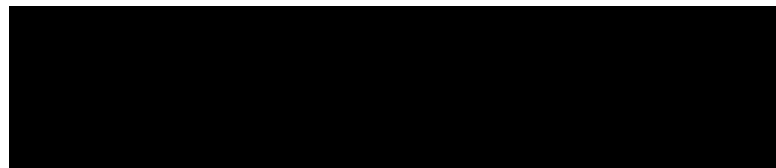


Themes of Relevance

from A Course in Miracles



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Acknowledgements

Tucked away within A Course in Miracles' Workbook for Students are 14 gems of beautiful discourse on major themes from the course. When following the workbook practice, these topics are read separately over the course of 140 days of accompanying lessons. While perfectly placed for the usual Workbook practice, we have extracted and collected these topics into one concise journal for easy access and spiritual study.

These discourses present the topics of Forgiveness, Salvation, the World, Sin, the Body, the Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Real World, the Second Coming, the Last Judgement, Creation, the Ego, a Miracle, and I in a concise and approachable manner. They are introduced by the following instructions:

From time to time, instructions on a theme of special relevance will intersperse our daily lessons and the periods of wordless, deep experience which should come afterwards. These special thoughts should be reviewed each day, each one of them to be continued till the next is given you. They should be slowly read and thought about a little while, preceding one of the holy and blessed instants in the day.

In line with A Course in Miracles' literary quality, these essays exhibit delightful symmetry. Each is titled by a question highlighting the exposition as a definition of the theme. The content of each essay five paragraphs long. More impressively, these essays continue the tradition of the rhythmic pentameter throughout all paragraphs of all essays. In this way, each essay is a self-contained epic poem.

We share this anthology as part of our mission to restore these valuable teachings to our collective awareness. You can find more A Course in Miracles exhibits and resources at alexbrady.org.

- alex brady

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What is Forgiveness?

Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in this view are all your sins forgiven. What is sin except a false idea about God's Son? Forgiveness merely sees its falsity, and therefore lets it go. What then is free to take its place is now the Will of God.

An unforgiving thought is one which makes a judgment that it will not raise to doubt, although it is not true. The mind is closed, and will not be released. The thought protects projection, tightening its chains, so that distortions are more veiled and more obscure; less easily accessible to doubt, and further kept from reason. What can come between a fixed projection and the aim that it has chosen as its needed goal?

An unforgiving thought does many things. In frantic action it pursues its goal, twisting and overturning what it sees as interfering with its chosen path. Distortion is its purpose and the means by which it would accomplish it as well. It sets about its furious attempts to smash reality, without concern for anything that would appear to pose a contradiction to its point of view.

Forgiveness, on the other hand, is still, and quietly does nothing. It offends no aspect of reality, nor seeks to twist it to appearance that 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.

Do nothing, then, and let forgiveness show you what to do through Him Who is your Guide, your Savior and Defender, strong in hope, and certain of your ultimate success. He has forgiven you already, for such is His function, given Him by God. Now must you share His function, and forgive whom He has saved, whose sinlessness He sees, and whom He honors as the Son of God.

What is Salvation?

Salvation is a promise, made by God, that you would find your way to Him at last. It cannot not be kept. It guarantees that time will have an end, and all the thoughts that have been born in time will end as well. God's Word is given every mind which thinks that it has separate thoughts, and will replace these thoughts of conflict with the Thought of peace.

The Thought of peace was given to God's Son the instant that his mind had thought of war. There was no need for such a Thought before, for peace was given without opposite, and merely was. But when the mind is split there is a need of healing. So the Thought Which has the power to heal the split became a part of every fragment of the mind that still was one, but failed to recognize its oneness. Now it did not know itself, and thought its own identity was lost.

Salvation is undoing in the sense that it does nothing, failing to support the world of dreams and malice. Thus it lets illusions go. By not supporting them, it merely lets them quietly go down to dust. And what they hid is now revealed; an altar to the holy Name of God whereon His Word is written, with the gifts of your forgiveness laid before It, and the memory of God not far behind.

Let us come daily to this holy place, and spend a while together. Here we share our final dream. It is a dream in which there is no sorrow, for it holds a hint of all the glory given us by God. The grass is pushing through the soil, the trees are budding now, and birds have come to live within their branches. Earth is being born again in new perception. Night has gone, and we have come together in the light.

From here we give salvation to the world, for it is here salvation was received. The song of our rejoicing is the call to all the world that freedom is returned, that time is almost over, and God's Son has but an instant more to wait until his Father is remembered, dreams are done, eternity has shined away the world, and only Heaven now exists at all.

What is the World?

The world is false perception. It is born of error, and it has not left its source. It will remain no longer than the thought which gave it birth is cherished. When the thought of separation has been changed to one of true forgiveness, will the world be seen in quite another light; and one which leads to truth, where all the world must disappear and all its errors vanish. Now its source has gone, and its effects are gone as well.

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. But eyes deceive, and ears hear falsely. Now mistakes become quite possible, for certainty has gone.

The mechanisms of illusion have been born instead. And now they go to find what has been given them to seek. Their aim is to fulfill the purpose which the world was made to witness and make real. They see in its illusions but a solid base where truth exists, upheld apart from lies. Yet everything that they report is but illusion which is kept apart from truth.

As sight was made to lead away from truth, it can be redirected. Sounds become the call of God. And all perception can be given a new purpose by the One Whom God appointed Savior to the world. Follow His light and see the world as He beholds it. Hear His Voice alone in all that speaks to you. And let Him give you peace and certainty, which you have thrown away, but Heaven has preserved for you in Him.

Let us not rest content until the world has joined our changed perception. Let us not be satisfied until forgiveness has been made complete. And let us not attempt to change our function. We must save the world. For we who made it must behold it through the eyes of Christ, that what was made to die can be restored to Everlasting Life.

What is Sin?

Sin is insanity. It is the means by which the mind is driven mad, and seeks to let illusions take the place of truth. And being mad, it sees illusions where truth should be, and where it really is. Sin gave the body eyes, for what is there the sinless would behold? What need have they of sights or sounds or touch? What would they hear or reach to grasp? What would they sense at all? To sense is not to know. And truth can be but filled with knowledge, and with nothing else.

The body is the instrument the mind made in its striving to deceive itself. Its purpose is to strive. Yet can the goal of striving change. And now the body serves a different aim for striving. What it seeks for now is chosen by the aim the mind has taken as replacement for the goal of self-deception. Truth can be its aim as well as lies. The senses then will seek instead for witnesses to what is true.

Sin is the home of all illusions, which but stand for things imagined, issuing from thoughts which are untrue. They are the “proof ” that what has no reality is real. Sin “proves” God’s Son is evil; timelessness must have an end; Eternal life must die. And God Himself has lost the Son He loves, with but corruption to complete Himself, His Will forever overcome by death, love slain by hate, and peace to be no more.

A madman’s dreams are frightening, and sin appears indeed to terrify. And yet what sin perceives is but a childish game. The Son of God may play he has become a body, prey to evil and to guilt, with but a little life that ends in death. But all the while his Father shines on him, and loves him with an everlasting Love which his pretenses cannot change at all.

How long, oh Son of God, will you maintain the game of sin? Shall we not pull away these sharp-edged children’s toys? How soon will you be ready to come home? Perhaps today? There is no sin. Creation is unchanged. Would you still hold return to Heaven back? How long, oh holy Son of God, how long?

What is the Body?

The body is a fence the Son of God imagines he has built to separate parts of his Self from other parts. It is within this fence he thinks he lives, to die as it decays and crumbles. For within this fence he thinks that he is safe from love. Identifying with his safety, he regards himself as what his safety is. How else could he be certain he remains within the body, keeping love outside?

The body will not stay. Yet this he sees as double safety. For the Son of God's impermanence is "proof" his fences work, and do the task his mind assigns to them. For if his oneness still remained untouched, who could attack and who could be attacked? Who could be victor? Who could be his prey? Who could be victim? Who the murderer? And if he did not die, what "proof" is there that God's eternal Son has been destroyed?

The body is a dream. Like other dreams, it sometimes seems to picture happiness, but can quite suddenly revert to fear, where every dream is born. For only love creates in truth, and truth can never fear. Made to be fearful, must the body serve the purpose given it. But we can change the purpose which the body will obey by changing what we think that it is for.

The body is the means by which God's Son returns to sanity. Though it was made to fence him into hell without escape, yet has the goal of Heaven been exchanged for the pursuit of hell. The Son of God extends his hand to reach his brother, and to help him walk along the road with him. Now is the body holy. Now it serves to heal the mind that it was made to kill.

You will identify with what you think will make you safe. Whatever it may be, you will believe that it is one with you. Your safety lies in truth and not in lies. Love is your safety. Fear does not exist. Identify with love, and you are safe. Identify with love, and you are home. Identify with love, and find your Self.

What is the Christ?

Christ is God's Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well. He is the Thought Which still abides within the Mind That is His Source. He has not left His holy home, nor lost the innocence in which He was created. He abides unchanged forever in the Mind of God.

Christ is the link that keeps you one with God, and guarantees that separation is no more than an illusion of despair. For hope forever will abide in Him. Your mind is part of His, and His of yours. He is the part in Which God's Answer lies; where all decisions are already made, and dreams are over. He remains untouched by anything the body's eyes perceive. For though in Him His Father placed the means for your salvation, yet does He remain the Self Who, like His Father, knows no sin.

Home of the Holy Spirit, and at home in God alone does Christ remain at peace, within the Heaven of your holy mind. This is the only part of you that has reality in truth. The rest is dreams. Yet will these dreams be given unto Christ to fade before His glory, and reveal your holy Self, the Christ, to you at last.

The Holy Spirit reaches from the Christ in you to all your dreams, and bids them come to Him, to be translated into truth. He will exchange them for the final dream which God appointed as the end of dreams. For when forgiveness rests upon the world and peace has come to every Son of God, what could remain to keep things separate, for what remains to see except Christ's face?

And how long will this holy face be seen, when it is but the symbol that the time for learning now is over, and the goal of the Atonement has been reached at last? So therefore let us seek to find Christ's face, and look on nothing else. As we behold His glory, will we know we have no need of learning or perception or of time, or anything except the holy Self, the Christ Whom God created as His Son.

What is the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit mediates between illusions and the truth. As He must bridge the gap between reality and dreams, perception leads to knowledge through the grace that God has given Him to be His gift to everyone who turns to Him for truth. Across the bridge that He provides are dreams all carried to the truth to be dispelled before the light of knowledge. There are sights and sounds forever laid aside. And where they were perceived before, forgiveness has made possible perception's tranquil end.

The goal the Holy Spirit's teaching sets is just this end of dreams, for sights and sounds must be translated from the witnesses of fear to those of love. And when this is entirely accomplished, learning has achieved the only goal it has in truth. For learning, as the Holy Spirit guides it to the outcome He perceives for it, becomes the means to go beyond itself to be replaced by the Eternal Truth.

If you but knew how much your Father yearns to have you recognize your sinlessness, you would not let His Voice appeal in vain, nor turn away from His replacement for the fearful images and dreams you made. The Holy Spirit understands the means you made, by which you would attain what is forever unobtainable. And if you offer them to Him, He will employ the means you made for exile, to restore your mind to where it truly is at home.

From knowledge, where He has been placed by God, the Holy Spirit calls to you to let forgiveness rest upon your dreams, and be restored to sanity and peace of mind. Without forgiveness will your dreams remain to terrify you. And the memory of all your Father's Love will not return to signify the end of dreams has come.

Accept your Father's gift. It is a call from Love to Love that It be but itself. The Holy Spirit is His gift by which the quietness of Heaven is restored to God's beloved Son. Would you refuse to take the function of completing God when all He wills is that you be complete?

What is the Real World?

The real world is a symbol like the rest of what perception offers, yet it stands for what is opposite to what you made. Your world is seen through eyes of fear, and brings the witnesses of terror to your mind. The real world cannot be perceived except through eyes forgiveness blesses, so they see a world where terror is impossible, and witnesses to fear can not be found.

The real world holds a counterpart for each unhappy thought reflected in your world; a sure correction for the sights of fear and sounds of battle which your world contains. The real world shows a world seen differently, through quiet eyes and with a mind at peace. Nothing but rest is there. There are no cries of pain and sorrow heard, for nothing here remains outside forgiveness. And the sights are gentle. Only happy sights and sounds can reach the mind that has forgiven itself.

What need has such a mind for thoughts of death, attack and murder? What can it perceive surrounding it but safety, love and joy? What is there it would choose to be condemned, and what is there that it would judge against? The world it sees arises from a mind at peace within itself. No danger lurks in anything it sees, for it is kind and only kindness does it look upon.

The real world is the symbol that the dream of sin and guilt is over, and God's Son no longer sleeps. His waking eyes perceive the sure reflection of his Father's Love; the certain promise that he is redeemed. The real world signifies the end of time, for its perception makes time purposeless.

The Holy Spirit has no need of time when it has served His purpose. Now He waits but that one instant more for God to take His final step, and time has disappeared, taking perception with it as it goes, and leaving but the Truth to be Itself. That instant is our goal, for it contains the memory of God. And as we look upon a world forgiven, it is He Who calls to us and comes to take us home, reminding us of our Identity Which our forgiveness has restored to us.

What is the Second Coming?

Christ's Second Coming, which is sure as God, is merely the correction of mistakes and the return of sanity. It is a part of the condition which restores the never-lost, and re-establishes what is forever and forever true. It is the invitation to God's Word to take illusion's place; the willingness to let forgiveness rest upon all things without exception and without reserve.

It is the all-inclusive nature of Christ's Second Coming that permits it to embrace the world, and hold you safe within its gentle advent which encompasses all living things with you. There is no end to the release the Second Coming brings, as God's creation must be limitless. Forgiveness lights the Second Coming's way because it shines on everyone as one.

The Second Coming ends the lessons which the Holy Spirit teaches, making way for the Last Judgment, in which learning ends in one last summary that will extend beyond itself, and reaches up to God. The Second Coming is the time in which all minds are given to the hands of Christ to be returned to Spirit in the Name of true creation and the Will of God.

The Second Coming is the one event in time which time itself can not affect. For every one who ever came to die, or yet will come or who is present now, is equally released from what he made. In this equality is Christ restored as one Identity in Which all Sons of God acknowledge that they all are one. And God the Father smiles upon His Son, His one creation and His only joy.

Pray that this Second Coming will be soon, but do not rest with that. It needs your eyes and ears and hands and feet. It needs your voice. And most of all it needs your willingness. Let us rejoice that we can do God's Will, and join together in Its holy light. Behold, the Son of God is one in us, and we can reach our Father's Love through him.

What is the Last Judgment?

Christ's Second Coming gives the Son of God the gift to hear the Voice for God proclaim that what is false is false, and what is true has never changed. And this the judgment is in which perception ends. At first you see a world which has accepted this as true, projected from a now corrected mind. And with this holy sight, perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.

The final judgment on the world contains no condemnation, for it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless. Without a cause, and now without a function in Christ's sight, it merely slips away to nothingness. There it was born, and there it ends as well. And all the figures in the dream in which the world began go with it. Bodies now are useless, and will therefore fade away, because the Son of God is limitless.

You who believed that God's Last Judgment would condemn the world to hell along with you, accept this holy truth: God's Judgment is the gift of the Correction He bestowed on all your errors, freeing you from them, and all effects they ever seemed to have. To fear God's saving grace is but to fear complete release from suffering, return to peace, security and happiness and union with your own Identity.

God's Final Judgment is as merciful as every step in His appointed plan to bless His Son, and call him to return to the eternal peace He shares with him. Be not afraid of Love, for It alone can heal all sorrow, wipe away all tears, and gently waken from his dream of pain the Son whom God acknowledges as His. Be not afraid of this. Salvation asks you give it welcome. And the world awaits your glad acceptance which will set it free.

This is God's Final Judgment: You are still My holy Son, forever innocent, forever loving and forever loved, as limitless as your Creator, and completely changeless and forever pure. Therefore awaken and return to Me. I am your Father and you are My Son.

What is Creation?

Creation is the sum of all God's Thoughts, in number infinite, and everywhere without all limit. Only Love creates, and only like Itself. There was no time when all that It created was not there, nor will there be a time when anything that It created suffers any pain.

Forever and forever are God's Thoughts exactly as They were and as They are, unchanged through time and after time is done. God's Thoughts are given all the power that Their own Creator has, for He would add to Love by Its extension. Thus His Son shares in creation, and must therefore share in power to create. What God has willed be forever one will still be one when time is over; and will not be changed throughout the course of time, remaining as it was before the thought of time began.

Creation is the opposite of all illusions for Creation is the truth. Creation is the holy Son of God, for in Creation is His Will complete in every aspect, making every part container of the whole. Its oneness is forever guaranteed inviolate; forever held within His holy Will beyond all possibility of harm, of separation, imperfection and of any spot upon its sinlessness. We are creation;-- we the Sons of God.

We seem to be discrete and unaware of our eternal unity with Him, yet back of all our doubts, past all our fears, there still is certainty. For Love remains with all Its Thought, Its sureness being Theirs. God's memory is in our holy minds which know their oneness and their unity with their Creator. Let our function be only to let this memory return, only to let God's Will be done on earth, only to be restored to sanity, and to be but as God created us.

Our Father calls to us. We hear His Voice, and we forgive creation in the Name of its Creator, Holiness Itself, Whose holiness His own creation shares. Whose holiness is still a part of us.

What is the Ego?

The ego is idolatry -- the sign of limited and separated self, born in a body, doomed to suffer and to end its life in death. It is the will that sees the Will of God as enemy, and takes a form in which It is denied. The ego is the "proof" that strength is weak and love is fearful, life is really death, and what opposes God alone is true.

The ego is insane. In fear it stands beyond the Everywhere, apart from All, in separation from the Infinite. In its insanity it thinks it has become a victor over God Himself, and in its terrible autonomy it "sees" the Will of God has been destroyed. It dreams of punishment, and trembles at the figures in its dreams, its enemies who seek to murder it before it can ensure its safety by attacking them.

The Son of God is egoless. What can he know of madness and the death of God when he abides in Him? What can he know of sorrow and of suffering when he lives in eternal joy? What can he know of fear and punishment, of sin and guilt, of hatred and attack when all there is surrounding him is everlasting peace, forever conflict-free and undisturbed, in deepest silence and tranquility?

To know Reality is not to see the ego and its thoughts, its works, its acts, its laws and its beliefs, its dreams, its hopes, its plans for its salvation, and the cost belief in it entails. In suffering, the price for faith in it is so immense that crucifixion of the Son of God is offered daily at its darkened shrine, and blood must flow before the altar where its sickly followers prepare for death.

Yet will one lily of forgiveness change the darkness into light; the altar to illusions to the shrine of Life Itself. And peace will be restored forever to the holy minds which God created as His Son, His dwelling-place, His joy, His love, completely His, completely one with Him.

What is a Miracle?

A miracle is a correction. It does not create nor really change at all. It merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false. It undoes error, but does not attempt to go beyond perception nor exceed the function of forgiveness. Thus it stays within time's limits. Yet it paves the way for the return of timelessness and love's awakening, for fear must slip away under the gentle remedy it gives.

A miracle contains the gift of grace, for it is given and received as one. And thus it illustrates the law of truth the world does not obey because it fails entirely to understand its ways. A miracle inverts perception which was upside-down before, and thus it ends the strange distortions that were manifest. Now is perception open to the truth. Now is forgiveness seen as justified.

Forgiveness is the home of miracles. The eyes of Christ deliver them to all they look upon in mercy and in love. Perception stands corrected in His sight, and what was meant to curse has come to bless. Each lily of forgiveness offers all the world the silent miracle of love, and each is laid before the Word of God upon the universal altar to Creator and creation in the Light of perfect purity and endless joy.

The miracle is taken first on faith because to ask for it implies the mind has been made ready to conceive of what it cannot see and does not understand. Yet faith will bring its witnesses to show that what it rested on is really there. And thus the miracle will justify your faith in it, and show it rested on a world more real than what you saw before, a world redeemed from what you thought you saw.

Miracles fall like drops of healing rain from Heaven on a dry and dusty world where starved and thirsty creatures came to die. Now they have water; Now the world is green. And everywhere the signs of life spring up to show that what is born can never die, for what has life has immortality.

What am I?

I am God's Son, complete and healed and whole, shining in the reflection of His Love. In me is His creation sanctified and guaranteed eternal life. In me is love perfected, fear impossible, and joy established without opposite. I am the holy home of God Himself. I am the Heaven where His Love resides. I am His holy Sinlessness Itself, for in my purity abides His own.

Our use for words is almost over now. Yet in the final days of these two weeks we gave to God together, you and I, we found a single purpose that we shared, and thus you joined with me. So what I am are you as well. The truth of what we are is not for words to speak of or describe. Yet we can realize our function here, and words can speak of this and teach it, too, if we exemplify the words in us.

We are the bringers of salvation. We accept our part as Saviors of the world which, through our joint forgiveness, is redeemed. And this, our gift, is therefore given us. We look on everyone as brothers, and perceive all things as kindly and as good. We do not seek a function that is past the gates of Heaven. Knowledge will return when we have done our part. We are concerned only with giving welcome to the truth.

Ours are the eyes through which Christ's vision sees a world redeemed from every thought of sin. Ours are the ears that hear the Voice of God proclaim the world as sinless. Ours the minds which join together as we bless the world. And from the oneness that we have attained, we call to all our brothers, asking them to share our peace and consummate our joy.

We are the holy messengers of God who speak for Him, and carrying His Word to everyone whom He has sent to us, we learn that It is written on our hearts. And thus our minds are changed about the aim for which we came and which we seek to serve. We bring glad tidings to the Son of God who thought he suffered. Now is he redeemed. And as he sees the gate of Heaven stand open before him, he will enter in and disappear into the Heart of God.