and knows the way to him. He does not need His Son to show Him how to find His way. Lesson 189 cont.*

In the text of A Course in Miracles is a section on the Laws of Chaos. They describe the insanity of the ego's thought system. Here we are told that the ego in its arrogance has decided what God is and what it thinks of us, its wayward children. It describes an angry, and vengeful God which will need to be appeased by suffering, penance and sacrifice. This God often appears in the old Testament of the Bible. The guilt of the seeming separation from God, that we all carry, is easily triggered by these statements and can lead to us creating a painful and suffering spiritual path to God. The Course insists that God has never judged us for we have never truly sinned. The world we appear to be living in is a dream or more accurately a nightmare. Nothing real happens in dreams. The Spirit in us is eternal and cannot be changed or damaged and thus sin is impossible. Heaven will be returned to our awareness just as soon as we want it.

*Father, we do not know the way to You. But we have called, and You have answered us. We will not interfere. Salvation's ways are not our own, for they belong to You. L189*

*To come to the knowledge that you have not, you must go by a way that you know not. (St. John of the Cross. Ascent of Mount Carmel )*

*Reading the lives of saints and mystics may have its place in our lives, though it would be better if we had never read them. But a million times more important is our awareness of every interior movement and change, even the most subtle, because this is where it is at, this is where the Spirit is continually moving us, transforming and informing us in its own particular way. This is where we will learn everything we ever need to know, and to do this, we must clear our minds of everything else.*

Bernadette Roberts - The Path to No-Self

### **3. Do not prepare yourself**

Following on from what has been previously written, it now becomes apparent that there is no need for purification and atoning for sins before we can experience the peace and joy we desire. In fact, our seeming help to the Holy Spirit only gets in the way of our awakening.

*We have repeated how little is asked of you to learn this course. T-21.II.1*

*Trust not your good intentions. They are not enough.*

*But trust implicitly your willingness, whatever else may enter. Concentrate only on this, and be not disturbed that shadows surround it. That is why you came. If you could come without them you would not need the holy instant. Come to it not in arrogance, assuming that you must achieve the state its coming brings with it. T-18.IV*

It is the Holy Spirit that removes "sins", not us. Our task is to become aware of them and allow them to be healed.

*The miracle of the holy instant lies in your willingness to let it be what it is. And in your willingness for this lies also your acceptance of yourself as you were meant to be. The holy instant does not come from your little willingness alone. It is always the result of your small willingness combined with the unlimited power of God's Will. You have been wrong in thinking that it is needful to prepare yourself for Him. It is impossible to make arrogant preparations for holiness, and not believe that it is up to you to establish the conditions for peace. God has established them.*  
T-18.IV cont.

Thus the Course is not asking us to go out and do "good works" for God. The only good works we need do is to practise forgiveness of ourselves.

*The sole responsibility of God's teacher is to accept the Atonement for himself. Atonement means correction, or the undoing of errors. When this has been accomplished, the teacher of God becomes a miracle worker by definition. Question 18. Manual for Teachers.*

If our path of forgiveness is to do what society would call good works, we would need to remember learning forgiveness is the first aim of our work.

*In preparing for the holy instant, do not attempt to make yourself holy to be ready to receive it. That is but to confuse your role with God's. Atonement cannot come to those who think that they must first atone, but only to those who offer it nothing more than simple willingness to make way for it. Purification is of God alone, and therefore for you.  
Rather than seek to prepare yourself for Him, try to think thus: T-18.IV cont.*

What follows next can be considered as an affirmation in getting ourselves out of the way so that the Holy Spirit can do His work through us. It can be hard for us to realize that our contribution to our spiritual practice is so small compared to that of the Holy Spirit. What is being asked of us here is humility.

*I who am host to God am worthy of Him.  
He Who established His dwelling place in me created it as He would have it be.  
It is not needful that I make it ready for Him, but only that I do not interfere with His plan to restore to me my own awareness of my readiness, which is eternal.  
I need add nothing to His plan.  
But to receive it, I must be willing not to substitute my own in place of it. T-18.IV cont.*

#### **4. Our job**

*Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it. It is not necessary to seek for what is true, but it is necessary to seek for what is false. T-16.IV.6*

A Course in Miracles can be looked upon as a negative path in the sense that miracles do not do anything, they undo misperceptions. The Course asks us to resign as our own teacher, because we have been badly taught. We can use the analogy of the sun covered over by clouds. We are not being asked to find or create a sun, but simply to notice the clouds and allow them to be dissolved.

*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. And with Him, you will build a ladder planted in the solid rock of faith, and rising even to Heaven. T-18.V.2:5-7*

It is our co-operation with the Holy Spirit, and allowing Him to lead the way, that is now required.

*Never approach the holy instant after you have tried to remove all fear and hatred from your mind. That is its function. Never attempt to overlook your guilt before you ask the Holy Spirit's help. That is His function. Your part is only to offer Him a little willingness to let Him remove all fear and hatred, and to be forgiven. T-18.V.2*

*The Bible tells you to become as little children. Little children recognize that they do not understand what they perceive, and so they ask what it means. Do not make the mistake of believing that you understand what you perceive, for its meaning is lost to you.... You do not know the meaning of anything you perceive. Not one thought you hold is wholly true. The recognition of this is your firm beginning.... T-11.VIII.2.*

The implication of this last quotation is that we are all completely confused. We have completely misunderstood. We believe what our eyes see and what our ears hear and what our brain thinks. Just as our dreams last night seemed so real to us until we woke up, so this 'waking dream' also appears real. Jesus tells us we dream 24 hours a day. The only way we can keep our seeming separation going and hold onto our individuality is to live it out in a dream. He even states at one point in the course that there is no life outside of heaven (T-23.II.19.1). Without a sane guide, the Holy Spirit, we would never escape this rather convincing dream.

*The presence of fear is a sure sign that you are trusting in your own strength. The awareness that there is nothing to fear shows that somewhere in your mind, though not necessarily in a place you recognize as yet, you have remembered God, and let His strength take the place of your weakness. The instant you are willing to do this there is indeed nothing to fear. Lesson 48*

### **Undoing Denial**

The approach to life's problems by our ego is always the same and is in fact quite simple. First it tells us we are not the problem it's the world (denial) and then tells us to accuse the world for our loss of peace (projection). The Course's solution to our problems is the exact opposite to that of the ego.

*The Holy Spirit asks of you but this; bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him. Open every door to Him, and bid Him enter the darkness and lighten it away. At your request He enters gladly. He brings the light to darkness if you make the darkness open to Him. But what you hide He cannot look upon. T-14.VII.6*

While we insist our problems are in the world we cannot be healed by the miracle. Anger at others may cause them to change their behaviour to suit us, but our problems will simply continue.

*Conflict must be resolved. It cannot be evaded, set aside, denied, disguised, seen somewhere else, called by another name, or hidden by deceit of any kind, if it would be escaped. It must be seen exactly as it is, where it is thought to be, in the reality which has been given it, and with the purpose that the mind accorded it. For only then are its defenses lifted, and the truth can shine upon it as it disappears. Lesson 333*

It is much more comfortable for us to see problems in the world and not in ourselves. To look within our minds and see the negativity that needs to be healed is uncomfortable and often a painful process. Previously, we have seen ourselves as innocent and to discover instead all the negativity that lies in our minds is not an easy process. This is why we denied and projected in the first place. Now we're being asked to take our projections back, undo our denial and allow them to be healed, which is the path of forgiveness. This can be particularly difficult for people who consider themselves 'spiritual'. They may believe they have gone far beyond anger whilst they have just buried it deeper in their unconscious.

Perhaps the shortest and most powerful definition of forgiveness is this:

*Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. .... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not. Workbook-pII.1.4:1,3*

Our job is to quietly observe our mind, not judging what we find there no matter how negative it appears to be, decide we no longer need it, and allow Spirit to heal it for us.

*The greatest Guru is helpless as long as the disciple is not eager to learn. Eagerness and earnestness are all-important. Confidence will come with experience. Be devoted to your goal - and devotion to him who can guide you will follow. If your desire and confidence are strong, they will operate and take you to your goal, for you will not cause delay by hesitation and compromise.*

Nisargadatta Maharaj

#### 4. NISARGADATTA MAHARAJ'S SPIRITUAL AWAKENING FROM *I AM THAT* COMPARED TO *A COURSE IN MIRACLES*

If I had to choose a couple of spiritual books to take with me onto a desert island they would be *A Course in Miracles* and Nisargadatta Maharaj's *I Am That*.

Nisargadatta's book consists of transcriptions of dialogues between Nisargadatta Maharaj and people who visited his small house in Calcutta. He struck me as a man who had spiritually awakened, no longer had a personal "I" and was aware the world was a dream. The Course would say he lived in the real world, the Course's term for how the world will appear when our forgiveness lessons are complete. Nisargadatta's path included forgiveness as he practised and advocated a non-judgemental awareness of everything that arose. He sometimes referred to this as being in the "I Am" state, instead of falling into the trap of thinking "I am this" or "I am that" as in the case of thinking "I am this body", "I am a daughter", "I am a sinner", "I am a student," etc.

Watch your mind, how it comes into being, how it operates. As you watch your mind, you discover your self as the watcher. When you stand motionless, only watching, you discover your self as the light behind the watcher. The source of light is dark, unknown is the source of knowledge. That source alone is. Go back to that source and abide there.

Nisargadatta Mahara

*Forgiveness ... is still, and quietly does nothing. .... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not.*

*A Course in Miracles W-pII.1.4:1,3*

A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the sun on rising makes the world active, so does self-awareness affect changes in the mind. In the light of calm and steady self-awareness, inner energies wake up and work miracles without any effort on your part. Do understand that you are destined for enlightenment. Co-operate with your destiny, don't go against it, don't thwart it. Allow it to fulfill itself. All you have to do is to give attention to the obstacles created by the foolish mind."

Nisargadatta Maharaj

*Only be quiet. You will need no rule but this, to let your practicing today lift you above the thinking of the world, and free your vision from the body's eyes. Only be still and listen.*



*You will hear the Word in which the Will of God the Son joins in his Father's Will, at one with it, with no illusions interposed between the wholly indivisible and true.*

*A Course in Miracles Lesson 129*

Below is a dialogue between a visitor who asked Nisargadatta Maharaj about his spiritual awakening. I have also added some other replies on the same subject he gave to different visitors. Relevant quotations from *A Course in Miracles* (in italics) have been added.

### **Dialogue:**

Questioner: Are we permitted to request you to tell us the manner of your realisation?

Maharaj: Somehow it was very simple and easy in my case. My Guru, before he died, told me: Believe me, you are the Supreme Reality. Don't doubt my words, don't disbelieve me. I am telling you the truth - act on it. I could not forget his words and by not forgetting - I have realised.

*Why wait for Heaven? Those who seek the light are merely covering their eyes. The light is in them now. Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all. A Course in Miracles Workbook Lesson 188*

*Learn, then, the happy habit of response to all temptation to perceive yourself as weak and miserable with these words:*

*I am as God created me. His Son can suffer nothing. And I am His Son.*

*Thus is Christ's strength invited to prevail, replacing all your weakness with the strength that comes from God and that can never fail.*

*A Course in Miracles T-31.VIII.5.*

*You are as God created you, and so is every living thing you look upon, regardless of the images you see. T-31.VIII.6.*

Q: But what were you actually doing?

M: Nothing special. I lived my life, plied my trade, looked after my family, and every free moment I would spend just remembering my Guru and his words. He died soon after and I had only the memory to fall back on. It was enough.

When I met my Guru, he told me: 'You are not what you take yourself to be. Find out what you are. Watch the sense 'I am', find your real Self. I obeyed him, because I trusted him. I did as he told me. All my spare time I would spend looking at

myself in silence. And what a difference it made, and how soon! It took only three years to realise my true nature. My Guru died soon after I met him, but it made no difference. I remembered what he told me and persevered.

*Error cannot really threaten truth, which can always withstand it. Only the error is actually vulnerable. You are free to establish your kingdom where you see fit, but the right choice is inevitable if you remember this:*

*Spirit is in a state of grace forever.*

*Your reality is only spirit.*

*Therefore you are in a state of grace forever. T-1.III.5.*

Q (a different visitor): Please tell me which road to self-realisation is the shortest.

M: No way is short or long, but some people are more in earnest and some are less. I can tell you about myself. I was a simple man, but I trusted my Guru. What he told me to do, I did. He told me to concentrate on 'I am' - I did. He told me that I am beyond all perceivables and conceivables - I believed. I gave him my heart and soul, my entire attention and the whole of my spare time (I had to work to keep my family alive). As a result of faith and earnest application, I realised my Self within three years. You may choose any way that suits you; your earnestness will determine the rate of progress.

Q: It must have been the grace and power of your Guru.

M: His words were true and so they came true. True words always come true. My Guru did nothing; his words acted because they were true. Whatever I did, came from within, unasked and unexpected.

*Nothing can prevail against a Son of God who commends his spirit into the Hands of his Father. By doing this the mind awakens from its sleep and remembers its Creator. All sense of separation disappears. T-3.II.5.*

Q: The Guru started a process without taking any part in it?

M: Put it as you like. Things happen as they happen - who can tell why and how? I did nothing deliberately. All came by itself - the desire to let go, to be alone, to go within.

*Save time for me by only this one preparation, and practice nothing else. "I need do nothing" is a statement of allegiance, a truly undivided loyalty. Believe it for just one instant, and you will accomplish more than is given to a century of contemplation, or of struggle against temptation.*

*To do anything involves a body. And if you recognise you need do nothing, you have withdrawn the body's value from your mind....To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides.... For from this centre will you be directed how to use the body sinlessly. T-18.VII*

Q: You made no efforts whatsoever?

M: None. Believe it or not, I was not even anxious to realise. He only told me that I am the Supreme and then died. I just could not disbelieve him. The rest happened by itself. I found myself changing - that is all. As a matter of fact, I was astonished.

*Whenever you are tempted to undertake a useless journey that would lead away from light, remember what you really want, and say:*

*The Holy Spirit leads me unto Christ, and where else would I go? What need have I but to awake in Him? T-13.VII.14.*

*Then follow Him in joy, with faith that He will lead you safely through all dangers to your peace of mind this world may set before you. T-13.VII.15.*

But a desire arose in me to verify his words. I was so sure that he, could not possibly have told a lie, that I felt I shall either realise the full meaning of his words or die. I was feeling quite determined, but did not know what to do. I would spend hours thinking of him and his assurance, not arguing, but just remembering what he told me.

*Have faith in only this one thing, and it will be sufficient: God wills you be in Heaven, and nothing can keep you from it, or it from you. Your wildest misperceptions, your weird imaginings, your blackest nightmares all mean nothing. They will not prevail against the peace God wills for you. The Holy Spirit will restore your sanity because insanity is not the Will of God. T-13.XI.7.*

Q: What happened to you then? How did you know that you are the Supreme?

M: Nobody came to tell me. Nor was I told so inwardly. In fact, it was only in the beginning when I was making efforts, that I was passing through some strange experiences; seeing lights, hearing voices, meeting gods and goddesses and conversing with them.

*As we go along, you may have many "light episodes." They may take many different forms, some of them quite unexpected. Do not be afraid of them. Workbook Lesson 15*

Once the Guru told me: 'You are the Supreme Reality', I ceased having visions and trances and became very quiet and simple.

*They are signs that you are opening your eyes at last. They will not persist, because they merely symbolize true perception, and they are not related to knowledge. Workbook Lesson 15*

I found myself desiring and knowing less and less, until I could say in utter astonishment: 'I know nothing, I want nothing.'

*To learn this course requires willingness to question every value that you hold. Not one can be kept hidden and obscure but it will jeopardize your learning. No belief is neutral. T-24.in.2.*

*You do not know the meaning of anything you perceive. Not one thought you hold is wholly true. The recognition of this is your firm beginning. You are not misguided; you have accepted no guide at all. Instruction in perception is your great need, for you understand nothing.*

*Recognize this but do not accept it, for understanding is your inheritance. Perceptions are learned, and you are not without a Teacher. Yet your willingness to learn of Him depends on your willingness to question everything you learned of yourself, for you who learned amiss should not be your own teacher. T-11.VIII.3.*

There was no 'me' left to strive for. Even the bare 'I am' faded away. The other thing that I noticed was that I lost all my habitual certainties. Earlier I was sure of so many things, now I am sure of nothing. But I feel that I have lost nothing by not knowing, because all my knowledge was false. My not knowing was in itself knowledge of the fact that all knowledge is ignorance, that 'I do not know' is the only true statement the mind can make.

*Think not you understand anything until you pass the test of perfect peace, for peace and understanding go together and never can be found alone. T-14.XI.12:4*

*Your learning gives the present no meaning at all. Nothing you have ever learned can help you understand the present, or teach you how to undo the past. Your past is what you have taught yourself. Let it all go. Do not attempt to understand any event or anything or*

*anyone in its "light," for the darkness in which you try to see can only obscure.* T-14.XI.  
3:4-8

Q: Were you genuinely free of desire and knowledge, or did you impersonate a jnani (enlightened teacher) according to the image given to you by your Guru?

M: I was not given any image, nor did I have one. My Guru never told me what to expect.

If you imagine yourself as separate from the world, the world will appear as separate from you and you will experience desire and fear. I do not see the world as separate from me and so there is nothing for me to desire, or fear.

Q: More things may happen to you. Are you at the end of your journey?

M: There was never any journey. I am, as I always was.

Yes, I appear to hear and see and talk and act, but to me it just happens, as to you digestion or perspiration happens. The body-mind machine looks after it, but leaves me out of it. Just as you do not need to worry about growing hair, so I need not worry about words and actions. They just happen and leave me unconcerned, for in my world nothing ever goes wrong.

To me nothing ever happens. There is something changeless, motionless, immovable, rock-like, unassailable; a solid mass of pure being-consciousness-bliss. I am never out of it. Nothing can take me out of it, no torture, no calamity.

*The journey to God is merely the reawakening of the knowledge of where you are always, and what you are forever. It is a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed. Truth can only be experienced. It cannot be described and it cannot be explained. I can make you aware of the conditions of truth, but the experience is of God. Together we can meet its conditions, but truth will dawn upon you of itself.* T-8.VI.9.

Q: What was the Supreme Reality you were supposed to reach?

M: I was undeceived, that is all. I used to create a world and populate it - now I don't do it any more.

The world and the mind are states of being. The supreme is not a state. It pervades all states, but it is not a state of something else. It is entirely uncaused, independent, complete in itself, beyond time and space, mind and matter. ....There is nothing to recognise it by. It must be seen directly, by giving up all search for signs and approaches. When all names and forms have been given up,

the real is with you. You need not seek it. Plurality and diversity are the play of the mind only. Reality is one.

*What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want. From there, the mind makes up an image of the thing the mind desires, judges valuable, and therefore seeks to find. These images are then projected outward, looked upon, esteemed as real and guarded as one's own. From insane wishes comes an insane world. From judgement comes a world condemned.*

Workbook Lesson 325

Q: Where do you live, then?

M: In the void beyond being and non-being, beyond consciousness. This void is also fullness; do not pity me. It is like a man saying: 'I have done my work, there is nothing left to do'.

I see no difference between you and me. My life is a succession of events, just like yours. Only I am detached and see the passing show as a passing show, while you stick to things and move along with them.

Having realised that I am one with, and yet beyond the world, I became free from all desire and fear. I did not reason out that I should be free - I found myself free - unexpectedly, without the least effort. This freedom from desire and fear remained with me since then. Another thing I noticed was that I do not need to make an effort; the deed follows the thought, without delay and friction. I have also found that thoughts become self-fulfilling; things would fall in place smoothly and rightly. The main change was in the mind; it became motionless and silent, responding quickly, but not perpetuating the response. Spontaneity became a way of life, the real became natural and the natural became real. And above all, infinite affection, love, dark and quiet, radiating in all directions, embracing all, making all interesting and beautiful, significant and auspicious.

Q: You are giving a certain date to your realisation. It means something did happen to you at that date. What happened?

M: The mind ceased producing events. The ancient and ceaseless search stopped - I wanted nothing, expected nothing - accepted nothing as my own.

I think the above quotations from Nisargadatta Maharaj give a valuable insight into the real world, which is the goal of *A Course in Miracles*. I will finish this article with a favorite quote of mine from Nisargadatta where he highlights the paradox of the awake person who is both everything and nothing.

When I look within and see that I am nothing, that is wisdom.  
When I look without and see that I am everything, that is love.  
And between these two, my life turns.  
Nisargadatta Maharaj

## 5. REST AND RELAX - LOVE IS WAITING TO COME IN

*Deep within you is everything that is perfect,  
ready to radiate through you and out into the world.*

*A Course in Miracles Lesson 41*

### **Who we are**

We have forgotten the truth of who we are but the truth has not forgotten us. It is patiently waiting for us to accept it back into our mind's awareness. It has never been lost, only forgotten.

*You are at home in God, dreaming of exile but perfectly capable of awaking to reality.*

*A Course in Miracles T-10.I.2:1*

In the Course God's creation is called Christ. This creation is outside time and space and is therefore eternal. God can only create like Itself and therefore we share all the attributes of God - thus we are formless, perfect, eternal spirit.

*The truth about you is so lofty that nothing unworthy of God is worthy of you.*

*A Course in Miracles T-9.VII.8.4*

This is our natural state and if we did not get in its way it would simply become apparent to us. If we could rest and relax, let go of our investments in thinking and judging, the natural state would simply dawn upon us.

*Seek not outside yourself. For it will fail, and you will weep each time an idol falls. Heaven cannot be found where it is not, and there can be no peace excepting there. .... Seek not outside yourself. For all your pain comes simply from a futile search for what you want, insisting where it must be found. What if it is not there? Do you prefer that you be right or happy?*

*A Course in Miracles T-29.VII*

To seek outside for love and peace and happiness implies that we cannot be whole within. Our ego counsels that to achieve this great goal and find the Kingdom of Heaven must entail a great deal of effort on our part. To be told we need only to rest and relax will therefore make no sense to us. Surely, we think, the more effort we put in the faster we will attain our goal. This also implies that we know best how to find our way home. And is this true?

### **I need do nothing.**

*To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides.*

*A Course in Miracles T-18.VII.7:7-8*

To make a place within you for the Holy Spirit is the Course's path of forgiveness. To be guided by the Holy Spirit requires the mind to be quiet so you can hear His voice. You cannot hear His voice if your mind is full of judgement, whether of yourself or others. Forgiveness is not easy. It requires vigilance, awareness and a recognition that the problem is in our mind and not in the world. This is not brought about by dozing in bed all day but in the active 'classroom' of relationships.



*To do anything involves the body. And if you recognize you need do nothing, you have withdrawn the body's value from your mind. Here is the quick and open door through which you slip past centuries of effort, and escape from time.*

*A Course in Miracles T-18.VII.7:1-3*

When the Course states you need do nothing it means that we allow Jesus or the Holy Spirit to do the doing and not us. We no longer do things on our own but allow Spirit to work through us.

"I need do nothing" does not mean you won't do anything. This could result in a very active life but as you are not the doer you no longer feel tired. Instead of working from ego energy your strength comes from a higher source. You will no longer do things from guilt and you will never be in a hurry. You will lose the sense of urgency in what you do.

But do we still need to make plans, you may ask. Our mind hates the idea of being left out of the decision-making process. However, the Course sees this differently.

*A healed mind does not plan. It carries out the plans that it receives through listening to Wisdom that is not its own. It waits until it has been taught what should be done, and then proceeds to do it. It does not depend upon itself for anything except its adequacy to fulfil the plans assigned to it.*

*A Course in Miracles Lesson 253*

When plans are needed they will be given at the right time and place. We are being asked to get out of the driving seat, to reduce the function of the thinking mind from trying to sort everything out and simply follow plans from a higher source.

*A quiet mind is all you need. All else will happen rightly, once your mind is quiet. As the sun on rising makes the world active, so does self-awareness affect changes in the mind. In the light of calm and steady self-awareness inner energies wake up and work miracles without any effort on your part.*

Nisargadatta Maharaj

### **Striving**

When we wish to pursue materialistic goals in this world, then striving can be of value. We may wish to attain a degree at university. We need to work hard and put in a long hours of effort. But to transfer this approach into the area of spirituality, has been referred to as 'spiritual materialism'. It doesn't work. Only egos strive.

*You surrender the doer, the understander.*

*Just rest and relax. It's a letting go.*

*Letting everything be as it is right now.*

*Relaxing releases you from the ego.*

Adyashanti

Most of us have many desires. We believe once we achieve our desire we will be happy. So it seems to make sense to put in a lot of effort to achieve the desired outcome. But is it really the fulfilment of desire that creates happiness? Only the ego can have desires. At the moment the desire is fulfilled in that moment ego is absent. In the absence of the ego only Spirit is left in our mind. It's the happiness of Spirit that we experience at that moment. That happiness comes from

our natural state. If we were to let go our attraction to the ego, through the forgiveness of judgement in our minds, we would come to experience a causeless happiness. This is the only happiness worth having.

*Stop trying to wake up. Let go of effort. Trying has to do with time, with the desire to bring about change. You're awake, you're awake. You just don't know it. Know it. That's all. Stop trying to become what you already are. Relax. Relax yourself into a piece of cooked spaghetti.*

*The trying is the problem. All it does is provide distraction from seeing what is. It actually causes harm. Why are there all those stories about how it was only when the person gave up, exhausted, that it finally happened, that the blinders finally came off?*

*But don't give up so that it will happen. Just give up because you're worn out. Because it feels good to rest. It feels good to be what you are. That's the whole thing. Stop trying to become. Just be.*

*Let the spiritual journey come to an end.*

Jan Frazier

### **Resting and relaxing.**

*Enormous effort is expended in the attempt to make holy what is hated and despised. Nor is a lifetime of contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at detachment from the body necessary. All such attempts will ultimately succeed because of their purpose. Yet the means are tedious and very time consuming, for all of them look to the future for release from a state of present unworthiness and inadequacy.*

A Course in Miracles T-18.VI.4:8-11

The spiritual self we are trying to cultivate will never feel adequate because it will still be the ego - now wearing spiritual clothes. We are doomed to suffer a lack of self-worth until we realise that what we are trying to create is false. How could we possibly improve on the perfection of our Christ self? It has been nothing but a hopeless journey of arrogance.

*Stopping unnecessary mental doing allows the natural state to arise. Deep stillness always rests under an agitated mind.*

*Relax. Resting mind activity disarms gross identification. There is no "how" to stop thinking. Simply stop getting involved in the stories of your thoughts. Stopping is not a doing, not a technique, not to be learned. Neither is it a big deal. Just be quiet, be still, and stop participating in the imaginary world created by your thoughts. There is no identification when the mind is not engaged with thoughts; no suffering is a consequence of no identification.*

Jac O'Keefe

For the natural state to arise in our awareness, there must be a measure of peace in our minds. While our minds are addicted to judgement, this is impossible. The Course's path to peace is forgiveness.

*Forgiveness... is still, and quietly does nothing. ... It merely looks, and waits, and judges not.*  
A Course in Miracles W-p11.1.4:1,3

Through watching our minds without judgement, insight will dawn upon us. Seeing the pain we cause ourselves through judgement, we will start to learn to simply stop doing it. Once we clearly see the link between a loss of peace and judgement we will never ask for a 'how to' technique again.

*You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgment.*

*A Course in Miracles T-3.VI.3.*

Thus the question "How do we stop judging?", will no longer come up. When as child we discover that touching a flame creates pain, we don't ask our parents what is the method not to touch flames. We have a direct insight - touching the flame will cause pain, so we don't do it again.

*There is nothing to fix, nothing to do, nothing needs to be better, nicer, or in a certain way, all that stuff is just thoughts, there's no need to take any interest in it. How things are is just fine. Rest. Rest on the inside.*

Jac O'Keefe

*As you gently relax into awareness, into listening, the mind's compulsive contraction around objects will fade. Silence of being will come more clearly into your consciousness, welcoming you to rest and abide. An attitude of open receptivity, free of any goal or anticipation, will facilitate the presence of silence and stillness, and reveal them to be your natural condition.*

Adyashanti

The people whom I have quoted in this article, including the person who wrote the poem below, have all had a deep awakening and share the same message. I feel the following poem is a wonderful summary of the theme of this article.

*The truth comes to you of its own free will  
when you prepare yourself through deep surrender  
to your Self, giving up all attachment, giving up your body, your mind, and everything that's  
important to you, to the Self.*

*As long as you're holding on to anything,  
the Reality will evade you.*

*The Reality only comes when you give up yourself,  
when you give up your ego,  
when you give up your needs, your wants,  
trying to make something happen, desires.  
When you give up trying to become Self-realized.  
When you just give up.*

*Then something wonderful happens.  
You begin to expand.  
Not your body, but the Consciousness which you are.  
You become all pervading, Absolute Reality.  
It happens by itself.*

*from Silence of the Heart by Robert Adams.*