

The Samaritan Institute
at
The Sunshine Cathedral

***Introduction to**
A Course in Miracles

A Six Week Course

*Course curriculum designed and prepared by
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*"Here at the Sunshine Cathedral, we are
seekers and students of Truth, empowered
by Spirit, sharing the Light with the World"*

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is
A Metropolitan Community Church
Affiliated with The Center for Progressive Christianity

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Lesson 1: Origins & Terms

The Nature of God

Oneness is simply the idea God is. And in [God's] Being, [God] encompasses all things. No mind holds anything but [God]. We say 'God is,' and then we cease to speak, for in that knowledge words are meaningless. There are no lips to speak them, and no part of mind sufficiently distinct to feel that it is now aware of something not itself. It has united with its Source. And like its Source Itself, it merely is. (WB, part 1, Lesson 5, Sentence 1 – Lesson 6, Sentence 1)

Non-dualistic, ultimate Reality is the nature of God in *ACIM*. We long to speak of what can't be fully known. We are in relationship to the Whole, but we can never know more than our experience of It. So it is impossible to speak meaningfully or completely about "God;" the best we can do is to speak of God's nature as we experience it. The Course tells us that our words are but "symbols of symbols...[and] thus are twice removed from reality" (M, Question 21, paragraph 9, sentences 9-10).

Compare to:

"Hear, O Israel, our God, the LORD is **one**." – Deuteronomy 6.4

"The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." – Luke 17.20-21

"One God...of all, who is over all and through all and in all." – Ephesians 4.6

"Sacred are you, Source of All, who exists yet doesn't exist, eternally..." – Gospel of Melchizedek (a so-called Gnostic text)

"I am the ALL; the All issues from me and reaches me. Cut wood, I am there. Lift stone, I am there." – Gospel of Thomas

"The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao. The name that can be named is not the eternal Name. The unnamable is the eternally real. Naming is the origin of all particular things. Free from desire, you realize the mystery. Caught in desire, you see only the manifestations. Yet mystery and manifestations arise from the same source. This source is called darkness. Darkness within darkness. The gateway to all understanding." – Tao te Ching, chapter 1

About the Buddhist concept of emptiness, or *Sunyata*: "Sunyata signifies that everything one encounters in life is empty of absolute identity, permanence, or 'self'. This is because everything is inter-related and mutually dependent - never wholly self-sufficient or independent. All things are in a state of constant flux where energy and information are forever flowing throughout

the natural world giving rise to and themselves undergoing major transformations with the passage of time.” (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia)

“I am now in the presence of pure Being...” – Charles Fillmore¹

"God does not exist. [God] is being itself beyond essence and existence. Therefore to argue that God exists is to deny [God]." – Paul Tillich, Systematic Theologian²

The *Course* seems to understand God, as did Paul Tillich, as the “ground of being,” *Being* itself. The Taoist scriptures, the Buddhist concept of Sunyata, the non-canonical gospels, the Judeo-Christian bible, and contemporary mystics and thinkers such as Fillmore and Tillich all seem to share the idea that God is more than can be conveyed by a single name or image. God, the Source and Substance of life is the *stuff* of which matter is made, the *web* that connects all living beings, the Whole of All that is (and the whole is, of course, more than the sum of its parts). God is one, undivided, and includes all that is. This understanding is not unique to the *Course* but it is beautifully articulated in the *Course*. The Mystery of Life that we call “God” cannot be known, since there is no mind apart from God to know it. There is only Oneness, Allness, and so the best we can do, says the *Course*, is use our limited and limiting words which are symbols of symbols to discuss our experience of the One, the Whole, the Infinite.

Reality

“Reality as created by God and as God is formless, changeless, eternal, infinite love, and limitless and unified perfection – a non-dualistic oneness. *Reality* in the *Course* is synonymous with *Heaven* and obviously cannot be related in any way to the universe of form that the world calls reality.” – Gloria & Kenneth Wapnick, *The Most Commonly Asked Questions About A Course in Miracles*

Ultimate Reality is the perfection of undivided oneness. It is our unity with God, or “Heaven.” It is the Truth beyond the changing forms and conditions of life. Beyond impermanence is the Source of all, and this Source is divine, and our unity with It is Heaven. It is the truth of our being and ultimately is what we will know and experience.

Life

Life in *ACIM* is spiritual, in fact, it is spirit: non-material, non-dualistic, and eternal. The *Course* says, “There is no life outside of Heaven. Where God

¹ Founder of Unity School of Christianity

² Tillich was born in 1886 and died in 1965. He was German and Lutheran by birth but during the time of the Nazis came to the United States. After teaching theology and philosophy in German universities, he taught theology at Union Theological Seminary, Harvard Divinity School, and the University of Chicago in the U.S. He was influenced by existential philosophy and depth psychology.

created life [Heaven/Reality], there life must be. In any state apart from Heaven [in the physical realm] life is illusion” (T, Chapter 23).

In short, life as we experience in physical form is limited by physics, time, perception, senses, understandings, language, etc. Physicality is constantly changing and will one day end. So it is not “ultimately” real. Life, true Life, is synonymous with Heaven and God and Reality...it is what is eternal and beyond the changes and chances of mortal existence. The *Course* tells us, then, that life “is Oneness with our Source...Life, spirit, and Mind are terms basically synonymous with each other, sharing the characteristics of formlessness, changelessness, and [eternity]” (Wapnick).

Child of God

The *Course* uses masculine pronouns for God, Christ, humanity, etc. But as troublesome as that may be for us, we need to remember that “Son of God” means Child of God in *ACIM*. And the Child of God is you and it is me and it is everyone. Jesus, in the *Course*, is our “elder brother,” showing us, as it were, the ropes. He is our Wayshower, our example, the one who became awakened to his Truth and to whom we can look to help us wake up as well. So, Jesus is the archetypal “son of God,” but he represents all sons and daughters of God, which is to say, all people. The Child of God is our true self, our true nature, the pure Goodness that is our Reality hiding behind our assumptions, prejudices, fears, opinions, illusions, etc. The Child of God is the truth of who we are...we are each part of the Whole, emanations from the One, perfect Source. And so it is that God is our Father and/or our Mother and we are Her sons and daughters, we are extensions of the Divine Self. This True Self/Child of God is similar to the Inward Light (Quakers), Buddha Nature (Buddhism), Christ Within (New Thought), True Image (Seicho-No-Ie), Atman (Vedic traditions), etc. The concept is not unique to the *Course*.

Ego

When *ACIM* speaks of the ego, it isn’t using the word in the Freudian sense, but rather like the ancient philosophers did to speak of a perceived, small, separate self. When we feel weak, alone, separate from our Source, insignificant, that is the ego-self and not our true Christ Nature or Real self. The ego operates from fear and a sense of duality and separation in opposition to the Reality of unified, whole, Oneness.

Miracles

In *A Course in Miracles*, a miracle isn’t a dramatic intervention into the natural world, changing something, making the impossible suddenly and magically possible. Rather, a miracle is simply a change in perception. To see something differently is to experience a miracle. To see what you didn’t see before, to consider what you hadn’t considered before is to change your entire experience and expectation, and such dramatic changes within oneself is miraculous. To see our unity with God and our innate and unblemished sacred value is the miracle we seek most diligently and from that miracle many other blessings will come; but the primary miracle is to

change our thinking and that miracle will result in positive changes in our lives. Hagar looking up and suddenly seeing a well in the wilderness that she had previously overlooked is an example of such a change in perception/miracle (Genesis).

Who Authored ACIM?

The claim is made that ACIM was authored not by a person but by an “inner voice.” The teaching seems to synthesize the Wisdom of Eastern traditions, the language of Christianity, and the insights of psychology to form a “Course” that can provide spiritual nourishment, emotional healing, and guidance for life. It focuses on love, forgiveness, healing relationships, developing positive perceptions while avoiding useless judgments. ACIM was first published in 1976 and continues to be popular.

In 1965 Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford were Psychologists and colleagues in New York City. Neither was religious and in fact, both doubted the existence of God. Helen and Bill found their jobs and lives increasingly stressful. Even their friendship was at times stressful! One day, Bill just announced, “there must be a better way and I intend to find it!” The ways they had been dealing with conflict and problems had just produced more uncertainty and fear and regret and pain. A new way was needed. Helen agreed that a better way must be possible and she, too, decided to look for it.

“This moment of joining represented an unprecedented turning point in their relationship. It was an example of what the Course calls a ‘holy instant,’ that moment we lay aside our characteristic patterns of thinking and feeling, which have failed us, and open ourselves to receive the truth, to receive ‘a better way.’ In this holy instant they established a ‘holy relationship,’ a transformation of the hidden foundation of their old relationship into a new one, based on a joint dedication to finding truth together. The holy instant and the holy relationship were implicit invitations to the [holy] Spirit to enter their lives and their relationship and give the gift of healing that had been asked for” (*An Introduction to A Course in Miracles*, Miracle Distribution Center).

Following this “healing,” Helen began to experience psychic visions. These experiences led her to believe in God. She started hearing an “inner voice” that one day said over and over again, “This is a course in miracles. Please take notes.” At first, she thought her sanity had been compromised. Bill suggested that she write in shorthand what she thought the voice was saying and he would help her figure out what it all meant. And so she sat down to record this message:

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. 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. The opposite of love is fear, but what is all-encompassing can have no opposite. This course can therefore be summed up very simply in this way –
Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God. (Preface to *A Course in Miracles*)

After seven years of such inner listening and recording, *A Course in Miracles* came to be. Though the “voice” speaks sometimes in the third person and other times in the first person, it is all the same identified as the voice of Jesus.

Must We Believe That Jesus Authored ACIM?

Some people need to believe Jesus authored the text. For them, that gives it credibility. It is probably not essential for everyone to believe that, however. {I, for one, have my doubts!}

The truths communicated in *ACIM* can also be found in Greek and Asian philosophy, Western Psychology, Buddhist and Hindu practice, Taoist scriptures, Gnostic texts, and parts of the bible. The truths stand on their own regardless of how the *Course* was formed.

Universal Consciousness seems to have broken through to Helen Schucman and the wisdom of that Consciousness combined with the knowledge stored in her own subconscious mind may have produced *ACIM*. But she and others believed that Jesus was somehow the conveyor of the message, and there are parts of the text that seem to suggest that rather explicitly, also.

Is Jesus the symbol to which her mind attached the universal truths or is it simply the case that Jesus from beyond the restraints of time and space spoke through her using language she could understand and share? Neither scenario diminishes the power of the text. If one applies the text to her or his own life and finds it to be healing and empowering, then whether or not Ms. Schucman contributed something of herself to the work isn't important. The important thing is *ACIM* proves to be a useful spiritual tool in one's life. It will probably be no less useful whether or not you believe the text was “channeled” from Jesus.

The purpose of this introduction is to explore the teachings of *ACIM* and not to debate the possible metaphysical origins of the text. The myths about a sacred text are never as compelling or important as the actual message of the texts.

We will treat *ACIM* as a practical system of spiritual psychology and philosophy. If its origins are completely human and natural, that in no way hinders our planned use of the *Course*.

Homework

Each day for the next week, meditate on the following quotes from *A Course in Miracles*:

- *The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.*
- *When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter.
As you see him [or her], you will see yourself.
As you treat him [or her], you will treat yourself.
As you think of him [or her], you will think of yourself.
Never forget this, for in him [or her] you will find yourself or lose yourself.*
- *Everything you teach you are learning. Teach only love, and learn that love is yours and you are love.*
- *To have, give all to all.*
- *Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world.*

Lesson 2: Joy in Place of Pain

“*A Course in Miracles*...is about a God who is not capable of anger. It is...about pain versus joy.” – Jerry Sears, *A Course in Miracles in 5 Minutes*

ACIM is a “course.” It is a course of study and a course of treatment. When life is working, that is, when we are happy and not confronted with an unreasonable amount of pain, we probably won’t look for a new course of action. Whatever we’ve been doing seems to be working well enough.

But, when we are afraid, unhappy, angry, or otherwise out of balance and experiencing more sorrow than joy, more pain than freedom, more fear than hope, then we may seek some kind of new “course” to correct the unfulfilling course we seem to be on.

ACIM acknowledges that there may be a thousand different paths from which to choose. *ACIM* is but one. But Universal Wisdom expresses through *ACIM* as surely as it does through the Bhagavad Gita, the poetry of Kahlil Gibran, the ponderings of Socrates, or the teachings of Nona Brooks. *ACIM* may be the vehicle and language through which you are able to “hear” the voice of Universal Wisdom, in which case, *ACIM* is definitely for you. Even if it isn’t a primary path for you, it may prove to be a good supplement to your other disciplines. In any case, there is probably something in *ACIM* that will be useful to you at some time.

Whether the answers you seek come to you in the form of *A Course in Miracles*, the teachings of Unity, Religious Science, Pentecostalism, Buddhism, Anglicanism, Greek Philosophy, Progressive Christianity or any other school of thought, embrace those answers for yourself only. Don’t judge others for finding their answers in different ways. *ACIM* warns strongly against self-righteous judgments. In fact, *ACIM* teaches us that every judgment is a self-judgment. Embrace your truth for you. Allow the next person the same freedom. In this way, Universal Wisdom is free to speak to each of us without our judgments getting in the way of universal harmony, healing, and growth.

What we believe will determine in many ways the quality of our lives. *ACIM* will challenge some of our old beliefs. But in the end, we are free to choose what we will believe. *ACIM* offers a view of God that is infinitely compassionate, non-judgmental, all-loving, and universally accessible. We are free to embrace, modify, or reject this view of God. We only need to remember that whatever view we embrace will shape who we become and how we experience life. *ACIM* attempts to offer us the freedom to choose beliefs that produce joy rather than pain.

Where is God?

One of the ways that *ACIM* offers joy instead of pain is that it makes clear that God is near. If we are united in some way to the Source of all that is, we are never alone and never without hope or resources. This is a comforting

thought: “God is in everything I see because God is in my mind” (WB, part 1, Lesson 30). This too is an empowering thought: “God indeed can be reached directly, for there is no distance between [God] and [God’s Child]” (M, Question 26, sentence 1).

If, as the bible says, it is in God that we live and move and have our being³, then where could we ever be that God isn’t? The New Thought proverb goes, “There is no spot where God is not.” And it’s true. Didn’t the psalmist pray, “Where can I go from your Spirit [O God]? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths [of the netherworld], you are even there.”⁴ Like the water that fish swim in...the water that provides their world, the water that they breathe, the water that empowers them to move about, the water that is their life, so is God to all of life. Like the air we breathe that is everywhere and even becomes part of us as we breathe it in and it gives life to us, so is God. A Presence, an Energy, infinite and omnipresent, more than any image or name...this is our Source, the ground of Being that we so often call “God.” *There is no spot where God is not.* Isn’t that good news?

What is healing?

Whether the pain is physical or emotional, when we are hurting we desire healing, don’t we? We want whatever isn’t working to work again. We want peace to come into the troubled situation. We want joy to replace regret and hope to overcome fear. To release the pain and replace it with contentment or enthusiasm or right order, that’s the healing we all want. The *Course* tells us, “The miracle is the means...and healing is the result.”

About healing, *ACIM* says,

Healing is a not a miracle...The kind of error to which Atonement⁵ is applied is irrelevant. All healing is essentially the release from fear...A major step in the Atonement plan is to undo error at all levels. Sickness or ‘not-right-mindedness’ is the result of level confusion, because it always entails the belief that what is amiss on one level can adversely affect another. We have referred to miracles as the means of correcting level confusion, for all mistakes must be corrected at the level on which they occur...the body cannot create⁶ and the belief that it can, a fundamental error, produces all physical

³ The Book of Acts in the New Testament shows St. Paul quoting an ancient Greek poet who said, “In [God] we live and move and have our being.”

⁴ Psalm 139

⁵ At-One-ment, the reminder that we are not separated from our Source, never have been, never can be. We are one with the One; remembering this changes our perceptions and our experiences in life.

⁶ *ACIM* teaches that our minds create our lives. To change conditions we must change our minds, or our thinking. The body responds, the *Course* believes, to what the mind has directed it to do. When the body misbehaves it is because the creator, the mind, has given it the directive to do so. Change the captain’s order (the mind’s directive) and you’ll change the direction of the ship (the body).

symptoms... Only the mind can create because spirit has already been created, and the body is a learning device for the mind. Learning devices are not lessons in themselves. Their purpose is merely to facilitate learning... the body is merely part of your experience in the physical world... The value of the Atonement does not lie in the manner in which it is expressed. In fact, if it is used truly, it will inevitably be expressed in whatever way is most helpful to the receiver. This means that a miracle, to attain its full efficacy, must be expressed in a language that the recipient can understand without fear. This does not necessarily mean that this is the highest level of communication of which [the person] is capable. It does mean, however, that it is the highest level of communication of which [the person] is capable now. The whole aim of the miracle is to raise the level of communication, not to lower it by increasing fear (T, chapter 2, section IV, paragraphs 1-3, & 5).

One person eats a bite of steak. She says, "this is delicious."
Another person eats a bite of steak, prepared the same way, and says, "this is overcooked – too tough and too dry."
Still a third person looks at the other two and says, "yuck, how can you eat meat?"

Is the steak delicious? Is it slightly disappointing? Or is it disgusting and wrong, regardless of how it is prepared? The answer isn't in the steak. The answer is in the one who is making a judgment about the steak. The difference between a delicious well-done steak and a tough, overcooked steak is the judgment made by the diners.

ACIM is trying to get us to reduce our strong and negative judgments. Our belief about a thing is often what makes the thing a blessing, a neutral event, or a curse. So, our choice of attitude determines how we experience an event. When we approach an event with fear or judgment, we aren't seeing the good in it or the possibilities that exist with it. We are only seeing disappointment and fear and that results in pain. Once we change how we see and interpret the situation, we have immediately reduced the pain, and in a holy instant we have been healed.

Less judgment means less fear. Less fear means less pain. Less pain means healing is taking place. Change the thinking that produces fear and you have experienced the miracle that leads to healing.

If God is everywhere and at all times present, then we always have access to the Wisdom and Power of God in every situation. That Wisdom and Power can help us see the Good and turn away from fear. When that happens, pain is reduced, and healing has begun. The presence of God is the presence of Good, and if Good is everywhere, then we can focus on the Good when things are difficult or painful. Focusing on the Good rather than on the difficulty places our attention on Joy rather than Pain, and in that moment healing has taken place. Healing isn't the miracle. The change of perception

that allowed us to have hope and peace rather than fear and judgment was the miracle. The result of the miracle was healing. "The miracle is the means, the Atonement is the principle, and healing is the result" (T, chapter 2, section IV, paragraph 1, sentence 2).

Homework

Pray daily, twice each day: *God is where I Am. With God all things are possible. God is Love and Love casts out all fear. Fear is now gone and I am filled with hope, peace, and love. I am healed. Miracles are taking place in my life now.*

Lesson 3: Q&A About ACIM

1. *Why is the language of **A Course in Miracles** so cumbersome and difficult to understand?*

According to Kenneth Wapnick (who has been a student and teacher of ACIM almost since its beginning), the difficult language is actually part of the pedagogy of the *Course*. Because the language is flowery, poetic, even awkward, we are forced to read the text carefully, slowly, repeatedly. We struggle with it, wrestle with it, and in the process internalize the lessons that are to be learned. By forcing us to engage the text carefully and critically, the Truth that is ours to embrace becomes clear to us.

2. *If, as has been stated in earlier lessons, God is not a person, why does the Course portray God that way? The Course calls God “Him” and “Father.” Aren’t these human images? If God isn’t human-like, then why use human images?*

The same question could be asked of the bible, couldn't it? The Ten Commandments forbid any “graven image” of the Divine, and Jesus said God was “Spirit” to be worshiped in spirit and in truth. And yet, Jesus also called God “Abba” and some of the contributors to the Hebrew Bible called God “Elohim” (a feminine, plural image) while others called God “Adonai” (which means “My Lord”) and still others called God “El Shaddai” (a maternal image), etc. Many Christians use Jesus as an image for God, the human face of the Eternal Reality. No image can contain God, and our scriptures say as much, but then they also offer images for the God that is beyond images. It does seem contradictory, doesn't it?

The short answer is that language is full of idiom and metaphor. We are bound to use metaphor and simile and idiom and imagery to communicate our ideas. As long as we remember that image is not essence, that's fine. But once we start to believe that our images contain God rather than pointing toward Her, then we have tried to trap God in a human understanding (the bible calls this “idolatry”).

Language is dualistic, but God is not, or so the *Course* teaches. So, we are using our dualistic tool (language) to discuss the unified, whole, undivided One.

A topic such as “God” is too vast for us to tackle all at once, especially if we are new to a specific and intentional spiritual journey. So, we use language for God that is familiar, understandable, comfortable. God is like a Parent in that God is perfect, unconditional love. Just as a mother feeds her child from her own body and protects her child with her own life, so is God our nurturer, life-giver, and care provider. Words like “father” or “mother”

or “Lord” or “Creator” are symbols pointing beyond themselves to a Reality that could never be adequately expressed by any word or image. The images are to help us speak about the unspeakable, but it is our job to remember that the subject is bigger than the word that is used to symbolize it.

3. *Why does the **Course** use exclusively “masculine” language?*

Some have tried to justify the seemingly sexist language of *ACIM* by saying it is intentionally within the tradition of biblical, which is to say patriarchal, language. They usually go on to suggest that language is symbolic and though the language may be masculine the God the language points toward is neither male nor female. The bible happens to include names and images for God that are masculine, feminine, both and neither. But the average *Course* reader is probably not a bible scholar and may not know this. In any case, this introduction to the *Course* will not try to defend or justify its exclusive language, but will, instead, inclusify its language when possible. Knowing that God is neither male nor female, this introduction will try to use language that reflects that truth. This shouldn't be seen as an attempt to change the *Course*, as the *Course* is concerned with “spirit” more than physicality, and spirit is beyond the limitations of gender. So, our attempt to use language that is appropriate to our progressive sensibilities is in line with the themes of the *Course*.

4. *If we are unified with the Creator and with all life, why do I feel alone sometimes, or worse, victimized?*

A Course in Miracles says that we “are at home in God, dreaming of exile.” The conflicts are but a nightmare. They seem real, and the pain certainly feels real. But ultimately, we must “wake up” to our true Selves, and our true or higher Selves are whole, perfect, and complete. Our inner most reality cannot be sick nor destitute nor harmed in anyway, nor is there anyone we wish to harm. Waking up to the truth is enlightenment, or salvation. In the enlightened state, there is no pain or division or discord. So, the *Course* insists that in God there is only joy and perfection, and any apparent separation from this true, divine state is but a dream from which we will at some point awake. At that moment, we will be in heaven again, where all is well.

5. *Who's to blame for this dream in which we are stuck?*

Why blame anyone? Rather than attack someone or something for causing the dream, it may be more helpful to simply remember, “this isn't ultimately real.” The disease, the war, the crime, the natural disaster...none of that is eternally real, and none of that can touch or harm our real Essence. This perspective alone may be enough to reduce suffering caused by these situations. And if suffering has

been reduced, then healing has begun. A change of perception has wrought a miracle again! Blaming, shaming, or attacking only keeps us stuck in the falseness. We don't want to blame the dream, we want to wake up from it. One changed idea at a time gets us ever closer to waking up to our real potential, our real value, our blessed state.

Lesson 4: More Questions & Answers

1. *OK, I see the world around me. I know it's real. Why does the Course say that the material world is an illusion?*

When you see a movie, is it real? You see it. It is there, right in front of you. You remember it. It made you feel happy or sad or afraid or bored. It took up a measurable amount of your time. And even though you saw it, experienced it, remember it, had feelings about it...it isn't real, is it? It's just a movie. As powerful as it may have been to you, as enjoyable or meaningful as it may have been, the characters were just characters, the situations were contrived, the effects were generated. It wasn't "real." That means that it doesn't continue beyond the credits. It didn't live before it was created and it doesn't continue beyond its end. It's an experience, but it lacks true substance and it certainly lacks eternal qualities.

Likewise, when you have a dream, it can feel very powerful. It can seem very real. But once you wake up from it, even though it seemed entirely real while you were in the middle of it, you realize that you created those images, experiences, and sensations. Your mind created the whole thing, and other than some memories of it, the whole thing disappeared the instant you woke up.

The *Course* is making similar observations about the world. Worlds are created and eventually cease to be, just like movies and dreams. It doesn't mean that what is happening in them doesn't seem real or meaningful, but they were created out of something else and they will eventually disappear into something else. They are not ultimately real. They, like a dream, seem real, but also like a dream, will fade away once we wake up to a grander perspective. *ACIM* isn't saying that your job or your pet or your significant experiences aren't important to you; it's just saying that in the vastness of eternity, they are like a dream that seemed real in the moment but faded into the ether once we obtained a waking state.

In other words, only God is real, and God is perfect. When imperfection or even temporary joys appear in our lives, they aren't God, that is, they aren't perfect and eternal. So, they aren't "real." Remember: ***Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.*** We are part of God, and therefore we cannot be permanently harmed. The situations that cause pain or disappointment are fleeting and will be replaced eventually by the waking consciousness that knows our unity with the divine, perfect, everlasting Reality that cannot be lost, lonely, sick, or abused. That is the hope offered by *A Course in Miracles*.

2. *ACIM seems to be a kind of mental or mind science like Divine Science or Religious Science or Positive Thinking. Since so much of*

the Course is about thinking and perception, the mind must be important to consider. So, where is the mind?

Wapnick tells us, "Mind...is non-corporeal or non-material, unlike the brain. Therefore it is invisible and intangible. Since it is also non-spatial and non-temporal, it is impossible to answer this question...the very word 'where' connotes a spatial dimension, which is unknown to the mind."⁷

Remember, quantum physics now tell us that consciousness is non-local. That means, of course, that consciousness isn't limited to a place. Consciousness is larger than the body or even a place. Mind is more than our memories or opinions or thoughts. Mind is more than the body or the brain. Mind is more than one person's experience. Mind is non-local, that is, non-spatial and non-temporal and non-corporeal. Divine Mind is the All, and we are perfect ideas in that Mind, using the power of the one Mind to think, to will, to act, and to create. To say where *is the mind* is to say *where is God?* Where isn't It?

3. *So is my "mind" The Mind?*

Sort of! That is, your Right Mind is The Mind. What you think is your "mind" is really just your ego, your sense of separateness or smallness. Your "little mind" that is ego and memories and unconscious images is not your highest or right or divine Mind. Super-Conscious Mind, the all-knowing, ever-present Mind is "*The Mind*" or Divine Mind. When we change our "little minds" to be open to the higher Thoughts of the One Mind, then we see the wonderful possibilities, the broad reality, the love and beauty that is everywhere and always available. In the bible, St. Paul said, "I die daily..." When we retire or push aside the "small self" or the false belief in separation, then that ego-centered self has died and given birth to the Resurrected Christ Mind within us. It's a daily process until we fully wake up to our Reality. The One Mind is our Mind because it is the only Real Mind. The ego-centered, individualized, separate self that we think we are and that we call our minds must change or "die daily" to allow the One Mind to operate through us, as us. That's Christ in us, the hope of glory!⁸

4. *What happens when we die and where do we go?*

Where is there to go? When we die, it's like waking up from a dream (or perhaps ending one dream and beginning another), but the change of scene doesn't require movement in reality. Some have said it's like going from one room to another, but it's still all in the one house. Death is only the expiration of the body. The Reality of who we are continues forever. There is one Reality, we are all part of It, and It is eternal. Our

⁷ *The Most Commonly Asked Questions About A Course in Miracles*

⁸ Colossians 1.27

experiences of It (or our interpretations of our experiences) may change, but there remains one Life, It is divine and everlasting, and that Life is our life now and forever.

Lesson 5: Meditations

Letting Go

Help me to let go of my preoccupations with the future.

Give me the strength to stop my futile attempts to predict and control the future.

Let me so no value in my plan of what the future should be.

Rid me of my senseless questions about tomorrow and of all my desires to manipulate and control others.

Remind me that my fears and uncertainties of tomorrow are only related to my unfounded fear of You.

Help me to be still; help me to listen and love.

Awaken me to the truth of Your Presence being only in the now of this moment.

Lift me up into Your Arms and remind me that I am Your Creation, and that I am the Perfection of Love.

Help me to acknowledge that I am Your Messenger of Love, and free me to shine Your Light everywhere.⁹

A Fire Within My Heart

There is a fire of compassion within my heart, a bubbling up of Love within my soul, a vibration within every cell of my body, a song of angels within my mind, a call of Love from God within my being, saying: 'Love, Love, Love, Love. As the Light of the world, as a messenger of God's Love, that is all you ever need to do.'¹⁰

Surrender

And I asked, 'What is the secret of total surrender to God?'

And I was told, 'The secret of surrender is simply to be. The secret of surrender is simply not to think. It is letting perception gently dissolve into the knowledge of Love, the land of no change, the kingdom of God. It is hearing the waves tenderly kiss the surf, becoming united, becoming one. It is perception dissolving into knowledge of the perfect, One-essence of God and Love. The secret of surrender is simply to do nothing and to be.'¹¹

A Shortcut to God is...

Letting go of interpreting other people's behavior,

Letting go of all our judgments,

Letting go of our control issues,

Letting go of guilt, blame and shame,

Letting go of making others wrong and ourselves right,

⁹ Gerald G. Jampolsky, *Shortcuts to God: Finding Peace Quickly Through Practical Spirituality*

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

*Letting go of our expectations and our scripts for others,
Letting go of seeing the shadows of the past in others and in ourselves,
Letting go of all our unforgiving and self-condemning thoughts.*

*Having the same interest in others as we have in ourselves,
Choosing to have peace of mind, and the Peace of God as our only goal,
Having a fire in our hearts to surrender to Love,
Knowing that our identity is the essence of Love and that we are no longer
fearful of death.
Choosing peace instead of conflict,
Choosing to cooperate rather than compete,
Believing that giving is receiving,
Knowing that Love is the answer to every problem that we will ever face.*

*Trusting and having faith in a Loving, non-judgmental God,
Stepping aside and letting our Higher Power lead the way,
Putting the future in the hands of God,
Knowing that we are always loved by God.*

*Knowing that when we've done all of the above, Eternal peace, love, joy and
happiness will be ours.¹²*

Homework

Say a few of the affirmations, over and over, every day this week.

Various Sayings...¹³

We stand together, Christ and I, in peace...

*Judgment and love are opposites. From one come all the sorrows of the
world; but from the other comes the peace of God...*

*My sinless brother/sister is my guide to peace. My sinful brother/sister is my
guide to pain; and which I choose to see I will behold.*

Forgiveness lets me know that minds are joined.

I am affected only by my thoughts.

I will not hurt myself again today.

I gladly make the 'sacrifice' of fear.

[Holy One], my freedom is in You alone.

[God] gives all power unto me.

Now let a new perception come to me.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ *Workbook for Students (A Course in Miracles)*

*I seek a future different from the past.
This instant is the only time there is.
The [holy] Spirit looks through me today.
All fear is past and only love is here.
A happy outcome to all things is sure.
The past is over. It can touch me not.
My present happiness is all I see.
The hush of Heaven holds my heart today.
Let me forget my brother's [or my sister's] past today.
My holiness shines bright and clear today.
I will not be afraid of love today.
My true Identity abides in You [God].
I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt.
If I am bound, my [God] is not free.
Let me not bind Your [Child] with laws I made.
God's healing Voice protects all things today.
My holy vision sees all things as pure.
I am surrounded by the love of God.
God is my refuge and my security.
I am in need of nothing but the truth.
The [Child] of God is my identity.
Let every voice but God's be still in me.
My Self is the ruler of the universe.
Your peace is with me...I am safe.
Whatever suffers is not part of me.
The glory of [God] is my own.*

Now would I be as God created me.

I rule my mind, which I alone must rule.

God is but Love, and therefore so am I.

There is one life, and that I share with God.

When I am healed I am not healed alone.

If I defend myself I am attacked.

There is no love but God's.

Truth will correct all errors in my mind.

I am as God created me.

I am one Self, united with my Creator.

Love created me like Itself.

Today I claim the gifts forgiveness gives.

I will receive whatever I requested.

I can be free of suffering today.

Lesson 6: A Few More Concepts to Consider

So far we've explored such practical, theological, and philosophical concepts as *God, Reality, Life, Ego, Child of God, Miracles, Jesus, Joy, Pain, Healing, Unity, Mind, Death (and beyond)*. Let's look at a few more concepts from *A Course in Miracles*:

Hell

"Emotional energy has got to go somewhere, and self-loathing is a powerful emotion. Turned inward, it becomes our personal hells: addiction, obsession, compulsion, depression, violent relationships, illness. Projected outward, it becomes our collective hells: violence, war, crime, oppression. But it's all the same thing: hell has many mansions, too."¹⁴

Resurrection

"Once we have forgiven completely, the ego is transcended. The final step belongs to God, who reaches down and lifts us unto Himself [or Herself]...[Jesus] invites us to follow his example of leaving behind what could never last, and accepting God's gift of the life that can never die."¹⁵

Accessing God

"God indeed can be reached directly, for there is no distance between [God] and [God's Child. God's...[Word] is written on everyone's heart. [When there are problems in life,] behold the problem, ask [God] for the answer, and then accept it when it comes...God takes you where you are and welcomes you. What more could you desire, when this is all you need?"¹⁶

Reincarnation

"In the ultimate sense, reincarnation is impossible. There is no past or future, and the idea of birth into a body has no meaning either once or many times. Reincarnation cannot, then, be true in any real sense. Our only question should be, 'Is the concept helpful?'...If it is used to strengthen the recognition of the eternal nature of life, it is helpful indeed...For our purposes, it would not be helpful to take any definite stand on reincarnation. A teacher of God should be as helpful to those who believe in it as to those who do not."¹⁷

God's Favorable Judgment

"Is each one to be judged in the end? Indeed, yes! No one can escape God's Final Judgment. Who could flee forever from the truth? But the Final Judgment will not come until it is no longer associated with fear. One day each one will welcome it, and on that very day it will be given...He/She will hear his/her sinlessness proclaimed around and around the world, setting it free as God's Final Judgment on him/her is received. This is the Judgment in which salvation lies. This is the Judgment that will set him/her free...Time

¹⁴ Marianne Williamson, *A Return to Love*

¹⁵ Wapnick, *Christian Psychology in A Course in Miracles*

¹⁶ *ACIM, Manual for Teachers*, pp. 64-65

¹⁷ *ACIM, MT*, p. 60

pauses as eternity comes near, and silence lies across the world that everyone may hear this Judgment of the [Child] of God: 'Holy are you, eternal, free and whole, at peace forever in the Heart of God.'...[God's] promises have guaranteed [God's] Judgment, and [God's] alone, will be accepted in the end."¹⁸

Forgiveness

"Learn that God has given you the means by which you can return to [God] in peace. *Do not see error.* Do not make it real. Select the loving and forgive the sin by choosing in its place the face of Christ...[God] loves [you]. Can you remember [God] and hate what [God] created?...As prayer is always for yourself, so is forgiveness always given you. It is impossible to forgive another, for it is only your sins you see in [the other]. You want to see them there, not in you. That is why forgiveness of another is an illusion; yet is...[a] happy dream...Only in someone else can you forgive yourself, for you have called [another] guilty of your sins, and in him [or her] must your innocence now be found."¹⁹

In the end, *A Course in Miracles* is an affirmation of God's goodness and our own. We are made in God's image, filled with God's love, and we are God's children forever. We are wonderful and our potential is enormous. At our core, we are innocent and holy. Ultimately, we cannot be separated from our loving God. This message is the message of Jesus, or so *ACIM* would have us believe. And this message is meant to relieve our fears, fill us with joy, and empower us to live abundant lives.

**Dear God,
May miracles replace war.
May miracles replace hatred.
May miracles replace judgment.
May miracles replace fear, in me and in the world. Amen.**²⁰

¹⁸ *ACIM, MT*, pp.38-39

¹⁹ *The Song of Prayer: Prayer, Forgiveness, Healing* (a supplement to *A Course in Miracles*)

²⁰ Marianne Williamson, *Illuminated Prayers*