

Living A COURSE IN MIRACLES

Guidebook

Important

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Living A Course In Miracles:

Applying the Course's Messages
of Wisdom, Courage, and Forgiveness

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Introduction

Welcome to *Living A Course In Miracles: Applying the Course's Messages of Wisdom, Courage, and Forgiveness*. This guidebook has been created to assist you in your own spiritual journey. As you listen to the program and explore the principles of *A Course In Miracles*, we welcome you to open your heart and mind to the guidance of your higher self, so that you can gain greater clarity about the nature of divinity and its relation to the world in which we live as taught by the Course.

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D., is an internationally renowned Course teacher. A clinical psychologist, he has been working with *A Course In Miracles* since 1973 and worked closely with Helen Schucman, scribe of the Course, in preparing its final manuscript. With his wife Gloria, he is president and co-founder of the Foundation for *A Course In Miracles*. Like the Course itself, Kenneth encourages you to follow your own path to spirituality, whatever that might be. The insights inherent in the Course are intended to enhance your existing spiritual practices, so we suggest that you listen to your heart and your own inner guidance as you travel on this journey.

Gaining a deeper understanding of the lessons of the Course, and applying its principles to your life, can be daunting at times. In conjunction with the program, this guidebook has been created to help you clarify the principles of the Course. Comprehending them and applying them to your life will aid you in making the decision between continuing to listen to the voice of your ego, or beginning to listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. In its entirety, the Course is an opportunity for new perceptions that can be applied to all aspects of your life. Doing so will ultimately give you greater clarity, compassion, and peace of mind.

In order to gain the full benefits that this program has to offer, we suggest that you listen to each audio session at least twice, ideally three times, and then work on the corresponding segments of this guidebook. Listening to the audio session several times allows it to sink into your subconscious mind as you gain more and more insights each time you listen. Although there is some space provided for your responses within this guidebook, be sure to keep a notebook or journal on hand as you listen to the program and do the exercises, and write down your thoughts and feelings as you go along. Journaling is a very powerful tool for solidifying your new perceptions and gaining greater clarity.

As you focus on opening your heart and choosing to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, you will be given guidance through your intuition as well as through signs, symbols, and messages that come to you through events and experiences that you have throughout your day. Be sure to write down these insights as they occur. You may find that the more you focus on them, the more intense they will become. Remember that the Course focuses on simply observing the workings of your ego with a compassionate and non-judgmental eye. Imposing the idea that “I need to take action and change my behaviors” will only set you on a path deeper into the ego’s illusions.

Session 1: Choose to Change Your Mind about the World

In this session Kenneth discusses the concept of reality versus illusion in relation to the principles outlined in A Course In Miracles. He reminds you that you have two teachers: the ego voice within your mind and the voice of the Holy Spirit (or love) within your mind. You can choose which voice to listen to. Awareness of the ego and the defense system that it has created can aid you in making the internal changes that provide you with a greater sense of peace. Trying to change the outer world around you simply becomes a lesson in futility and further perpetuates the illusions that your ego mind has created.

1. Kenneth reminds you that there is a misperception in taking the Course literally. He cites an example of the nurse who gave up her job and worldly possessions thinking that such action was dictated by the Course. What worldly possessions have you attempted to “give up” so that you could become more “spiritual”? What was the outcome of this venture?

2. In the world of ego, like the world of business, there are winners and losers. It’s an environment that is based on a belief in scarcity and lack. An analogy might be a pie. If you have a piece of pie, then there is one less available to me. There is only so much to go around, and your gain could mean my loss. List an example in your life when you perpetuated this belief.

3. Take a moment to image the above scenario with the perception that there is an infinite number of pies, and that there is more than enough for all to enjoy. How does your perception of the situation change? How do you feel emotionally about this situation once you have chosen an attitude of “love” and abundance over “fear” and scarcity?

4. A “special” relationship is one in which you seek your wholeness through another. In doing so you project your shame upon them, creating a relationship that is saturated with the voice of the ego. Make a list of any of the “special” relationships that you have.

Session 2: Through Darkness to the Light

This session focuses on your feelings of guilt and your subsequent projection of these feelings onto others. In order to grow, you must be willing to experience your own feelings of sin, guilt, and fear and be willing to look at the darkness that resides within you. The tendency is to project your own guilty feelings on the world around you so that you don't have to fully experience the horror of your own perceived guilt. When you begin to look at your life as a classroom in which your relationships are the curriculum and the wisdom of Jesus in the Course is the teacher, then you will experience your life from a much different perspective. Having the courage, then, to experience the darkness that resides within you is the only real way to remember the light from which you first existed.

1. Make a list of all of the individuals who you believe have wronged you in your life.
2. Beside each name, write down the wrongdoing you specifically believe that they were guilty of.
3. Reflect on each name and wrongdoing, and do a personal inventory. Look within yourself to see when you have felt a parallel guilt. What personal guilt might you have been avoiding while resenting someone or something outside of yourself?

4. Make a list of what is challenging you in your current relationship and career. Now, take a step away from the anxiety of these experiences and view them as life lessons in which the divine is teaching you a lesson about yourself. Reflect on each, then write down what your personal lesson might be in each case.

5. Seeing your life's challenges as lessons can give them a very different perspective. Choose one of the above challenges and make a concerted effort to view it as a lesson. Record any new insights that you gain as you practice this exercise.

6. Make a list of the areas of your life in which you expect perfection from yourself, and perhaps others. Can you choose differently? Are you willing to? How can you give yourself permission to let go of trying to be perfect?

Session 3: How *A Course in Miracles* Began

Kenneth opens this session by giving the details of the inception of the Course by Helen Schucman and William Thetford in 1965. He then goes on to explain the myth of separation in great detail, outlining the basic principles from which the Course evolved.

1. The principle message of the Course is forgiveness. First and foremost is self-forgiveness. To become more aware of your own lack of forgiveness, make a list of the things that you still need to forgive yourself for; anything in life that you thought, felt, did, or did not do, that you feel any guilt about.

2. Kenneth describes the time in which Helen and Bill made a commitment to find a more peaceful and loving way to relate to one another — in what the Course terms the “holy instant” (when two people set aside their separate interests, go to what the Course refers to as their “right minds,” and then choose to see the other’s interest as their own). Have you ever consciously experienced the “holy instant” in any of your relationships? If so, describe it and the outcome that resulted because of the choice that you made.

3. Is there any part of the myth of separation that Kenneth describes that confuses you? If so, write out your confused thoughts, then re-listen to that segment of the program again.

4. Unlike several Christian and Jewish belief systems in which “atonement” refers to suffering and sacrificing to gain forgiveness from a vengeful God, the Course defines “atonement” as the understanding and recognition that sin (the separation from God) never happened. Prior to studying the Course, what was your experience of “atonement” in relation to your beliefs?

5. If you change your belief so that you do not need to be forgiven by an angry God, how might this change your perspective on the role of forgiveness in your life?

Session 4: Dealing with the Ego

Kenneth opens this session by reminding you that the decision maker is the ego's greatest threat. You have the option at any time and in any situation to choose how you experience and perceive things. If you choose to follow the ego's story, you pay a price — the price of further projection and misery. To emphasize this further, Kenneth explains the underlying metaphysical framework of the Course. According to the Course, original sin never happened, but we believe it did. With the agony of self-contempt from this belief, we then began projecting our guilt, shame and fear, thus creating the material universe that exists. If we choose to continue to project, we will see an external world of great suffering and pain, and we will be miserable. However, at any time if we decide to make the correct choice, we will experience life from a much more aware and peaceful perspective.

1. Kenneth states that we secretly love to be unfairly treated. Our ego feeds on situations where we see ourselves as victims of injustice. Write down the situation in your life where you felt most unjustly treated.

2. If you viewed the injustice of the situation above as projected guilt, how could you perceive the situation differently?

3. When you experience violence in the outer world, the Course does not suggest that you condone it in any way, but that you see the potential for violence that exists within you. What is the most violent act that has ever been perpetrated upon you? Ask yourself if you have the potential for such anger, fear, or rage.

4. Note the behaviors of those around you that you judge as negative, toxic, cruel, or inappropriate. Start witnessing yourself as the judge. What thoughts or feelings arise?

5. Does your ego intend separation as you judge others? How can you perceive things differently to bridge the gap of separation that you created?

Session 5: One Problem, One Solution: Magic vs. Miracles

Kenneth gets to the heart of the Course by discussing how you can apply its principles to your life. He suggests that you remain open and attentive to the trigger points that stir you in your life, and learn which “magic” quick fixes serve you the most. He explains the ego’s laws of chaos, and he distinguishes the difference between pure joy and temporary happiness. One is an internal state of being; the other relies upon external “illusions” of the material world for its stimuli.

1. Kenneth suggests that you become attentive to the trigger points that may upset you throughout your day. For a day, take the time to note individuals or circumstances that upset you. Make a list of them.

2. Go through the list and write down the reason that you believe you were triggered. Then ask for guidance from the Holy Spirit to review each and observe what you are projecting onto the situation; what beliefs or feelings you have about yourself that you do not wish to see.

3. Once you have had a chance to see those aspects of yourself that you have been avoiding, simply observe what you see with compassion and non-judgment. Go into your feelings, do not avoid them. Write down any insights that you had while doing this exercise.

4. Kenneth refers to the “magic” that exists in our whole; things that may give you a temporary “high.” Which “magic” elements are you most drawn to? Observe each of them, with the realization that they are an illusion. Make note of any insights that arise.

Session 6: Looking at Your Fear without Judgment

In this session Kenneth describes how you can become an advanced teacher of God. He discusses how you can perceive the world with a heightened awareness, with a sense of forgiveness for yourself and others, to gain a greater sense of peace in your life. To judge your ego-based actions and those of others is to continue to follow its trappings. You can try to split your mind so that you can become the observer of your ego's actions as you experience them. The next step is to observe your ego's behaviors without judgment, guilt, or fear. If you can do so, you are open to experience the miracles that the Course refers to.

1. Kenneth discusses how all that exists in the material world is a dream — a desk, the dog, a thunderstorm, other individuals, the food you eat, etc. As you encounter things throughout your day, remind yourself that all is a dream. So, when you wake up in the morning, say to yourself, “this cereal is a dream,” etc. Try this exercise for at least a day, and make note of any insights that you have.

2. The Course states that you are never upset for the reasons that you think you are. For the next week, whenever you find yourself getting frustrated or angry, make a mental note to yourself that you are not angry for the reason that you think you are. Make note of any insights or ideas that you get in response to this exercise.

3. A useful exercise that you may wish to try — that is not related to the Course, but could aid you in practicing being the witness to your ego — is meditation. While you meditate, focus on your breathing. If your mind wanders, simply observe that it is wandering without judgment, then bring your focus back to your breath. As you continue this exercise you will work the “silent witness” muscle of your mind.

4. Your attempts to define yourself as a “specialist” in various areas of your life is your ego’s way of perpetuating the idea of your individuality and separateness. In what areas of your life would you label yourself as “special” or “the specialist”?

5. In the Course Jesus states, “Teach not that I died in vain. Teach, rather, that I did not die, by demonstrating that I live in you.” How are you currently demonstrating the ideologies of the Course in your life?

6. Kenneth reminds you that denying yourself in any way will not rectify your feelings of fear and guilt. The trick is to continue your life normally, but with mindfulness of the ego’s workings. What “magic” of this world do you deny yourself in hopes of becoming more spiritually enlightened?

Session 7: The Ego, the Holy Spirit, and the Decision Maker

Kenneth opens this session with an exercise to reminder you that you are united with your creator and that there is no duality in heaven. With the use of a ladder as the metaphor he takes you through the Course's theories on separation and how the ego's illusion is strengthened through our biblical stories of the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Ultimately, we often see ourselves as victims in our world from our births until our deaths.

1. Repeat part of the exercise that Kenneth opens this session with, offer to your mind with all the certainty that you can give, "I am oneself, united with my creator, at one with every aspect of creation and limitless in power and in peace." Then close your eyes and tell yourself again, slowly and thoughtfully, attempting to allow the meaning of the words to sink into your mind. Meditate on these words at least twice daily for a week. Write about any insights that you discover as you continue this exercise.

2. What issues do you have with authority figures? Noting that this perpetuates separateness — someone is wrong and someone is right — how might you change your mind about this power struggle that you have created?

3. Kenneth stipulates that any experiences of guilt or self-hatred that you have are a fragmentary reflection of the original guilt. Make a list of the areas in which you judge yourself most harshly. What do you hate about yourself?

4. Now that you've listed the areas in which you carry self-hatred, look at each as a reflection of the original guilt that you would have felt at the point in which you chose to separate from the oneness. How does your perspective on your hatred change in light of this comparison?

5. In the creation of the world, we find ourselves in a body, ruled by our brain. Viewing the world from the perspective of your mind also makes the Holy Spirit a player in the formula. Make note of how often you make choices and perceive your life from the perspective of your brain, and not your mind.

6. Imagine that you came into this world consciously, that you chose your parents and the events that play out in your life as lessons on how to return home. Viewing yourself as an active, conscious participant in your life, how does this change your victim consciousness?

Session 8: Getting to the True Top of the Ladder

In this session Kenneth begins his instruction at the bottom of the ladder of awareness. He reminds us that all pain is an accusatory finger that we point at someone else. He recaps the journey of descent down the ladder, then he follows by describing how to begin to climb up that ladder to a place in which you can choose to say "no" to the ego. In doing so you are then able to remove any barriers and restore to your mind its power to be the causative agent to the perceptions that you currently enforce in your life.

1. The kind of love that the ego seeks is termed “special love” in the Course. In the ego’s world we search for love that is rooted in a person, a relationship, money, fame, an object, a substance, a craving, or a pleasure. Make a list of the “special loves” that you have been seeking in your life. Do not judge yourself for these choices, but simply study and observe them.
 2. The Course states that your task is not to seek for love, but to seek and find all the barriers that you have placed between yourself and love. Make a list of the barriers that you have put up between yourself and love in your life. What do you find yourself most preoccupied with? What disturbs you most and keeps you from looking within?
 3. Kenneth suggests that you will recognize love if you let go of specialness, loss, abandonment, betrayal, momentary ecstasy and satisfaction. Have you had moments in your life where you have experienced even a moment of love through relinquishing any of the above?
 4. Denial and repression flourish in the ego’s world. Take some time to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to areas in which you might be in denial. What are you unwilling to take responsibility for in your life? Pay attention to any signs that may arise and record any insights that you get on this matter.

Session 9: The Only Real Choice – The Real Alternative

Kenneth discusses how our identification with guilt is the root of our suffering. Consequently, the world's purpose is to keep the problem of our pain and unhappiness in existence by continuing the cycle of perception of sin, guilt, fear, and projection. The only real choice is to ask for help from the Holy Spirit, thus choosing love over guilt as our teacher. With the aid of the Holy Spirit we can look at our hatred with open eyes and honesty. As we journey through this painful awakening, having the compassion and sense of purpose that a loving presence provides makes the task much more bearable.

1. Kenneth discusses how we often struggle with a belief system that anyone of authority is out to steal from us. What is your judgment or projection upon authority figures in your life? If you were to take an honest look at your beliefs, what do you believe they are stealing from you?

2. Make a list of the “other ladders” that you have attempted to climb in order to avoid looking at the pain of your own feelings of guilt and self-hatred.

3. As you face struggles throughout the day, ask yourself the following question: “Do I prefer to be right or happy in this situation?” If the choice is to be right, do not judge yourself; just observe your choice of separation over love. If you choose happiness, note any sense of peace that comes from making that choice. How does it feel in your heart, mind, and body?

4. Think of a situation that you are struggling with. Note how you feel when you focus on it. Ask the Holy Spirit for assistance, then focus again on the situation. Again, note how you feel after asking for help. Write about any insights that you gain while doing this exercise.

Session 10: What Really Works

In this session Kenneth discusses what really works as far as climbing the ladder home. He cautions you to avoid trying to skip rungs of the ladder, and he reminds you that forgiveness and undoing the ego is a gradual process. He suggests that you choose one of the many spiritual paths and diligently follow it; trying to choose several will only create conflict in your mind and further fuel the ego's patterns. Ultimately, to see the face of Christ in your brother is a powerful step along the journey of forgiveness and remembering.

1. There is a temptation to try to skip rungs of the ladder home. We often expect that we can jump from the bottom rung to the top without going through the intermediate steps. Do you do this? If so, what steps are you avoiding taking? Are you open and willing to look at the guilt and hatred that exists within yourself?

2. Kenneth discusses how many of us come from other spiritual paths before studying the Course. Are you currently following several spiritual paths? If so, ask yourself whether this might cause conflict in your mind and be another one of your ego's ingenious ploys.

3. Take a look at the principles of the Course thus far. Is there any element of it that you struggle with? Does it feel right for you? If not, you might ask the Holy Spirit for some guidance and take note as to whether your resistance is your ego's defense or something else. Either way, just observe your thoughts and feelings without condemnation or judgment.

4. Think of someone in your life who pushes your buttons the most. Imagine that this is all a dream. Look at the individual from this perspective. If this is a classroom and this individual is part of the curriculum, can you begin to see the face of Christ in them? If not, what is blocking you and why?

Session 11: The Six Stages of Development of Trust

Kenneth and Gloria spend a great deal of this session discussing how we can relate to others in our lives according to the Course. The session opens with a powerful poem that Helen wrote as she dealt with actually facing Jesus as real and letting go of the ego's illusions. Central to choosing the voice of the Holy Spirit is finding forgiveness first for yourself, then for others. Key in this process is the development of trust. There are six stages to this that are outlined in this program. The first three stages can be very difficult. Stage 1: a period of undoing in which you begin to question your values and how they have perpetuated the illusions of your ego.

1. Take some time to close your eyes and listen again to the poem. You may wish to listen to it several times. What images, messages, or insights does the poem conjure up in your mind?

2. Who in your life do you most need to forgive and why?

3. Acceptance is key to awakening from the ego's dream. Make a list of those things that you do not accept in your life. Observe each item and make a mental note of how this lack of acceptance is fueling your ego.

4. Make a list of your current value system. Now, given the new insights of the Course, how does your value system tie into the voice of your ego and how it dictates your life?

5. Once you have listed and noted your current value system and studied it as an element of your ego's voice, what is your response to your realization? Were you judgmental and self-critical? Was your first initiative that you need to "change" or "make better" your value system? If so, wasn't this response also empowering the critical voice of your ego? Try to simply observe your responses, avoiding judgment and condemnation. List any insights that you might gain in doing this exercise.

Session 12: The Six Stages of Development of Trust (cont'd)

Kenneth and Gloria continue their journey through explaining the six stages to the development of trust. They describe Stage 2 as a period of sorting out; Stage 3 as a period of relinquishment in which you sacrifice your perceived best interest on behalf of the truth; Stage 4 as a period of resting; Stage 5 as a period of unsettling; and Stage 6 as a period of achievement, the stage of real peace. These stages are a guideline from which you can focus on your journey, understanding that it is a gradual process.

1. Kenneth and Gloria state that the Holy Spirit's guidance is gentle and that we make it difficult with our resistance. Do an inventory of your life. How are you currently resisting the guidance of the Holy Spirit? What actions are you taking (or not taking) that are contrary to hearing the voice of the Holy Spirit?

2. What thoughts are you thinking that are contrary to the Holy Spirit's guidance?

3. What beliefs do you currently have that perpetuate the ego's belief system?

4. How does your competitive spirit manifest in your life? What are the ramifications of following this spirit? Remember, do not judge or create an "action plan." Simply observe this behavior with compassion.

Session 13: Projection Makes Perception

Gloria opens this session with selections from the Course along with a short meditation on the journey of separation and back again. She then illuminates the Course's theory of original creation by describing a journey that she took over an 18-month period. In this experience she re-lived the oneness, separation, and subsequent struggles. She describes meeting with three groups of beings: light, middle, and dark. These groups are representations of two states of our mind: the Holy Spirit that is equated with the light, and the middle and dark groups that are equated with the ego. She describes her fear and panic in the face of the dark beings, and she explains how she continually attempts to compel the light beings to join her and rise against the darkness. This experience is a vivid and pungent reenactment of the struggles that we each face with our egos and the projection that we make in our lives and throughout the world as it exists today.

1. Describe what you experienced in the meditation that Gloria did. Did you have any instances where you were joined with the oneness?

2. As you listened to Gloria's story, what thoughts arose for you?

3. Once you've listed your thoughts, analyze each to distinguish which might have been generated from the voice of the ego and which from the voice of the Holy Spirit.

4. Describe how your ego's projection system is reflected in your life today. Then, using your personal life as a microcosm, describe how it is reflected in the present-day world at large.

Session 14: A Course In Miracles and Money

In this session Kenneth describes money in relation to the Course. He introduces you to the scarcity principle in which you believe that there is something lacking in you. This is perpetuated with your physical body and many aspects of your ego's illusions. World power and the belief in deprivation all play a key role in the ego's relationship to money. The ego's system is set up to perpetuate the belief that your gain is another's loss. My acquisition of money is your loss. This belief system then created a sense of inequality and victim consciousness where other's interests are very separate from yours. Change lies in leading a life of shared interests, where you give away the thought system that you have made your possessions a symbol of. How do you do this? Find those that you have projected guilt upon and find forgiveness both for them as well as yourself for your mistaken thoughts.

1. Take a look at your childhood. What was your belief system and relation to money in conjunction with your parents or any others who had a powerful role in your upbringing? Do you harbor any anger towards them in relation to money?

2. Your salvation lies in choosing to experience your life as a classroom and in finding forgiveness. Asking the Holy Spirit for guidance, put out the intention to find forgiveness. Observe your thoughts and feelings and make note of any insights that you gain.

3. The Course states that change lies in giving away the thought system that you have made your possessions a symbol of. Review your thoughts and feelings about money. What is money — the possessions or status that money can buy you — symbolic of for you?

4. With the guidance of the Holy Spirit, take some time to look at how you have abused power in your life. List anything you have done that you believe has been abusive. Then try to look at this behavior without guilt or judgment, realizing that you are an insane part of an insane ego system.

5. What kind of pain have your decisions about power created for you?

6. Review the lists that you have created above. Go through each note and choose forgiveness, both for yourself and for anyone else that you projected your guilt upon.

Session 15: The Gift of God: Love

In this session Kenneth outlines how we can choose the gift of God, love, over fear. Having traveled through a great many journeys in interpreting the essence of the Course, we are given a glimpse of the relationship that we are capable of having with the divine. Of course, this relationship already exists. We can fully experience it only when we are willing to let go of our ego's illusions. Kenneth clearly articulates the errors that we make in our world of the ego and tells us how we can correct these errors simply by perceiving things differently.

1. Begin to practice this exercise whenever you find someone causing you apparent anxiety or frustration. As early as you can in the experience, repeat to yourself, "You are not my problem. I am my problem." Continue repeating this phrase. If you do not become aware until after the situation has passed, think of the other individual and continue to repeat this phrase, allowing it to fully sink into your heart and mind. Write about any insights that you gain while doing this exercise.

2. If you find yourself dependent upon something to be a certain way in order to make you peaceful, Kenneth states that this is a red flag you should look at. The next time you note that a preference you have becomes a demand, or an obligation that you impose upon another, ask for the Holy Spirit's help. Be aware that the "ego" voice within you is hoping that the Holy Spirit will not answer, because it would rather remain a guilty victim of a cruel and unjust world. Don't feel guilty, just simply become aware of this and write about any insights that you might gain in doing so.

3. Try to meditate or pray upon how you are furthest from joining with the mind of Jesus in your life. Listen to any responses that arise in your mind, and write them down.

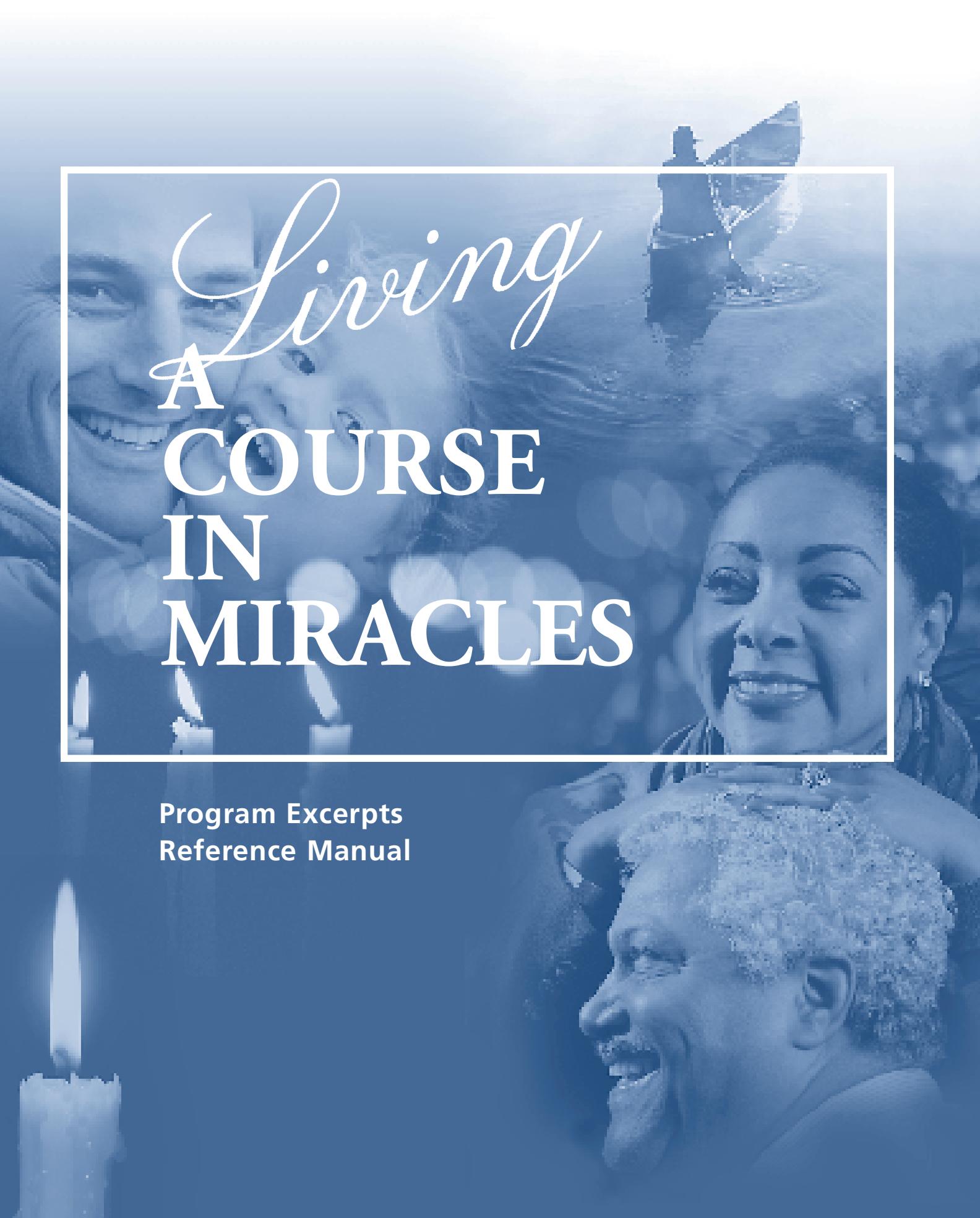
4. Next time you find yourself judging your behavior or thoughts harshly, stop. Envision yourself as a young child behaving in this manner or thinking these thoughts. If you were the parent of this child, and coming from a place of love from within your heart, how would you respond to this frightened and ashamed child? Imagine God responding to you in this way. Write about any insights that you might gain in doing this exercise.

Session 16: The Gift of God: Love (cont'd)

In the final session of this program Kenneth continues to read from the final words that Helen scribed. He starts by informing us that God sent the Holy Spirit as our comforter. Calling the Holy Spirit to guide us brings comfort to our minds because the problems exist within our minds. He reminds us that the return home is simple. It is our guilt that makes it difficult. As we open our hearts and mind, we allow ourselves to become pure channels of divine love. We open the door to a world where there is no past or future; a world where love and compassion reign supreme.

1. Kenneth asserts that the Holy Spirit is our comforter and that comfort can only come to our minds. Next time your mind is uneasy, call upon the Holy Spirit to enter it and provide you with solace. Write about any insights that you gain while doing this exercise.

2. We are told that the return home is simple. Guilt is our problem. We buried the light under our guilt, but it still shines radiantly. Make a list of anything that you are holding onto in your life that you feel guilty about. Review the list frequently and make a choice as to whether or not you wish to release your guilt. Do not judge yourself in this process, but make note of your resistances and responses.
3. This is described as a Course in changing our thinking, not our behavior. Trying to change your behavior is yet another trapping of your ego's voice. Make a list of the behaviors that you have promised yourself you will change in order to become a "better" person. Choose whether or not attempting to make these behavior modifications is in your ego's or your heart's best interest.
4. Call the Holy Spirit in for guidance and do this visualization exercise. Imagine that you have just opened the door to Heaven. You are experiencing the "holy instant" where there is no past or future, only pure love. Take some time to bask in the beauty and oneness of this place. When you are through, list any insights, resistances, thoughts, or feelings that you had.



Living A COURSE IN MIRACLES

Program Excerpts
Reference Manual

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Introduction

Welcome to Living *A Course in Miracles*: Applying the Course's Messages of Wisdom, Courage, and Forgiveness. This Program Excerpts Reference Manual has been created to assist you in better understanding and assimilating the powerful message of the *Course* into your life.

You may find the *Course* difficult to comprehend at times. This is only natural. The *Course* embodies such a new and unfamiliar way of perceiving the world that at times it can seem overwhelming and incomprehensive. Also, as Kenneth mentions in his lectures, our egos are often resistant to transformation and can make the concepts of the *Course* seem even more puzzling. It is for this reason that we created the Program Excerpts Reference Manual.

Within each session we have chosen particular passages that encapsulate the essence of Kenneth's message. Whenever you see quotation marks around a phrase, Kenneth is making a direct quote from *A Course in Miracles*. At times you will hear Kenneth referring to the "workbook" or "teacher's manual." In such cases, he is not referring to your guidebooks, but to excerpts from the "workbook" and "teacher's manual" within the *Course* itself.

We encourage you to listen and re-listen to his messages, along with reading and re-reading these excerpts. Through uncompromising discipline, commitment, and conviction you will begin to understand the great wisdom of the *Course* more and more. As Kenneth also mentions in his lectures, one of the fundamental keys in your studies of the *Course* is that you ask the Holy Spirit for guidance on this journey. Taking the journey with a divine, compassionate guide will allow you to study the *Course* and apply it to your life with less resistance and a greater sense of ease.

Although the *Course* does not suggest this, you may find it helpful to meditate and journal on particular segments of the passages that you read in this manual. We have created a "notes" segment at the end of each session to assist you in your journaling. Try not to edit your notes, and allow them to flow freely.

Treating them with the non-judgment that Kenneth suggests you treat yourself throughout your studies will allow you to begin to immediately implement the compassionate teachings of the *Course* into your life.

Session 1: Choose to Change Your Mind about the World

Opening Narration:

As Kenneth begins his discussion, he addresses the concept of reality versus illusion. He asserts that we have been and will always be at one with the divine. To illustrate this concept, he relays a myth about the miscreation of man and the earth. According to this myth, while we were part of the divine and in the oneness, at one time we decided that we wanted more, to be special. So we created a belief that we were separate from the divine. And consequently we miscreated this physical world to support this belief. We are not separate, and at any time we can choose to remember this.

However, most often we do not.

Based on the principles of the Course then, anything in existence other than love is simply an illusion that we made in order to provide evidence that we are separate from the divine. Although we may realize this, we still live in this so-called “real” world that we made. Thus we have to deal with life’s experiences in a practical and responsible way.

That part of us that decided to separate from the divine is the voice of the ego within our minds. The other voice is that of love, the Holy Spirit. As Kenneth will explain, we have an option. We ultimately make a choice of which voice we care to listen to — that of the ego, or that of the Holy Spirit.

Now, there is an inherent danger in taking the Course’s messages too literally and basically giving up all that exists in the “material” world. Therefore, it is necessary to live with the awareness that all of this that we experience is an illusion, but to find the balance between renouncing it all and living “in” it with a heightened sense of courage, conviction and awareness.

At this point in time I’d like to clarify a few references from Kenneth and the Course. When he speaks of “Christ” or the “Son of God,” Kenneth is referring to each and every one of us. So when this reference is made, you should make a mental note that he is referring to you. “We” and the Son of God are one and the same.

Secondly, when Kenneth refers to the “dream,” he is referring to our current lives and the experiences that we have in it. According to the Course’s myth about the miscreation of our physical world, once we thought that we wanted to be separate from the divine, we went into a

dream state. Within the “dream” is this world that our ego-self has miscreated. It’s basically an illusion. The reality is that we are love, we are one with the divine, but we have forgotten this. We created our physical bodies in this physical world in order to continue to forget and sustain the belief that we are separate.

And the third clarification, for those of you who are less familiar with the Course, is that it is believed that Jesus dictated its text to Helen Schucman. When Kenneth refers to “Jesus,” he is talking about the original teacher of the Course; the individual with whom Helen dialogued. So there are times when Kenneth will state, “Jesus says.” When he makes this reference, he is referring to the words that are scribed within the text of the Course.

As a final reminder, Kenneth mentions several times throughout the program that our egos are very powerful and are most often resistant to change. Because of this, you may find that you are struggling to fully understand the material. Our ingenious egos can make the concepts of the Course seem extremely puzzling. It is for this reason that we created the accompanying Guidebook and Program Excerpts Reference Manual. We encourage you to listen and re-listen to the program several times, along with working through the accompanying guidebooks. The repetition of the messages, along with your uncompromising discipline, commitment, and conviction will ultimately enhance your understanding of the Course’s great wisdom.

And lastly, as Kenneth also mentions in his lectures, one of the fundamental keys in your studies of the Course is that you ask the Holy Spirit for guidance on this journey. Proceeding with a divine, compassionate guide by your side will enable you to study the Course and apply it to your life with less resistance and a greater sense of ease.

Kenneth:

I think that what's important, and I guess it's a premise that underlies everything I've been saying so far, is that *A Course in Miracles* is a spiritual path. It is not a way of life in the sense of anything external. It is certainly not meant to be a cult, it is not meant to be a community, and it's not meant to be a church. It's not meant to be anything. It is a spiritual path that individual people participate in, if they choose. That's why there's nothing in this *Course* about joining in terms of groups. Absolutely nothing. There's a tremendous amount in this *Course* about joining with the Holy Spirit, which then becomes the prerequisite for your experiencing a oneness with other people. This doesn't mean about

joining with them, in any kind of external form, or external behavior. It means joining with them in the sense that you no longer see your interest as separate from theirs. And this joining, which basically is an acceptance of a joining that's already there; it's not something that you do, because we are already joined. It's the ego that tells us that we are separated.

So that the only joining that is important, and the only focus of that joining, is the joining in our mind; away from the ego with which we have previously joined, and now joining with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. That's the joining. That is called the greater joining. And that joining with the Holy Spirit once again becomes the basis for our experiencing our brothers and sisters as being one with us. Sharing the same interest, singular. And that interest, that goal, that purpose is to awaken from this dream. Another way of saying the same thing is that the ego has taught us in this world it's one or the other. I win you lose. So our interests are indeed separate.

The way that people build up businesses in our capitalistic world is that my business has to beat out and do better than the competition. That's called good business. So I'm going to win and you're going to lose. Our whole society is built on that premise. And the ultimate thought that underlies all of these practices in our world is that God has to be sacrificed so I will exist; it's one or the other. And the way that plays out in our everyday life, unfortunately, is that if I'm going to escape from the burden of my guilt, then I must project it onto you. So you now have the guilt and I don't. You lose and I win. And of course what makes relationships interesting is that you're going to do the very same thing with me. So we're both trying to do the same thing with each other, trying desperately to appear as if we're doing just the opposite. That's what special love is.

So it's that shift from seeing our interest as separate from others, to realizing our interest is the same. That's the shift that is the focus of the whole *Course*. But it has nothing to do with behavior. It has nothing to do with my being a loving, caring husband, wife, child, friend, employer, or employee. Any of the various roles that we all have. Nothing changes. All that changes is something of me. So again, this is not a *Course* in behavior. You know, one of the more important lines that I like to quote every once in a while, because it really summarizes all this, is a line in the text where Jesus says, "this is a *Course* in cause and not effect." This is a *Course* in cause and not effect. The cause is the mind, the effect is the world. So this is not a *Course* in changing the world. This is not a *Course* in helping us live better in the world. Again, there is no world. This is a *Course* in changing the cause of how we interact and perceive the world. And there are only two possible causes in our mind — it is the thought system of the ego, and there's the thought system of the Holy Spirit. There's nothing in between. That's it.

So this is a *Course* in changing our mind. That's the cause, and not a *Course* in the effect, which is how we behave. That's why there's nothing in the world about how you should be in the world. Aside from the workbook exercise, there are no rituals. There are no instructions for how you should behave in the world or what you should do in the world. But there's a great amount, in fact the whole *Course* is geared towards helping us look within our minds. Realize that we do have a mind, then realize that in that mind there are two teachers. There's a part of our mind that we refer to as the decision maker — that has the power to choose between those two teachers. And if we choose the ego, we are taught in the *Course* to understand that will bring us pain and reinforce all the pain of our lives. If we choose the Holy Spirit, that's the way out of pain. Very simply, that's what the whole *Course* is about.

Before we can meaningfully discuss what it means to live in this world as a student of *A Course in Miracles*, we have to understand what the nature of the world is in terms of what my relationship to it is. So we'll begin at "Projection makes perception." This is a very important line; it's the second time it appears in the *Course*. "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 [meaning the world] 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."

Now what this is all about is that the world is a witness to our state of mind. The reason this is so important is that part and parcel of the ego's thought system — in fact it's an inherent part of its whole thought system and indeed is the motivation for there being a physical universe — is that the ego does not want us to know that we have a mind. But that's very, very important. The ego does not want us to know we have a mind. All right, the split mind, the separated mind, is the home not only to ego but also of the Holy Spirit. Which means that there had to be a part of our mind that chose the ego over the Holy Spirit. And the ego's fear — in fact it's the motivating factor in everything that has ever happened in this world — the ego's fear is that we would some time, at some point, change our minds and we would realize that we have chosen the wrong teacher.

So in order to ensure that we would never choose against the ego (what choosing the Holy Spirit means), the ego then obliterates the mind entirely from our awareness. And that's what the world and the body accomplish. Which

means that we have lost all contact with this mind. We have lost all contact with the part of our mind that has chosen this thought system of ego; this thought system of guilt, fear, attack, and ultimately death.

And once the world occurred, once we were born into this world, we lost all access to this mind. And there seems to be absolutely no way of getting back to it. Until we read a line like this, the world is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. Which means that if I could be taught to understand that the world that I perceive, the world that I'm interacting with, the world that I live in — is nothing more or less than a projection, a picture of what is within my mind. I now have access, finally, to that mind. I have a way of getting back to it. I have a way of understanding what's going on. It's like before people had invented the microscope, there was no way of knowing that there was another world. You know, a world that our physical eyes could not see. All of a sudden we had the opportunity of seeing a world that beforehand we never could see, and could never prove was there. Well, in a sense, the world then becomes our microscope that allows us to look within and see a world that perhaps at some point a dim awareness existed, but we had no idea what was there.

You know we could dissect the brain, but that didn't help us understand the mind. Guilt doesn't rest in the brain, it rests in the mind. The fear of God doesn't exist in the body, or in the brain, it exists in the mind. The whole strategy of the ego doesn't exist in the brain, it exists in the mind. So there's no way of getting to it by dissecting a brain. We need a different kind of microscope. And obviously we need a teacher who will instruct us how to look through that microscope so we know what we're looking at. That's what Jesus does for us.

So the first step for us in learning how to live in the world as a student of the *Course* is to understand that the purpose now of living in this world, again, is not to change the world. It is not to convert the world, not to preach to the world, not to teach to the world. The purpose of the world is to be this microscope that allows us to look within and see this unseen world. An unseen world yet that is incredibly powerful because it determines everything we do.

Closing Narration:

Kenneth has just given you the basics upon which the principles of A Course in Miracles evolved. As he discussed, there are two voices that exist within our minds. At any time we can choose which voice we wish to follow.

The voice of the ego perpetuates guilt, shame, and fear. It sees all else in the world as separate from us, a place where there is lack and scarcity. When we listen to this voice, we see the world as a constant competition where there are only winners and losers.

The voice of the Holy Spirit, or “love,” knows that we are not separate; we are all one and unified in our goals. This voice knows that anything we experience as painful is based in our ego mind. The trick is that most of the current social systems within our society perpetuate the case of the ego.

To live the principles of the Course is not to change our external world, but to change our perception of it. It is to realize when the ego is at play, recognize it for its mistaken choice, and remember that we are all part of the divine. With this recognition, the voice of the ego becomes a whisper as the loving voice of the Holy Spirit resonates with greater clarity.

At this point in the program, you might take a moment to ask yourself, “When do I feel separate and alone? Under what circumstances do I most experience frustration, guilt, shame, and fear?” Take note of these situations, and as you experience them, just realize that you can choose to see them in a different light. The light that shines within your heart. The light of love. You shouldn’t try to change the circumstances of the outer world that you find yourself in. Doing so perpetuates the false belief of the illusion. Just simply become aware. This awareness in and of itself is healing, and you will find that it engenders a greater sense of inner peace within your psyche.

Notes

Session 2: Through the Darkness to the Light

Opening Narration:

Kenneth opens this session by discussing the concepts of guilt and projection. Healing does not simply come in making the choice to love. We must walk through the darkness before we can find the light switch. The light does not exist without the darkness. Therefore, in order to make the choice to perceive with love, we must first see and fully experience our guilt and our hatred, then make a choice against the hatred.

Our unwillingness to face our own feelings of guilt sends us into a tailspin. One in which we project that painful guilt onto others and consequently perceive the external world as guilty. Kenneth reminds us that although we all see the same thing, how we interpret what we see is a choice that we make. We are often caught in a cycle of sin, guilt, and fear — what Kenneth refers to as the “unholy trinity.” We believe that at one time we sinned against God (by apparently choosing to separate). We are then overwhelmed by our guilty feelings over what we believe that we have done, and we are certain that we will be punished in the future for our apparent sin. To fully experience the horror of this guilt is so overwhelming. So we choose to make others guilty so that we can avoid our own painful feelings. In doing so, the cycle is perpetuated. To heal is to fully experience our own pain, guilt and fear, and then, only after facing these feelings, choose to experience something different.

Kenneth:

In a very important line Jesus says, remember you get angry at an interpretation, not at a fact. In other words, perception is interpretation. So when in the Course Jesus speaks about looking or perception, he is not talking about what your physical eyes see. You know, he makes it very, very clear in many places that the eyes don't see anything. They simply report back to the mind what the mind has told it to see. And it's the interpretation of what your physical eyes see that's important. On a practical level what this translates to is that we all basically see the same thing. You know, our eyes are basically all the same, and we see the same physical world, what we think is the objective world. It's the way we see it, it's our attitude to what we see, it's our reactions to what we see, and that's what's important. So what he's talking about here is it's your reaction that's important. When your eyes look on a catastrophe that you read

about in the paper or see on the news, he's talking about your reaction to it, namely that you make it real. That you see it as a source of causing you pain.

So what he's telling us is that when we look through the eyes of the ego — which is what he's talking about when we damn others, when we condemn others — what we're really doing is projecting the judgment against our self, which is what guilt is. Guilt is the name we give to that dynamic that says I have done a terrible thing, I am a terrible thing, and I experience the horror of what I've done, of my sin. And inherent in that thought of guilt is the dreaded expectation that I will be destroyed. That's our famous unholy trinity of sin, guilt, and fear. I believe I have sinned against God, which is what separation is, I'm overwhelmed by the guilt over what I believe I've done, and now over the person I believe I am, and then I dread the future that the ego tells me is certain that I will be punished for my sin.

All right, once that thought system is made real in our mind, that's what we project on the world. So if I see the world as damned, if I want to damn the world, if I want to punish the world, if I see the world as a place of evil, then all I'm seeing is what I believe I did to hurt the Son of God. And we all believe we hurt, crucified, destroyed the Son of God when we separated from him. When we separated from God we obviously separated from Christ, which is our true Self, because God and Christ are perfectly whole and one. We're the ones who accuse our self of crucifying God's son. You know the myth of Jesus and the crucifixion of God's Son, it's simply a projection of that secret thought that we all have. And none of us has ever let go. We're the ones who have crucified God's Son. That's what our separation is all about.

And rather than deal with the guilt over that horrifying thought, we project it out. With no awareness, with no memory of where, of what, the cause of our judgment really is. We think the cause of our judgment is all the unconscionable things that people have done in the world. Having become totally oblivious to the fact that we are the ones who have done the unconscionable thing. Or at least that's what we accuse ourselves of. And the value of the world, and the value of the projections onto the world, is that they offer us this opportunity of realizing what is in our own minds. Borrowing the famous statement of Freud, we could say that world is the royal road to understanding the activities of the unconscious mind. Freud's statement was on dreams of course. All right.

Understanding the world is the way, is the royal road for ours of realizing what is going on inside of our mind. All right, so again if what I have made real in the world is evil and sin, and I judge it and I attack it and condemn it and damn it, that is very helpful information for me because that helps me recognize this is

what I secretly accuse myself of doing. All right. And then there's the other side. If you see holiness and hope you join the will of God to set him free. If on the other hand I look out and I see hope, then that's an expression of the fact that I have joined against the ego and joined with the Holy Spirit. There is no choice that lies between these two decisions. That's why Jesus says this is a very simple *Course*.

The purpose of the world now is not to be saved, not to be condemned. The purpose of the world is that it simply is a classroom for me in which I learn to look at what I never wanted to look at before in myself. If that's the only way I can get in touch with my own guilt, and I insist on seeing the world as a beautiful holy place, filled with beautiful and holy people, right, who kill and mame and torture other people, but after all that's just a simple mistake, that's all. And that's all I let myself see, I am depriving myself of the only opportunity I have to be healed. The only way I could be healed is to see the world for what it is. The world was made mad by guilt. It's an insane place filled with suffering and pain, and then Christ says at the end of this description of what the world really is like, if this were the real world God would be cruel. He's not telling us to pretend this world is lovely, this world is not lovely. I mean normal people know this world is not lovely. *A Course in Miracles* students don't know that. Normal people know this world is terrible, just with the pain that goes on. On international levels, on personal levels. Continually.

What makes the world lovely once again and the passages in the *Course* that speak of the loveliness of the world — these passages have nothing to do with the world, the external world — has to do with the shift in purpose. That's what makes the world beautiful and holy. Not the world, but the purpose we've given to the world. Again this is a real problem for students in the *Course* because they don't realize what they are doing is depriving themselves of the only hope they truly have to get out of the dream. If the world is our classroom, and our relationships are the curriculum, and Jesus is our teacher, and yet we deny that there's even a classroom, that there's even a lesson to be learned, then there's no hope. The only hope is in recognizing that the world is indeed our classroom. Our special relationships that are filled with such hatred and judgment and pain, these constitute the curriculum by which we're going to be taught and we now have a teacher who will interpret all of this for us, that's the way out. Unless I choose to deny that there's a world that's a problem. The only way I can know the ugliness and the hatred that's seething inside of me is to be able to look at it in the world and make it real by attacking it in the world, or being afraid of it in the world, or despairing of it in the world, or being depressed about it, whatever form it takes. I first have to realize how real I've made the

world before I could ask Jesus to help reinterpret that for me and help me realize that that's a projection of what I first made real in myself.

Now I have a fighting chance. Now I have hope for the first time. Cause there is no hope in this world, but there is hope in our changing our minds about the world.

Your task is not to choose truth; your task is to look at the denial of truth, which is the ego's thought system, and then to deny that choice. This is not a choice in what is positive. Cause what is positive is beyond anything we can understand. This is a choice in looking at the negative and then saying I don't want this anymore. But to keep looking at the world through rose-colored glasses only perpetuates the defensive system that the ego has driven so mightily and successfully to perpetuate. Just keeps the whole thing going. You need to see the world for what it is so you can get in touch with what you think you are. And then you can make a meaningful choice.

Closing Narration:

As Kenneth discussed, exploring your life as your classroom is key in being able to deal with the world, especially when there is upset, turmoil, and distress. The challenges you face in your relationships, career, and health are all part of the curriculum. Thus Kenneth reminds you that in many instances leaving your job or your relationship may very well interfere with the lessons at hand.

Whether your studies evolve around the relationships in your life, your career, or even the Course's workbook itself, attempting to achieve perfection should not be your aim. When you focus your energies upon perfection, you are perpetuating the belief that you are imperfect. This belief is also part of the illusion. Focusing your energy then on life's lessons, becoming more aware of your thoughts, beliefs, and reactions will prove to be a far greater reward than striving for 100% in all that you do. Again, the Course asserts that it is not what you do that is important, but how you perceive the classroom of your life.

Notes

Session 3: How *A Course in Miracles* Began

Opening Narration:

The fascinating story behind the inception of the Course — how and why it came into being — is introduced at the beginning of this session. Kenneth details the experience between Helen Schucman and William Thetford, along with the role that he played in editing the original text. He then provides you with an overview of Jesus' teachings that are the fundamental root upon which the Course was written.

At times, comprehending some of the concepts of the Course can be somewhat complex. Kenneth describes in great detail the myth of the original miscreation of our physical world. One of the unique things about the Course's concepts is that our ego, along with being totally insane, is so ingenious that we can often be fooled into its trickery without being aware of its brilliant devices.

Kenneth:

There are two unique aspects to the *Course* that I want to begin with as a kind of a way of introducing what the *Course* actually teaches. The first is that it's remarkable in the way that it integrates a non-dualistic metaphysics, which I'll explain in just a moment. With a very sophisticated and practical psychology, so that while on the one hand the *Course* says that the entire physical universe is an illusion, which again I'll get to in just a moment, it also makes it very clear that we should pay very careful attention to what we do here, and that we should basically live normal lives like everybody else, but to try to live them under different principles. Principles of forgiveness rather than anger and judgment and hate. But the way that the *Course* integrates these two I think makes it rather unique. In this sense the *Course* (in its metaphysical understanding of the world) has much more in common with the higher teachings that you find in the east, especially in Hinduism and Buddhism, (which are also non-dualistic.) That there is reality, the reality of God or of spirit, and then there's the illusory physical universe. This is not a position that is usually articulated in the west. It's much more found in the east. And so the *Course* takes that, and again uses that as the backdrop and the foundation for its teachings of forgiveness.

The second aspect of the *Course* which I think renders it somewhat unique in spiritual system, both ancient as well as contemporary, is that its focus is really not on truth or on reality or on God or on love, even though these are key

concepts in the *Course*. Its focus really is on the undoing of all the blocks that interfere with our awareness of love's presence, and so the relentless focus of the *Course* is really on exposing the false thought system of what the *Course* calls the ego, our thought system of separation, a division, hate, judgment, pain, suffering, sacrifice, etc. And I think this is what makes the *Course* unique. It basically says that love and truth and reality and God are not the problems, that their presence is very much with us in our minds. The problem is that we have covered it over with a thought system that is fully oppositional to God. And it's in removing these covers that reveal to us and allow us to remember the love that is truly there. In this sense the *Course* is very similar in its process to what Michelangelo described in terms of how he sculpted his marvelous sculptures. He had a solid block of stone; and that he saw within this stone the image that he wanted, whether it was of Moses or David or the Pieta, or many of his other wonderful sculptures, and all he did was take away what didn't belong. And that's much easier said than done. But in a sense that's what Jesus does in the *Course* as well. He helps us to take away what doesn't belong, which is what forgiveness does, which is what the miracle does, and then what's left is the love and the truth and the reality that was always there.

End of Session 3:

Now that Kenneth has introduced you to your ego and the myth of how it was conceived, you are ready to embark on exploring it further and uncovering how you can deal with it. Before doing so, you may wish to do a quick inventory of your life. Are you aware of the times when your ego speaks loudest to you? What does it say? What ploys does your ego use most to keep you believing in your separateness? How do you respond to your ego's beckoning?

Responding to these questions with honesty and commitment may be the first step that you take in confronting your ego and building a healing relationship with it.

Notes

Session 4: Dealing with the Ego

Opening Narration:

At the opening of this session, Kenneth goes into greater detail on the origin of our apparent separation, the ego's myth. He describes this myth so that we may more fully understand how our egos evolved into the insane belief system that we now hold to be true.

He explains why we carry the burdens of extreme personal sin, guilt, and punishment, believing that we angered and wronged the divine by choosing to separate. Kenneth then reveals how the ego creates a scenario where we leave our mind so that we can project our inner feelings of self-hatred and self-contempt somewhere outside of ourselves. Thus the birth of the outer world. This is the Course's parallel story to the big bang theory, where the physical universe is literally made up of our belief in our guilt.

To further perpetuate a "guilty" outer world, the ego also created other humans in our lives who could carry the burden of our feelings of sin and guilt. This projection, of course, is also carried out in our daily lives, where we experience others as guilty, as wronging us. We can focus on their wrongfulness so that we can avoid feeling the depth of guilty feelings that exists within each of us.

To expand this even further, we see ourselves as victims of the world — our families make us miserable, the bad quality of water makes us miserable, the violence on the streets around us make us miserable. We can focus on remaining victims of a world outside of ourselves that we have no control over. This is what the ego wishes us to believe. In truth, we ARE still at one with the divine, but we have chosen to forget this.

So we try everything in this world — try to make more money, try to find the right partner, try to find the right job. We keep trying to heal until we exhaust all possibilities and are absolutely miserable in this world. We then decide, like Helen and Bill, that there must be another way. We realize that the problem does not exist outside of ourselves. We can no longer attack and blame others for our misery. And so we turn to the Holy Spirit, the non-ego presence within our minds. Thus the line in the Course that states, "Seek not to change the world. Choose to change your mind about the world."

Kenneth:

We're all here as prisoners, kept in prison by a jailer that we do not know, so we think the jail is all around us. We think it's our parents, we think it's all the authorities in our life, we think it's our bodies, we think it's the planet, we think it's the air that we breath and the water that we drink, we think it's all around us. Everything is impinging on us and victimizing us, making us very unhappy and miserable, but we never ever look to where the problem is. As the *Course* says at one point, of all the many causes of your suffering, never once did you think that your guilt was among them. And guilt is not in our bodies, it's not in our personalities, it's in our mind.

All right, so what do we do? All right, what we do is we wait until we get so absolutely miserable in this world, until we try everything, and nothing works. We try all the relationships that we could ever try, we try all the substances that we hope will give us peace and reduce our anxiety. We try making money, we try losing money. We try all kinds of things. Anything that we feel will make life heal work. And all the time blaming everybody. Filled with judgment, filled with hate. Finally at some point we have to say, as Helen and Bill had said in that fateful afternoon in 1965, there must be another way. This *Course* will not be for you until you're able to say there must be another way. As long as you believe there's anything in this world that will work for you, anything in this world, then you won't be motivated to really study and practice this *Course*. As Jesus says in one section, this *Course* is for people who are miserable and know that they're miserable. He says near the beginning of the text, tolerance for pain is very high, but at some point everyone must say there must be another way. All right, that's what the *Course* refers to as the invitation to the Holy Spirit. That's what Jesus is waiting for, and I should say in the *Course* Jesus and the Holy Spirit is basically the same in terms of function. They both represent the inner teacher. They both represent that presence in our minds — not our brains — that is a non-ego presence. They speak for the part of us that we have buried. They cannot help us until we turn to them. And we won't turn to them again as long as we believe there's anything here we can turn to for help, for happiness, for peace. This *Course* will only work when you recognize that nothing else does.

When that happens, however, then you say there must be another way. Then the tides start to turn. All right, and here's where the ego made a tactical error. Because the dynamic of projection, which is what, in a sense, protects the ego, when understood differently becomes the very means for undoing the ego. And the ego never thought of that. All right. Because what projection does is it takes the thought that is within and projects it out. So the hate and the guilt that I

harbor within, I no longer see within in my mind, I see it in you. I see it all around me. I sometimes even see it in my own body, so I end up hating myself. But even when I hate myself I blame somebody else. It's my bad genes, it's my bad parents, my bad upbringing, my bad this, my bad that, my bad past life, you know it doesn't matter what it is. Anything but looking within at a decision that he has made.

There's that very important line in the *Course* that says seek not to change the world, choose to change your mind about the world. Jesus, as I mentioned earlier, or the Holy Spirit, are in our mind. They are not in the world. When you ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for help, which of course is one of the key things the *Course* is asking us to do all the time, what you are asking them for help with is to look at the relationship or the situation differently. That's how they help you. All right. One way of understanding what the miracle is, is that the miracle is a shift in perception. We could say just as easily the miracle is a shift in teachers. Shifting from the ego and now choosing the Holy Spirit. As the *Course* says, resign now as your own teacher for you have been badly taught. And we've all taught ourselves, following the dictates of the ego, which again is the part of us that likes us. And we have been taught very, very badly.

So then we ask Jesus for help, realizing that the ego has not worked for us. All of the things the world has offered. All the self-help training, all the psychotherapy, all these things and all these, I'm not saying are not helpful, they could all be very, very helpful at varying stages of your life, but they will not bring you home. They will not awaken you from the dream. They will not bring you to the real source of the problem. They may help you take very important steps towards realization of that, but they will not complete the job.

When you ask Jesus for help what you are saying is this relationship is so painful, this person I'm living with, my spouse or my lover or my children, or my colleagues at work, I just can't stand them. But I understand, finally, that I can't blame them, they are not the cause of my loss of peace. I don't know what is the cause of my loss of peace, but I'm getting tired after 40, 50, 60 years of blaming everybody. I'm getting tired of being angry all the time. I'm getting tired of saying nothing else has worked but this time it will work. I've been fired from 30 jobs, and every job it's been their fault. So this next job I know I'll find the right employer. Now, every relationship I've ever had has been a disaster because of all these rotten people in the world. Now maybe I was a little rotten, but I just spent 20 years of psychoanalysis and now I'm healed, so I know the next relationship will work.

The reason this book is called *A Course in Miracles* is because the miracle is the name the *Course* gives for the process of taking our attention from the dream, which is our life here, back to the dreamer. So the *Course* says that the miracle establishes that you dream a dream, and the contents of the dream are not true. So what the miracle does is basically reverse the projection — projection took the thought of separation, and the accompanying story of sin, guilt and fear, from the mind and projected it out into the world. So we see sin and guilt in everybody else, that then justifies our fear. Of course I should be afraid, look at all the awful people out there doing awful things. What the miracle does is take the projection where it ended up, which is in the world, and reverses it and brings us back within to the mind that thought all these things. Remember, if the ego's ace in the hole was to keep us mindless, then Jesus' ace in the hole is to make us mindful. Right? That's what this whole *Course* is about.

So we're asked in this *Course* to pay careful attention to all the things that go on in our normal life. A *Course in Miracles* student should be normal like everybody else. Right? Don't change anything externally. Change the way you look at everything externally. So that if you go through your day as vigilant as you can be, for all the signs of you being upset, all the temptations that come so easily, to say the reason I'm upset, the reason I'm angry, the reason I'm fearful, the reason I'm depressed, the reason I'm sick, the reason I'm this and that is because. Cause there's a virus going around and it made me sick, because this person cut me off on the freeway, because my boss is going to fire me, because my spouse walked out on me, because my children are ungrateful, because. And you don't deny what you're feeling, you don't deny what you perceive, but you simply go within and ask of your new teacher a different way of looking at it. And his way of looking at it would be not to cast blame on anyone. Not on anyone external, not on yourself. It's simply saying all that happened was a mistake. You chose the wrong teacher. It's not a sin; it's not a crime. It doesn't deserve punishment. All that it does is call for correction. And the correction would always be in the context of a relationship because that's where our sin gets bumped, that's where our mistake in choice gets expressed, so that we could then recall the projection through the guidance of our inner teacher, and we could realize again that the way I'm perceiving you is a misperception based upon my misperception of myself. Now I know I have a self that's found in my mind. And now I can do something about it.

So this *Course* offers absolutely no hope in the world. But it offers absolute hope in our minds. If you place your hope in the world in circumstances changing,

you know and everybody in this room has had long experience already, you know you'll be bitterly disappointed. This world doesn't work. People in this world don't work. Nobody is loving all the time. Heads of state lie. Everybody lies. You can't trust anything. The only thing you could trust is your own power of decision.

Closing Narration:

As Kenneth ends this session, he makes clear that there is a liberation that occurs when we ask the Holy Spirit for help. We reach a place where we stop foolhardily trying to change the world around us and focus on perceiving it differently. This choice starts us on a path of experiencing greater peace as we come to realize that we cannot change the outer circumstances of our lives, but we can change our minds about how they affect us. The change comes totally from within.

Even with this new awareness, you may find that you are constantly struggling with your ego, seeing yourself as victim to others, trying to seek allies in your convictions that you have been wronged.

Take a moment now and ask yourself, "Who and what am I blaming for the misery that I feel at this moment?" Then make a choice. You can continue to project that misery out onto the world around you, or you can ask for help to see it all in a different light. If you choose to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, then ask and sit quietly for at least 5 minutes. You may receive immediate feedback, or you may not. Either way, be patient and compassionate towards yourself. You have made an immense step towards choosing to change your mind!

Notes

Session 5: One Problem, One Solution: Magic vs. Miracles

Opening Narration:

At this point in the program Kenneth outlines the difference between the world of magic and the world of miracles. He reminds you that LIVING A Course in Miracles is not simply studying it, but applying its principles to your life.

He describes the concept of magic in this session. Magic as defined by the Course is anything you do in this world to bring you pleasure or to alleviate pain. It could be seen as quick fixes, external changes to apparent challenges that we face that are made to appease the ego, or anything that substantiates the ego's illusions. You are urged to note when magic occurs in your life and be aware of just how it works in the ego's thought system. Although it may temporarily make you feel better, it will not get to the root of your misery.

As you listen to Kenneth in this session, become more aware of your thoughts. How they affect the way you experience your life is key. Trying to solve your deeply rooted feelings of guilt through fixing the externals in your life is ultimately not the answer. The answers are within your mind.

Kenneth:

The basic way that you live *A Course in Miracles* is to apply its principles to your life. And obviously if you don't do that then everything you're studying means absolutely nothing. Then you're just empty words, and brilliant concepts, and etc. But if they don't help you become more peaceful and more loving and kinder — meaning less guilt-ridden, less judgmental, less angry, etc. — then all the beauty of the words and the brilliance of the teachings mean absolutely nothing. So it's a daily application, which is important, and the workbook is certainly a key part of that training, so much so that there's one line in the manual that says that a teacher of God can not claim that title until he's gone through the workbook, since we are learning within the framework of our *Course*. So that an integral part of the curriculum of *A Course in Miracles* is that it basically trains our minds to think along the lines we had discussed this morning, namely that our daily lives, or the world that we live in is a classroom, the curriculum, and Jesus is the teacher. And so that we see everything that occurs in our day — from the time we wake up to the time we go to bed, and

even including our dreams at night — as being opportunities to look at what is going on in our own minds.

Particularly important in all this is to be attentive to those things in our world, our personal everyday world, that act as trigger points or things that kind of upset us. And the various forms of injustice that we see, again, around us in our personal world, as well as in the world at large. So you watch your news program and you find your buttons getting pushed, and getting upset, then that should be a helpful thing to bring to your teacher. That becomes part of your classroom. Because Jesus would then help you recognize what's upsetting you is not what you are hearing or reading about in the news, but what's upsetting you is a decision you had already made but were not aware that you had made it.

That's what he means when he discusses magic. You could understand it best when you juxtapose it with the miracle. Magic is an attempt to solve a problem where the problem is not. Our only problem, as we've seen over and over again, is the decision we've made in our minds to choose the ego as our teacher instead of the Holy Spirit. That's the problem. That's what the workbook means when it says there's one problem and one solution. The problem is the belief in separation and the solution is the acceptance of the Atonement, or the correction. On that level, once we define the problem as being the mistake that our mind has made, then the miracle becomes the correction because the miracle tells us the problem is that we've made the wrong choice.

How we deal with magic, our own belief in magic as well as other people's belief in magic, becomes a central part of our curriculum. So then one can't really be a student of the *Course* and attempt to live its principles day in and day out without somehow understanding what magic is, and understanding again what our role is in it.

"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. You think you made a place of safety for yourself. You think you made a power that can save you from all the fearful things you see in dreams." Once again that's what magic is. We think that we made a place that we could hide. We believe we made a world and a body in which we could hide from the wrath of God. Again, that's the purpose that this world serves. That's why again we're told in the workbook that this world was made as an attack on God. It was made to exclude him. It was made to protect the thought in our mind that said to God your love was not enough. I want more. And since you won't give me more I will kill you off and I'll be God, and

I'll make a world for myself in which I could get everything I want. You know, I don't need you anymore. That's the thought, that's that horrifying thought that engenders so much guilt. And again, as I explained this morning, hard and fast upon that guilt is that equally terrifying thought God will find me, God will destroy me. So to block that whole thing out, I magically believe I can make up a world, make up a body, and hide there. That's what he means, that you think you made a place of safety for yourself. You think you made a power that can save you from all the fearful things you see in dreams.

Then again, that's the power of this world. That's the power of our magic. It is not so, that's the good news, that's the happy thought, that's the thought of peace and joy. It is not so. Your safety lies not there, it doesn't lie in the world. It doesn't like all the things that we use the world for to protect us. When we talk about physical things, like locks, or intangible things like insurance policies. Relationships. You know as long as I have this person with me I'm safe. All the superstitions that we have. If I do my daily work request then I'll be safe. All the silly things and what we think are not so silly things that we do in the world; we magically believe this will protect us. That's what this is addressing.

What you give up is merely the illusion of protecting illusions. There's that wonderful line that says defenses do what they would defend. That's a very, very important and insightful statement. Defenses do what they would defend. The purpose of defenses is to protect us from what we fear. But the very fact that we have a defense means there is something I should be afraid of, otherwise I wouldn't need the defense. While on the one hand the defense is supposed to protect me from my fear, what the defense ends up doing is reinforcing the fear because it tells me I need the defense because there's something inside I have to be afraid of, and without the defense I'll be destroyed. So the more we seek to defend ourselves against our fear, the stronger we make the fear.

What's helpful with the *Course* again is not to disparage the body, not to make fun of it, not to attack it, not to judge it, but also not to indulge it. And certainly not to attribute it to thoughts of salvation or thoughts of punishment. There's a line later on in the text that says who punishes the body is insane. Because the body is not the problem. You know, starving the body — whether you want to stare it off food because you think that that's sinful, or you starve it of sex because you think that's sinful, or you starve it of luxuries cause you think that they're sinful — that's silly, that's not the problem. It's not the answer either, but it's certainly not the problem. What this *Course* does is that it shifts the problem for us. It redefines it. Again, that's why it's called *A Course in Miracles*, and not a

Course in love, or a *Course* in truth, or a *Course* in reality, or a *Course* in Heaven. It's *A Course in Miracles* and miracles are the correction. And they correct our misperception that the problem is external, demanding an external solution, i.e., magic. And the miracle says it's not out there, the problem is inside, in our minds when we made the wrong choice. That's what needs to be changed.

Yesterday before I became a good *A Course in Miracles* student I thought they were doing this to me, so I got angry with them. Now I don't get angry, I say oh that's how they drive. What's this have to do with me? And I'm good at that now on the freeway, but I'm not so good at that in the supermarket on the line.

Right? When people push in front of me. Or I'm not so good when I go home. All right, and all of a sudden I get angry at something that could be absolutely trivial, but for me it's a great symbol. Or, I was good on the freeway on the way into the office, and I walk in to the office and boy the first thing happens and I explode. Or somebody looks at me funny, and I'm devastated. What's helpful is to begin to see how we most definitely live by a hierarchy of illusions. We give some things power over us, and maybe we give other things less power. And the power we give is the power that says you can take the peace of God away from me. That's all anger is. That's what all annoyances are. It's all an attempt that says before you did or said what you did or said to me, I was peaceful. And then all of a sudden you did this, you said this, or you did not do this and did not say what you should have, and now I'm angry and it's your fault. And what I've clearly done is I have once again negated the power of my mind, given that power to you. So now I'm weak and helpless and vulnerable, but it also means I'm innocent. There's no way God is going to come after me. Look, I'm a poor schlep. I have no power. I'm at the mercy of all these unconceivable people in my life. They're the ones God will get. Their sins will be writ in Heaven. Not mine. And they will walk before them; their sins will walk before them, as God leads them right to hell. And since it's one or the other, they go to hell, means I don't. So what's helpful is to see how I do this. How I live out this insanity in my daily life.

Closing Narration:

As Kenneth furthers his discussion on the Course, and how to apply its theories to your life, it becomes clearer that salvation does not come from all of the trappings that the external world offers us, but from a knowing that exists deep within each of us. The trick is to take the time to connect with that deeper knowing. To do so we must look at our pain-avoidance tactics (the “magic” that exists within our lives) with courage and conviction.

To end this session, you might take some time to reflect on those “magical” elements of your life that you continue to pursue in hopes of finding inner peace. What feelings might these pursuits be keeping you from experiencing? How are these magical fixes keeping “illusions” powerful and fully alive in your life? Again, the action to take is to simply reflect and become aware of your ego’s ploys. With the awareness and the willingness to face your own feelings of guilt and shame, you will discover the answers that you so hurriedly seek within your mind.

Notes

Session 6: Looking at Your Fear without Judgment

Opening Narration:

In this session Kenneth describes how you can become an advanced teacher of God. He discusses how you can perceive the world with a heightened awareness, with a sense of forgiveness for yourself and others, to gain a greater sense of peace in your life. To judge your ego-based actions and those of others is to continue to follow its trappings. A major part of the miracle is to observe the ego's behaviors without judgment, guilt, or fear.

Kenneth:

The advanced teacher of God — which is really where we are being led, that's the state that we want to be — is someone who's at peace no matter what goes on, it doesn't matter. That's what he means, and it doesn't, there's no difference in his state at different times in different places. Because they are all in one, they're one to God meaning the love of God, which is my true identity, always with me. And if I can be called that identity, doesn't matter who says what to me, or does what to me. Or to anybody else in my life. I will still be at peace. Again, this does not mean I don't react, it doesn't mean I don't act normally as we discussed this morning. Simply means whatever I do, I do peacefully. My forehead is serene and my eyes are quiet. My body may be very active and busy, but my forehead is serene and my eyes are quiet. Why? Because I know that all of this is a dream.

What you want to do is practice observing this without interfering, without trying to change it. Certainly without feeling guilty. Without feeling angry. Without making judgments of yourself or others. And that's what you practice. And the curriculum of the classroom is your daily life, whatever it is that you're doing. Putting a slice of bread in the toaster and the toaster doesn't work, and just what your reaction is. The perceptual fact in the perceptual world is that the toaster doesn't work. And just watch what you do with that. It depends on what frame of mind you're in, the right mind or the wrong mind. You can say, oh the toaster doesn't work and I won't have toast this morning. Or, I'll have to have it fixed later when I have time. Or you could react with a lot of angry annoyance. You know, why does this always happen to me? Why do they sell me a rotten toaster, you know, everybody knows the spiel.

But that reaction has nothing to do with the toaster. It has to do with whether you have chosen the ego as your teacher or the Holy Spirit as your teacher. And it's really helpful to use very mundane common things in your life, like toasters. You know, people at the supermarket line, people on the freeway. You know, just don't have to do big, big issues, like cancer or AIDS or a potential of World War III, you know you don't have to deal with that. It's ok and you do, but it's very helpful to see how the same reactions come to something that you know is really trivial. As they do with something that you also feel is something very monumental. That's very helpful to see. And that's a helpful way for you to realize why there's no order of difficulty in miracles. Why there's no hierarchy of illusions. First we have chaos. There's a hierarchy of illusions. This is the ego's answer to the first principle of miracles.

To the extent that we believe in this process, to that extent we'll be able to remember what is really going on, even though we're very, very busy. And as you get better and better at this over a period of many years you'll be able to almost have a split mind in the good sense of the split mind. Where part of you is fully engaged in the world and what you're doing, and the other part of you is still staying with Jesus or the Holy Spirit watching what you're doing. It's not that uncommon that people will report the experience they could almost watch themselves getting sick. You could almost watch the cold begin, or the headache start, or the upset stomach start. It's almost like there's a part of you that's observing your body starting to get sick. Or even having the thought I want to get sick. Because that's what will prove to you what you've done to me. You know you don't stop talking, you talk and you talk and you talk, no wonder I have a headache.

And then we want the headache. That's what's so insane about this cause the headaches hurt. We want the headache so we can point this guilty finger and say behold me brother, sister, mother, father, husband, wife, child, etc., you give me a headache. At your hands I get a headache. At your words I get a headache. So it's possible to almost step back and watch yourself choose to get sick and then watch your body get sick. And that's the kind of split mind you want to be able to encourage in yourself and reinforce and cultivate. At the same time you're acting in the world and doing what normal people do. You're stepping back and could almost observe yourself doing, and what is going on with such a phenomenon is that you are beginning to detach your identification

with this physical self, which means you're beginning to identify more with that decision maker in your mind that chooses to project the guilt onto your body. You could also watch yourself beginning to build up a case against somebody where you want somebody to do the very thing you told them not to do so you can catch them. Why? Because then we can hold them up in front of God and say I got him for you. You don't have to look any further; I did your dirty work for you. Here he is. Or she is. And our sickness is what proves that. That's the witness. So you could watch yourself do this. You could watch yourself choosing to get sick, watching yourself choose to get angry, and what you're really doing is beginning to detach yourself from your body in a good way; this is not an out-of-body experience.

It's a way of stepping back, getting back into your mind and observing yourself in action. It's beginning the process of identifying yourself as the dreamer of the dream and then observing the dream figure you call yourself in the dream. So the goal in the *Course* is not to awaken us from the dream; that will automatically happen. The goal in the *Course* is, because again it's called *A Course in Miracles*, the goal of the *Course* is to establish that we are the dreamer. So again it's very helpful to watch yourself in action. Even though you're very busy. And even in the midst of a real ferocious ego attack, you're really angry, you're really anxious, you're really fearful, you're really depressed, it is still possible for you to be able to detach yourself and watch what you're doing. And then be aware of the resistance and the fear that this engenders. Why? Because if I could watch what I'm doing then the figure I'm watching is not me. That's where the real anxiety comes from; cause more than anything else we're trying to preserve this identity.

But be aware that that's what's going on. So we're really talking about becoming very careful observers of yourself, even though you're very active in the world. And doing whatever it is that that normal people do.

All temptation really is a temptation to believe the ego is telling the truth and the Holy Spirit is the liar. That's the temptation. So part of the ego's truth is that the separation is real, therefore the body's real, and I believe in the body. To believe in the ego is to believe that there is indeed another will separate from God, and not always separate from God, but more attractive than God. More valuable than God's Will. Right. These attempts may indeed seem frightening, but they are merely pathetic. Right, now if we really read these with good, healthy egos we should be insulted. Because Jesus is saying, you

know guys, what you're doing is really pathetic, it's really sad. See we want to believe it's frightening because we think we have great power.

I mean that's the arrogance that we think we have the power to make God angry. So angry in fact that he's going to come after us. So this whole thing is terribly frightening because we believe that we attack God by separating from him and choosing our will over his will. Believing that we had a will that was separate from his.

And so Jesus is saying, if you look at it with me, then you'll realize this is not frightening. This is not monstrous. It's pathetic, it's nothing. You know, the ego is not this raging lion; it's a frightened mouse roaring at the universe. God isn't afraid of this. Why should you be afraid, God doesn't even see it. Why should you be afraid of it? And yet once again our entire world is literally the attempt to defend against what we think is the horror and terror of that thought. That I choose the will that was separate from God, that was better than God, and in so doing I believed I destroyed the Will of God. No, when you say it like this, obviously it's pathetic. It's silly. But our whole world rests on it. So another way of understanding what Jesus does in this *Course*, and why this is such an important spiritual document, is he's saying let's look at the real cause, the real seed, from which this entire world came and all the problems that came from it, and when you see how infinitesimal and nothing this seed is, everything will disappear.

One of my favorite lines in the *Course* is that "forgiveness is still and quietly does nothing. It looks and waits and judges not." And, I think, that's a good kind of formula almost for what you do. And, just be aware of that. And, be aware, if what's happening in you is negative, in other words, makes you uncomfortable, anxious, upset—then realize, why do I want to keep doing this? And that's all I would do. I would just question it. I don't try and do anything else.

It's so important that you not try to cover over your mistakes with this *Course*, not cover over your resistance to it. That's how you should spend your day, not being aware of all of the wonderful things you do and the miracles you do, but be aware of all of the "not wonderful" things you do—the hateful, vicious things you do, the fearful things, the anxious things, the magical things you do—because these are the problems. And to be able to look at that with his love beside you, which means you will not judge yourself. And the same kindness and gentleness that you would obviously experience in him, you would now begin to

experience in yourself. Which means, again, that that kindness and gentleness will extend through you and embrace everyone around you. That's how you become a really good student of this *Course*—not by memorizing its theory and spouting off and knowing what all of the terms mean and all that. You become a really good student of this *Course* by practicing it, which means you forgive yourself for not practicing it.

Closing Narration:

Now that Kenneth has outlined the path of the advanced teacher of God, you may wish to practice some of the exercises he suggests. Throughout the next several days, start to become aware of your resistance. Take note of your ego when it is at work. Notice the part that judgment plays in your life. When you judge others, how do you feel about yourself? When you judge yourself, how do you feel about others? Whenever possible, become the objective observer or witness in your life. Try to split your mind so that you can also observe your ego in action, realizing that you are not your ego's actions, nor what you label yourself and others. You are a part of the divine. All of the happenings of this world are simply an illusion.

Notes

Session 7: The Ego, the Holy Spirit and the Decision Maker

Opening Narration:

To further clarify the Course's concept of separation and sin, Kenneth uses the metaphor of a descent down a ladder. He uses classic Christian teachings to explain how we have perpetuated our beliefs in our separateness through the teachings of our religious doctrines. An example lies in the crucifixion of Jesus. We can see it in terms of how the ego mind would perceive it. At the point in which we birthed the belief in sin, we make a subsequent belief that God must be killed. Our ego stipulates that if we are separate, and God is perfect oneness, then in order to separate, we killed God. Separation and perfect oneness cannot exist simultaneously. One has to be extinguished in order for the other to exist.

He then goes on to describe the concept of the crucifixion of Jesus as the birthplace of fear. The belief in the return of Jesus, and that he will take back the life that you believe you took from him, creates a sense of impending punishment in your psyche.

As you journey your descent down the rungs of the ladder, you can begin to perceive how we made our current existence — a world in which we perceive ourselves as victims, without any responsibility for the unjust, random occurrences that fall upon us.

Kenneth:

One of the most important qualities of the self and the state of Heaven is that it's a state of perfect oneness and unity. Both unity within itself as well as unity within the Godhead. Or within God. In Heaven you do not have a distinction between Creator and created. In Heaven you do not have two beings, one called God and the other called Christ. These are terms which we give here from within the dualistic world, and is the closest we can come to express the relationship between God and his Son. But in Heaven, which is a state beyond all symbols and certainly beyond duality, there would not be a separate being called God, nor a separate being called Christ.

Everything that is not part of this one Self that's perfectly united with Itself and with its Creator and Source, anything that is not part of that Self does not exist. So, so when Jesus speaks of illusion, as he does all the way through the *Course*

that is what he is speaking about. Again, anything that is outside of Heaven does not exist. That's why he says in laws of chaos that there's no life outside of Heaven.

Everything in this world (which the Hindus refer to as the world of multiplicity) is differentiated. That's the purpose of the body. That my body begins and ends here, your bodies begin and end there and that's what keeps us separated.

All right, so when Jesus speaks about being one Self, he is not speaking about anything in this world. What we all have in this world within the dream is a memory of that Self. And that memory in the *Course's* language is the Holy Spirit. All right, and that's the link between the self, which is our experience within the dream, and the Self, which is your Identity as Christ.

One of the characteristics of this devolution, or this descent of the ladder, is that with each rung we descend to, we forget the preceding rung. Each step down causes amnesia to fall across our minds, a veil falls across our minds and we forget how we got to the rung we're on. So when we made the first seeming step, and of course we say seeming because in reality it never really happened, from that, our Christ Self to the decision-making self, we promptly forgot about that Self.

When we then show the ego's individuality over the Holy Spirit's Atonement principle, we then forgot about being a decision maker. Because when we choose the ego and turn our backs on the Holy Spirit, and basically telling the Holy Spirit that he's a liar, that he's wrong and we're right, that's where everybody in this world always stubbornly insists that they're right and everyone else is wrong, this is where it begins. We say to the ego, you're right. I like being an individual and the Holy Spirit is wrong.

Again, at that point the Holy Spirit disappears because the Holy Spirit is not wrong. So if we believe the Holy Spirit is wrong, he can no longer be the Holy Spirit. Therefore, there is no more Holy Spirit because we are right. And it's the same mistake of course people make with the *Course*. Jesus can't mean what he says here. I know better. All right. And that's everybody's problem, because the problem is that he's right and everybody else is wrong. And he's the one who knows better. This is the prototype of that experience here in the world.

That's the prototype for everyone's authority problem. All right. Basically the heart of every authority problem is that we're right and the figures, the authority figures, are wrong. Whether they're talking about our parents, our religious

leaders, political leaders, therapists, friends, teachers, whoever it is, that they must be wrong so I can be right.

And the core of that is that if I'm wrong, then I'm wrong about my individuality, my individuality disappears. That's why, within our experiences here in this world we can get so worked up over absolutely nothing, and, it becomes so important to us that we be right and someone else be wrong, especially if that person has authority over us. Or we perceive them as having authority over us. Because if they are right and I am wrong, it recalls to me that original choice when I told the ultimate authority, the Holy Spirit himself, that he was wrong and I knew better.

We now become afraid that at some point, what we stole, which is our identity, our existence, our very life, will be stolen back, will be taken back because we got it by thievery, therefore it will be taken from us by thievery, too. We got it by murder, by killing off God; therefore it will be taken from us by murder. All right. And there's a word for that of course, and that's death. Death then is the proof that God has exacted his punishment, his vengeance has been appeased and he has taken back the life that we took from him.

It goes without saying, of course, that this has nothing to do with the true God.

When we are born into this world, we are born as victims. And our lives then consist of a script that we write, that we call our life. And it's a life whose one thing permeates the entire course of our life and that is I did not do it. It is not my fault. All right. Everyone in this world has a victim script. The world is set up that way. Again, remember, nobody would make anyone responsible for his or her genetic makeup. No one would make anyone responsible for their parents or their siblings or for the state of the world or for their skin color or their religious orientation, or anything. The world was set up to prove that we are the innocent victim and our script is not our own and that we are not responsible for our life.

The film that runs through a motion picture projector in a movie theater is exactly the film you'll see on the screen. It must be that way. That's how it works.

Well, that's how the world works, too. The world is nothing more than the screen onto which is projected the thought system of these preceding rungs of which we have no awareness at all. So we've already seen that this key concept of the sinful, guilty, fearful self was one or the other, the mind being a battleground.

If this is the thought in the mind, it must be that the world that arose from that thought must also be one or the other at a battleground. Which means that survival in this world can only occur by my fulfilling and satisfying my separate interests. If it's one or the other, if I'm to exist, you cannot exist.

Closing Narration:

It is evident that the ego has made many illusions in our beliefs that further strengthen its position that we are separate and doomed. At this point in the program you may wish to reflect on the areas in which you perceive yourself as a victim in your life. Have you seen yourself as a helpless victim of dysfunctional parents? Were you a victim of unkind peers and cruel teachers throughout your childhood? Are you now the victim of merciless career managers and unappreciative spouses? Once you have pinpointed areas in your life that you perceive yourself a victim, take a look at these as part of your learning curriculum. Perceive them as necessary and actually beneficial. You might then ask yourself, "If I no longer perceive myself as a helpless victim in an unjust world, then how might my perception of my life change?" Taking that first step on the ascent up the ladder to self-responsibility would be a massive and courageous initiative on your part. Are you ready to take it? If not, why not? What is it that you so desperately fear?

Notes

Session 8: Getting to the True Top of the Ladder

Opening Narration:

As the previous session ended and this one begins, Kenneth has taken us on an analogical journey in which we have reached the bottom of the ladder home. At the bottom of the ladder, the ego rests in a state of sin, guilt, fear, and projection. It sustains its identity in perceiving itself as a victim of the cruelties of the external world.

To climb back up the ladder home is to restore to your mind its power to perceive itself as the causative agent. No matter how hard you try, as long as you experience this world as real, and seek to find joy within it, you will constantly be faced with misery. Your mission is to seek and find the barriers that you have created between yourself and love. Then, and only then, will you begin to proceed back up the ladder home.

Kenneth:

The purpose of the miracle, which is why Jesus calls his *Course, A Course in Miracles* and not a *Course* in love or anything else, because it's the miracle that restores to our mind its power to choose. It does not choose for us, but it restores to our mind the power to choose.

So now that the ego has us here on the bottom rung of the ladder and we're the innocent victims, we're obviously not very happy. And we don't want to be very happy, because if we're happy, whom can we blame? In other words, if I'm to continue to be a victim, I have to suffer. And if I'm going to suffer there has to be someone who's inflicting that pain on me, and it can't be me.

So then we choose to be miserable and unhappy in this world so that we can continue to point an accusing finger at whoever it is at the moment and say a line from the *Course* — behold me brother, at your hand I die. Or say, look at me and stand condemned because of what I am. In other words, look at my suffering and my pain, and you stand condemned as a miserable sinner because you are responsible for my pain. All pain, on any level, is an accusing finger pointed at someone, not ourselves, that says you did this to me.

And so we all walk this world in pain, all under the illusion that we want to solve the pain and undo it. And so we keep seeking and seeking and seeking for remedies for the pain but we never find it. Why? Because we don't want to find the remedy for the pain. If we really wanted to we would! Because the remedy for the pain is within us! The Holy Spirit never left our minds, he's just buried

there, but he's there. So Jesus gives a phrase for this dynamic and it's seek and do not find, which of course is taken from the famous passage of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel. The ego's motto, again, is seek and do not find.

Many of you know one of the most important definitions that Jesus gives in the *Course* for specialness is that specialness is a substitute for the love of God. The true top of the true ladder is the love of God. The top of the ego's ladder is always some form of specialness.

There's a passage, *What Is the Real Meaning of Sacrifice?* "It takes great learning, both to realize and to accept the fact that the world has nothing to give. What can the sacrifice of nothing mean?" Now, of course the ego tells us that the world has everything to give; we just have to find the right ladder. It cannot mean that you have less because of it. "There is no sacrifice in the world's terms that does not involve the body." Remember, the body is the concept of the self that precedes our being a victim. "Think a while about what the world calls sacrifice. Power, fame, money, physical pleasure. Who is the hero to whom all these things belong? Could they mean anything except to a body? Yet a body cannot evaluate. By seeking after such things, the mind associates itself with the body, obscuring its identity and losing sight of what it really is."

The key sentence here is power, fame, money, pleasure. These four were taken from a famous statement that Sigmund Freud made.

These, we can basically say, are the four ladders that would constitute all of the specialness that we covered in this world. If only we have enough power, if only I become famous enough, if only I have enough money, if only I have enough pleasure, you know, then I will be happy, my pain will be over and I will find Heaven. These are the false ladders that the ego has us pursue, always seeking, first to find the "right ladder" and to find the right way to ascend this right ladder. And we will never find what we want because the whole system is set up so that we will never find what we want.

The ego is certain that love is dangerous and this is always essential teaching. All right, now basically, strictly speaking, love is not dangerous to the ego because the ego doesn't know what love is. What is dangerous to the ego is the Son of God choosing love. Even though, throughout the *Course* Jesus talks about the fear of God and the fear of love, the fear of redemption, technically speaking, the ego doesn't know about God, it doesn't know about the Holy Spirit, it doesn't know about love. Of course, its whole thought system was meant to exclude love.

What it is afraid of is again, the decision maker choosing love. That's the ego's real fear.

It never puts it this way. In other words, the ego never tells us it's afraid of love. Our whole world is built on the search for love. All right, so the ego never tells us it's afraid of love. Now of course, the ego's love that it's searching for is special love. It's always rooted in a person, in a relationship, in an object, in a thing, in a substance, things that we love that we seek pleasure from, that we crave, that we believe we can not exist without, etc.

The ego never puts it this way. On the contrary, everyone who believes that the ego is salvation seems to be intensely engaged in the search for love. All right, that's what all the ladders of the world are about. They're all different forms of specialness, which again, are defined in the *Course* as being substitutions for love. "Yet the ego, though encouraging the search for love very actively, makes one proviso: do not find it. Its dictates then can be summed up simply as seek and do not find." That's the whole concept of different ladders.

We could say the whole purpose of the *Course* is to convince us that none of the ladders in the world is the real one. None of the ladders in the world will work. None of the ladders is the cause of our pain; none of the ladders is the cause of our hope. All right. There's only one ladder that's the cause of our pain, that's this ladder of the self. And there's only one ladder that will release us from that pain and that's the ladder of the self going the other way.

It is surely obvious that no one wants to find what would utterly defeat him. Being unable to love, the ego would be totally inadequate in love's presence, for it could not respond at all. All right. Again, the ego's fear is really not specifically of love's presence, it's our choosing love's presence.

To choose love means you choose against the ego. To take Jesus' hand on the journey up the ladder means you drop the ego's hands. To say yes to the truth means you say no to the ego's illusion. This is not a course in saying yes. It is a course in saying no. That's extremely important. This is not a course in saying yes to God; it's a course in saying no to the ego. When you say no to the ego you're saying this is not the truth. At that point, this disappears and what remains is the truth. That's why he says, later on in the text, "your task is not to seek for love, but to seek and find all the barriers you have placed between yourself and love."

The Holy Spirit offers you another promise and one that will lead you to joy. Now this is when the Holy Spirit says this is the ladder. It's the ladder the ego led you down and now you take my hand and I'll lead you up. In other words, we'll begin with the concept of the self that you have as an innocent victim and retrace the steps back to its source.

For his promise is always seek and you will find. And under his guidance, you cannot be defeated. His is the journey to accomplishment and the goal he sets before you he will give you. For he will never deceive God's son whom he loves with the love of a father. And remember that love is the love of oneness. It's the love of non-duality. It's the love of non-individuality. It's the love of non-specificity. That's the fear. You will undertake a journey because you are not at home in this world. So one of the challenges that Jesus has as our teacher is to convince us that this world is not our home.

See, what most religions and spiritualities do, and unfortunately many people do it with the *Course* as well, is they try to use their spiritual teaching as a way of making this world a better place for themselves. They make the error real. They believe in a hierarchy of illusions and there are certain ways of being in this world that will make you happier than others. In other words, they're saying the dream is real and now take my hand, I will show you a happier dream. But it's really the ego's hand that you're listening to and taking and not Jesus.

Closing Narration:

In the world of the ego we search for love outside ourselves. We seek to find love that is rooted in a person, a relationship, money, fame, an object, a substance, a craving, or a pleasure. Where are you looking for love in your life? Do you find yourself repeating, "When I have enough money, then I will find peace," "When I find my soul mate, then I will feel loved," or "When I am truly recognized for my intelligence, creativity, or hard work, then I will experience true joy in my life." You may wish to note the "special loves" that you have been seeking in your life and how they have not given you permanent, unaltered joy. Make a note of these mistakes that you have made. Do not judge yourself for these choices, but simply observe them and make the choice to continue your ascent.

Notes

Session 9: The Only Real Choice — The Real Alternative

Opening Narration:

Based on the teachings of the Course, the purpose of the ego's world is to maintain and continue the problem of our pain and unhappiness. In this session Kenneth reveals how the cause of our suffering comes from the decision maker's identification with guilt. He explains that the only way to rid ourselves of our guilt is to uncover it at its source. As we perpetuate the illusions of this world, we continue to attempt to find another ladder home. No other ladder will get us there. When we ask for help to remove the conditions that lead us to our fear, then we make the only real choice that works. We then choose the Holy Spirit over the ego as our teacher.

Kenneth:

When psychologists talk about guilt, they are not talking about this guilt in our minds. The guilt they are talking about is the guilt that is found in the body, the psychological body, and our personality. All right. And that guilt is a reflection or a shadow of this guilt that's in our minds. But since we have become mindless and nobody in this world studies the mind, we all study the brain, then we are not aware of it. And so we think we found the causes of our guilt, whatever various theory you subscribe to, but you never get to the bottom of it. And the bottom of all our suffering, the cause of all our suffering is our guilt. And our guilt is caused by the decision maker's desire to remain as an individual.

So another way to say the problem is our guilt is, really, the problem is a decision maker's identification with guilt. To say this another way, the problem is never any of the rungs on the ego's ladder. The problem is the decision maker's identification with the rungs on the ego's ladder. That's a very, very important distinction. The problem is never any of the aspects of the ego thought system, (our individuality, our sin, our guilt, our terror of the world, the body, our attack thoughts, etc., etc.).

The problem is always our choice to identify with this thought system. That's why changing any of the rungs on the ladder does not help at all. That's why asking Jesus or the Holy Spirit to fix things for you in the world will never work. How can they fix something in a world that doesn't exist? Right. That's why Jesus told Helen, he said to her, don't ask me to take your fear away from you. I can't do that. So he's telling us, don't ask me to, to fix anything in the world, don't ask me to fix anything in your mind. I can't do that.

He says, ask instead for my help to remove the conditions that led to the fear. And these conditions always entailed a willingness to be separate. That's the problem. The decision to be with the ego instead of with Jesus or the Holy Spirit is a decision to be separate from their love, which is an echo of the original decision to be separate from God's love. That's the problem. So Jesus is not saying I can help you with any of this. What I can help you do is change your mind about any of this.

If I believe I'm the innocent victim, somebody must be the sinful and guilty victimizer. And if I believe I am to be murdered, there must be somebody out there who will murder me. This is why there's no hope in the world. Because the world was made to be the hiding place of this thought. The only difference is, in the world, the thought that I exist because I killed God is no longer conscious and that thought now appears in everybody else, but not in me.

So the way each of us wrote our script, and there are no exceptions to this, is the script begins with our being innocent children, innocent infants. Right. The victims of what the world has done, or the effects of what the world has done to us. That's how we set up our life. So it's set up that way. We are what the world has made of us.

If you look at the Self-concept versus self, that's what Jesus is saying there, that we are what the world has made of us. So that the world is set up that way because its purpose is to be, the form of the content, one or the other, but the sin no longer rests in me, it rests in everybody else. And if I don't watch myself they will steal from me.

That's the origin of everyone's authority problem. The authorities are out to steal my identity. They're out to steal my power; they're out to steal my freedom. And it doesn't matter what form it takes, political, social, religious, familial, educational, it doesn't make any difference. We always believe the authorities are out to get us.

If you go back to the most basic part of our existence in this world, the need for food, that's what food is. If I don't consume something that I believe is external to me, I will die. Therefore, something else has to die so I will live. And since there's no hierarchy of illusions, it doesn't matter whether it's a carrot, whether it's a turnip, whether it's a fish, or whether it's a cow. It's something outside of me that I feel has what I need. It has the energy and the nutrients that I need to survive.

Now there's no way of avoiding this in our world. And the purpose is not to feel guilty because you have to eat. But the purpose is to realize what this whole world is based on. It's all based on one or the other. If I'm to survive, another very basic need, I have to have oxygen. Where do I get oxygen? Not from within me, I have to ingest oxygen from outside of me. And every time I take a breath I devour thousands of microorganisms. Do I care? No. All I care about is I get the precious thing I need so I can continue to live. And it works wonderfully for 10 or 15 seconds. Then I have to do it again. All right. There's no end to one or the other. It's extremely important that you recognize that this entire physical universe rests on that.

Anybody tries to tell you this is a wonderful place, they do not know what they're talking about. This is a place of murder. Remember, last night I quoted the line, "What is not love is murder." And love only exists in Heaven. Life only exists in Heaven. The idea again is not to feel guilty because we devour thousands of microorganisms every time we take a breath, etc., but the idea is to realize that that's what the world is about, and this is what we call life.

It's always interesting, I think, if you're here, is you could sit here and listen to this and it makes perfect sense. And you step outside of the room and you forget every word I said. It's not because you're suffering from incipient Alzheimer's. I don't think. It's because you're terrified of what this means. It means nothing that you value here means anything at all. So remember, the ego makes up a non-existent world, throws it with non-existent problems, and then tells us to seek for non-existent solutions. And again, that's why nothing ever works.

The world was made that problems could not be escaped. What is the problem? The only problem from the ego's point of view is the problem that we chose to be an individual and at some point we might change our mind. Remember, that's the first concept of the self that the ego introduces.

Then it becomes the concept of my sinful, guilty, fearful self. That's my problem. Remember, this self of sin, guilt, and fear is a defense against a self of individuality. So this is not the problem, my guilt, my self-hatred is not the problem; my fear of God's wrath is not the problem, because there is no wrathful God. And there's no guilt in me because I didn't do anything. So none of this is a problem.

So the ego makes up a non-existent problem and then says we have to solve this non-existent problem by making up a world and hiding in a body. Right. And then our body suffers. So that becomes a problem and the ego says, well, the

solution is you're not responsible for it. Somebody else is. So let's go out now and solve the "somebody else" who's the problem.

State it another way, a more basic way; the ego makes up the body, which is the solution to the problem of our sin, guilt, and fear. Then once we're in a body, that becomes a problem. So now we spend the rest of our lives trying to solve the problems of our bodies, whether they're talking about our physical bodies or our psychological bodies. And so all the different ladders that the ego introduces into our life are the different ways of solving the problem of my body. So my body will be more comfortable, less lonely, less angry, less unhappy, less sick, less aging, etc., etc. All the time, the real problem, which is that I chose to be an individual, is never looked at. So again, that's what the sign means that the world was made that problems could not be escaped.

The beginning of one of the sections on special relationships, it is essential that you realize that looking at the special hate relationship involves a great amount of pain. That's almost a direct quote. That's a very, very important sentence. It's, essential that we realize that looking at our specialness, looking at all the hatred in us, involves a great amount of pain.

He tells us that so when the pain begins to arise in our mind we don't run away. That's when we need him the most. Not to fix the pain, not to cover it over again, not to build us another ladder, but to help us look at it and realize what purpose the pain serves.

The purpose the pain serves is that it conceals us or protects us from looking at our decision to be an individual. On this ladder all the rungs are designed to keep us from getting back to the power of our mind. Once you realize that pain has a purpose and it's a purpose you no longer want, the pain will disappear.

Another way of saying what this *Course* is about is that it's a *Course* in purpose. Purpose is everything. The ego's purpose is to preserve individuality. The Holy Spirit's purpose is to awaken us from the dream of individuality and return us home. There are only two purposes in the entire world, 'cause there are only two thoughts in our mind. There's the ego thought of individuality and specialness, there's the Holy Spirit's thought of forgiveness and Atonement. And there's nothing else.

If I'm in pain, if I'm unhappy, if I'm in discomfort of any kind, it must be only because it's serving the ego's purpose of keeping me on this ladder. The ladder of the self. If I'm feeling truly peaceful, filled with hope, it's because I've chosen a different purpose. The purpose being my way of getting off this ladder.

There's an earlier section called *Seek Not Outside Yourself*. That's where the line appears, do you prefer to be right or happy. All right. And Jesus is saying this all the way through in many different ways. Don't seek outside yourself. To seek within yourself doesn't mean within your body, doesn't mean within your individual identity as a figure in the dream here at the bottom of the ladder.

What he's saying to seek within is to go back to this choice point in your mind. And again, that's the purpose of the miracle, to bring us back to this choice point in our mind, to the original concept of the self. This is the only concept of the self that we are, (decision maker) that has any value to us. All the others will root us still further in the dream.

If you are studying this *Course* and consider yourself a diligent and a sincere student, and you find yourself being hopeless, it's because you're studying this *Course* on your own. 'Cause if you really look at your ego with Jesus or the Holy Spirit, there can be no despair, there can be no guilt, there can be no judgment. And slowly, a little smile will begin to cross your face and stay there.

Closing Narration:

As Kenneth ends this session he asserts that it is imperative that we ask for help from the Holy Spirit when doing this work with the Course. Have you truly asked for help? Do you meet some resistance at being open to receive aid? It might be a useful exercise to stop and request assistance each time you start a session on the Course. Before continuing with the program, take five minutes to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance and insight. You will likely find that realizing the desert of this world and the futility of your outward search is much more bearable with the wisdom and compassion of the loving presence by your side.

Notes

Session 10: What Really Works

Opening Narration:

As students of the Course, we have to remain aware of the trappings of our egos. Kenneth opens this session by reminding us that we too are an illusion. In studying the Course we may at times forget this, and doing so will again only perpetuate the ego's dream that we have made.

The emphasis of this session is that although there are several spiritual paths to follow, it is important that you ultimately choose only one. Trying to follow more than one will only instill conflict within your mind. Causing such conflict would be yet another of the ego's tricks to keep you from focusing on its undoing.

Kenneth further cautions that there is an inherent problem in trying to climb the ladder home too fast. Many of us attempt to leap from the bottom of the ladder — where we listen solely to the voice of our egos — up to the top rung and into the arms of the Holy Spirit. Undoing years and years of the ego's power over you must be done gradually. Although the truth that the Course teaches is simple, if you are paying attention to its teachings, you will likely not find it easy. You can trust that your ego will find every barrier it can to resist the decision maker in you from removing any barriers.

Kenneth:

You know, unfortunately, many students of the *Course* don't make the connection between the central teaching that the world is an illusion, that also means that they're an illusion, too. The "I" that they think is studying this *Course* is an illusion. The belief in such a wonderful student or teacher of this *Course* is an illusion. If the world's an illusion, they must be an illusion, too. And it's the terror of that identification that causes people not to pay attention to them.

I'd like to have people think about the line when Jesus says, "The world was over long ago." Well, if the world was over long ago, where does that leave me? I'm part of the world. That's what nobody wants to really look at. And everything that goes on in this world is a defense against my realizing that I was over long ago. My individual existence was over long ago. It's not here anymore. In fact, it never was here.

So what is it that I am? I'm basically an after-image. Yet, I think I'm so solid and so important and so special and so smart and so holy and so spiritually

advanced, etc., and I'm nothing but an after-image. That's what all this is saying. When you read this *Course* you have to, you really have to pay careful attention to every line. And then realize why you don't pay careful attention to every line. You either fall asleep or you get hungry or you distract yourself or your eyes read the lines but nothing else pays any attention to it.

And the reason for it is because they're so terrified, because they mean the end of your individual existence. They mean the end of your specialness. And what's helpful is to just see how you defend against it. You don't have to let any of this go; you just have to look at it. You don't have to stop pursuing all of the ladders of specialness, to follow all the different roads that the ego leads you down. You don't have to stop any of that, but just stand back and watch yourself do it. And if you stand back with Jesus, I guarantee you that little smile will start to form on your lips. 'Cause you'll realize how silly all this is. And that's what will cause you to stop.

"Seek not another signpost in the world that seems to point to still another road. No longer look for hope where there is none. Make fast your learning now and understand you but waste time unless you go beyond what you have learned to what is yet to learn."

One of the important themes of the *Course* (and it certainly is very much implied here, even though the words are not used) is that forgiveness is a process. You know, so many people who are terrified at looking at these various rungs believe they can jump from the bottom of the ladder right into Jesus' arms and from there right to Heaven. And so they can skip all the intervening steps, which mean I must look at the devastation I believe my life is and above all, the devastation I believe, I caused, and that I am. It's only when you look at it that this will disappear. So what he's telling, making clear here is that this is a process. That you now have learned something but you must go beyond what you've learned to what you still have not understood.

So in other words, but what we learn first is that there's nothing here, nothing here will work. We're still at the bottom of the ladder, but this gets us to the right ladder. Remember, what I began with yesterday evening, you can't climb the ladder home until you know what the ladder is. The ego's purpose is to hide this entire ladder. This whole devolution of the self is hidden from us. And if I'm not aware of it, how can I make my way back up?

One of the things that Jesus does relentlessly in this *Course* is point out how awful being in this world is. Not because the world itself is awful, the world is nothing. What's awful is the fact that we believe we're here, which means we no longer believe we are in Heaven. That's what is awful. And that's the source of all our unhappiness and our despair.

And all you have to do is watch yourself in action and see how you will compromise that idea over and over again. Somehow try to bring a little bit of Heaven into hell, you know. And there are several passages in the *Course* also, which are very clear that this is impossible. You can't have Heaven in hell and you can't have hell in Heaven. They are mutually exclusive states.

But we want to stay here because we want to stay alive as an individual, and therefore we try to delude ourselves into thinking we can bring a touch of Heaven here. We can bring Jesus into our world. We could bring the teachings of *A Course in Miracles* into our world so our world will become better. So that the defense against recognizing the real futility of the world that is mentioned here is our need to be an individual.

That is why it is a huge step. It's not the only step or the final step, but it's a huge step to realize that nothing works in this world and we must get back to the bottom rung of this ladder. And realize that it's the bottom rung of this ladder.

A trap many students of the *Course* fall into is they usually come to the *Course* from other spiritual paths. And they'll say, well, the path I came from is one form of truth. The *Course* is another form of truth. But it's really all the same truth. It's not all the same. Indeed there's only one truth, but that's not in this world, that's in Heaven. All right. And different spiritual paths are just that. They are different. They are not the same. If you tried to blend them together as one what you're going to end up doing is building in conflict in your mind. Because you'll be following two different paths; you're trying to climb two different ladders. And the ladders go in different ways. They'll end up in the same place, but their paths are much different. And so you'll end up really hurting yourself because you're going to be building in conflict.

As a guideline for anyone, I would say, when you find the spiritual path that works for you, stay with it. You know, shop around. Do the spiritual smorgasbord. But when you find the path that works for you, stay with it. Now whether it's the *Course* or any other path, but don't mix them up. If you mix them up you're going to do a disservice to the *Course* as well as any other path that you're following. You may swear up and down and be sure you're right that

they're the same. They are not the same. And the *Course* certainly is unlike any other path that you're going to find.

The purpose of finding two different paths and following them is to prevent the truth from being reached. "Think not that happiness is ever found by following a road away from it." So again, Jesus saying, you know that the ladder I'm offering you is the right ladder. This is what will lead you home. Follow it. Don't substitute other ladders in their place.

The goal of this *Course* is not to find love. We're not asked to seek love, we're asked to seek and find all the barriers we place between ourselves and love. So in order to reach the positive goal of the *Course*, we first have to say no to the ego's negation of this goal. We must be able to look at this ego thought system and say this is not what I want.

And if you're not doing the *Course* that way, you are not doing the *Course* and then it will not help you and you will not find the goal that you're really seeking. You have the illusion of finding it. Again, this is a goal of undoing the ego. It's not in reaching God; it's undoing the obstacles to reaching God. When you undo the obstacles, God will show up all by himself.

Closing Narration:

As this session ended, Kenneth reminded you that you need to remember what the dream is and who the dreamer is.

At this point in the program you may wish to try this exercise. Please do not attempt to do this exercise while driving a vehicle. Take a moment and focus on where you are right now. Become aware of what your five senses are experiencing. Using these senses, begin to remind yourself that all around you is a dream. What do you see? All that you see is a dream. What do you feel? All that you feel is a dream. What do you smell? All that you smell is a dream. What do you hear? All that you hear is a dream. What do you taste? All that you taste is a dream. Now observe the "you" that is using these senses. This too is part of a dream. YOU do not exist.

At any moment you could awaken to find yourself surrounded by divine love, existing as part of the oneness. Further imagine, if you will, that you are part of that oneness and looking down upon this fantastic dream that you created. Just observe this dream. Do not judge it. Do not try to change it. Just observe it with a loving and compassionate eye.

You may wish to practice this exercise throughout the day as a reminder that every moment of every day, every experience that you have is all part of a massive dream that you can choose to awaken from at any time.

Notes

Session 11: The Six Stages of Development of Trust

Opening Narration:

This session opens with a recitation of a wonderful poem that Helen had written in conjunction with Jesus. This poem clearly articulates her struggles with her ego as she attempts to resist facing the fact that Jesus exists. By acknowledging His existence, Helen realized that she was then opening to the voice of the Holy Spirit, thus the illusionary world of the ego began to crumble.

Kenneth/Gloria:

We entitled this *Love Does Not Oppose*, which as we'll see is the basic underlying principle of forgiveness, of the Atonement. And is a wonderful saying exemplifying one of the basic *Course* teachings, namely not to make the error real. And we'll see how the life, death, and resurrection are the perfect exemplification of this principle of love not opposing the mistakes in the darkness in the world and that the basic message that Jesus came to teach us 2000 years ago in Palestine is the same message that he's giving us today in *A Course in Miracles*. Namely, how to be defenseless in the face of the fear and the hatred of the world.

The goal of the *Course* is to live in the real world. And living in the real world means living in this physical body, but without any sin or without any guilt. And that's the culmination of the *Course's* process. So that we could say that the purpose of the *Course* is not to help us return to Heaven, which is a step that God takes, but the purpose is to experience total forgiveness, which then is the total absence of any guilt in us. So that we live in this world without any projections at all. So that would be the state in which Jesus lived.

The ego speaks first and it's always wrong. You know, so that we're going to be tempted, in effect, to react to any situation as if we are an ego. And then what The *Course* would have us do is then pull back and ask within us, our internal teacher, the Holy Spirit, please help me to correct, you know, my perception of this situation. And then it's that stepping back, and asking for help, would disentangle us from that situation and that ego reaction so that we can step back and look at what's really happening and that this is an opportunity and a lesson to disattach from being an ego.

What usually happens in the world is that that reinforces the ego for most people. And if you're not a student of the *Course*, you just keep spinning your wheels, attacking back and the person attacks you and then you're into this attack/defense cycle and you just get deeper, deeper into a groove and a hole and you never get out of it.

So the *Course* is having us look at everything totally differently, pulling back from that and watching this go on and then saying that, you know, there is another way of relating the world. There is another way of being here in this world, whereas the Bible says, to be in the world but not of it. Not attaching to the world, but going through the motions of being in the world.

The way that we will know that stranger of Jesus who is within us is through forgiveness of those people whom we have condemned. You know, in other words, those people who are the most difficult of our special relationships. And by having this person be in our life we are really also having Jesus be in our life. And through the forgiveness of this person whom we see as an ego, which of course is a projection of an ego that we've made real on ourselves, the forgiveness of that person we'll also be forgiving Jesus. And that's what he means, "That I was a stranger and you took me in not knowing who I was, yet for your gift of lilies, you will know." And again, what that means in terms of this theme being, as God created us, is that we then make the ego self the stranger. And we make this Christ Self, who we really are, into our friend.

The *Course* makes very, very clear in many different places, forgiveness is a process. While it is possible in principle, since there is no time to forgive in one instant then be home, this is not our usual experience. Otherwise none of us would be here tonight, right. And the *Course* does make it very clear, as it does specifically in this section, that forgiveness is a process.

What this section does is really talk very specifically about six stages, although you don't have to make six into a sacrosanct number, but six stages of what it calls the development of trust, which is really just another way of talking about the process of forgiveness.

Four of these stages are not very desirable in terms of how the ego would look at them. So let's start off with the first one and that's development of trust.

Okay, it says, "First they must go through [and that's teachers of God] what might be called a period of undoing. This need not be painful, but it is usually so experienced. It seems as if things are being taken away and it is really understood initially that their lack of value is merely being recognized. How can lack of value be conceived unless the perceiver is in a position where he must see things in a different light? He is not yet at a point at which he can make the shift entirely internally. And so the plan will sometimes call for changes in what seem to be external circumstances. These changes are always helpful. When the teacher of God has learned that much, he goes on to the second stage."

Closing Narration:

This session ends with an explanation of stage one in the six stages to developing trust. This stage is a period of undoing in which you begin to question your current value system. Before proceeding with the program, you might review your current values. How might they reflect the voice of the ego over the voice of the Holy Spirit? How are they trapping you into further depending upon the illusions of this world? Remember, your job is not to try to change nor resist anything, but simply to become aware of your current state and do so with a committed and discerning eye.

Notes

Session 12: The Six Stages of Development of Trust (cont'd)

Opening Narration:

Kenneth and Gloria continue their discussion of the six stages to development of trust in this session. They assert that the ego's one basic value is that the world is real. They further explain that it is not in our best interest to focus on what stage we may be at, or to compare our progress to others. Again, such focus perpetuates the ego's world of competition and illusion. They remind us that the Holy Spirit's guidance is gentle and that it is our resistance and interference that makes it difficult. Again they provide us with yet another reminder that the Course does not dictate that the answer lies in ridding ourselves of our worldly possessions and comforts. The significance is not the form itself, but the meaning that we give it. Therefore, we should not give up our insurance policies and our investments. We should, however make note of the meaning and power that we give them in our lives. Do they make us feel safe? If so, what is it that we fear and believe that we need protection from? Therein lies the answer. Therein lies the undoing.

Kenneth/Gloria:

The entire thought system of the Course holds together such a logically tight system that you either accept everything it says or you must throw out everything it says because it's not a compromised kind of situation. And that really is that same kind of idea that you must question all values that we have without exception.

And again, as Gloria was saying, we are not aware usually of the full extent of these values. While they take a myriad number of forms, they all basically come down to the one basic value that this world is real. That the body is real, that the physical world is real, that the institutions in this world are real and valid, that the laws of this world are real.

The process of letting go of our investment in the things of the world, and our values in the world, are really what is reflected in these six stages. And again, as we're saying here, and we'll be coming back to over and over again, this is not an easy path. It's not easy not because God makes it difficult, but because the resistance we have to letting go of what we have made is so enormous that we

don't let it go without a lot of fighting and screaming and a lot of pain and lot of struggle. It doesn't have to be that way in principle, but our fear demands that we put up a good fight.

One other point before Gloria goes on with this. There's a built-in danger in the *Course* talking about six stages. And I think that that's obvious, but you think about it. And the danger is everybody wonders well, where do I fit in? You know. And then, where does this person fit in? You know, I'm on stage four but she's only on stage two, you know. And that's a built-in problem and certainly, those people who have grown up with traditional Christian spirituality know that when various mystics have talked about the mystical stages, you fall into the same trap.

Perhaps the most famous of these was St. Teresa of Avila. She wrote a classic of Christian mysticism called the *Interior Castle* in which she talks about seven stages. The first being the bare beginnings and the seventh which is the interior of the castle being the experience of unity with God. And from that point on I think everyone who's read that book starts wondering well, what's that, what part of the castle am I in? And it becomes a kind of a spiritual specialness thing in a way, kind of pointing a judgmental finger at other people.

The *Course* does talk about six stages, and talks about them as a process. But I think it's a real temptation and a mistake to try to plug into you know, where am I today, where was I a month ago, where am I going to be next year and, you know, where's everybody else? I think the purpose of this is simply to reflect the idea that it is a process, that it is a process of letting go, that's what the four, quote, negative stages are. But that, you know, try to resist the temptation to kind of plug into it, you know. Rather, try to identify with the whole flow of the process of letting go. Recognizing that it is a process.

Let me say that one of the principle things the *Course* talks about is the difference between form and content. And what we're talking about, and what the *Course* is talking about, about letting go, is the content, not the form. And the content would be any aspect of guilt or fear, etc. The form would be the various things that we do. And the *Course* is never saying we should stop what we're doing. In fact, at one point the *Course* says that the Holy Spirit will never take away your special relationships. What he will do is transform them, which means that he will shift their purpose from guilt to forgiveness.

So if we transpose that to various things that we would do in terms of financial security, we would say the Holy Spirit would never take your financial securities away from you. What he would do is that he would shift their purpose.

And the idea again, is not, that the investments we have is in the “ego’s reality”, as opposed to the true reality of Christ. So there’s nothing in the *Course* that would say you should give up your savings or give up your pension or give up your insurance policies or anything like that. In fact, I suspect if you ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit, he would say, you know, don’t bother with such silliness. He wouldn’t really say that. Don’t quote me on that! But, what he would say is, you know, don’t be concerned about the form, be concerned about the meaning you’ve invested in it and let me help you not be anxious or fearful or insecure.

But he’d be making the same mistake he’s saying the ego makes if he would say, well, give up the forms. You know, change the forms and that will make you feel more secure. As Gloria was saying, if you suddenly gave up all your insurance policies and your pension plans and your bank accounts and your money markets and your investments, then the chances are you’ll be thrown into a panic. You know, and you would have really accomplished nothing.

Second stage. Next, the teacher of God must go through a “period of sorting out.” This is always somewhat difficult because having learned that the changes in his life are always helpful, he must now decide all things on the basis of whether they increase the helpfulness or hamper it. He will find that many if not most of the things he valued before will merely hinder his ability to transfer what he has learned to new situations as they arise. Because he has valued what is really valueless, he will not generalize the lesson for fear of loss and sacrifice. It takes great learning to understand that all things, events, encounters, and circumstances are helpful.”

This is the third stage, this period of relinquishment, and again, it’s talking here about enormous conflict that this can engender, depending on how much we’re holding on to certain values, how much we still are believing the ego system that talks about sacrifice, and of course that kind of temptation can happen like this, instantly. And we can believe we’re a victim and that things are being taken away from us, that we’re being treated unfairly.

You know, I remember that line in the *Course*, beware the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated. I mean, I have to walk around with that up here because the temptation is every second of every minute. And so that this whole

description here is really talking about a process where we have to just keep asking for help in really bringing the unconscious values that we're holding to conscious awareness and then relinquishing and letting them go. And that's, I think, a difficult process because we have made all these sacred idols, as the *Course* talks about, and we're not really willing to give them all up.

This is the fourth step. "This is a quiet time in which the Teacher of God rests a while at reasonable peace." [Notice he says reasonable to qualify this!] "Now he consolidates his learning. Now he begins to see the transfer value of what he has learned. Its potential is literally staggering. And the Teacher of God is now at the point in his progress at which he sees in it the whole way out. 'Give up what you do not want, and keep what you do.' How simple is the obvious. The teacher of God needs this period of resting."

Now there's another humdinger and that's stage five. "The next stage is indeed a period of unsettling. Now must the Teacher of God understand that he did not really know what was valuable and what was valueless. And all that he really learned so far was that he did not want the valueless and that he did want the valuable. Yet his own sorting out was meaningless in teaching him the difference. The idea of sacrifice so central to his own thought system has made it impossible for him to judge. He thought he learned willingness. But now he sees that he does not know what the willingness is for."

So what this is saying is that you really don't know anything and understand anything that's going on. And in the text it says, "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 know myself. Yet in this learning is salvation born and What you are will tell you of itself."

Okay, so it sounds very strongly like this is kind of hooked into that stage here about, you know, we think that, you know, we've made progress, that we've let go of, you know, we could enumerate a whole bunch of things in your lives, and then we get to this period here, this unsettling, and again it's like the very bottom, the very foundation of our whole core system again is being shaken. And of course we're going to experience some amount of disequilibrium.

... And then the next sentence is a humdinger. "And now he must attain a state that may remain impossible to reach for a long, long time. He must learn to lay all judgment aside and ask only what he really wants in every circumstance.

Were not each step in this direction so heavily reinforced, it would be hard, indeed!"

As you know, one of the major themes that is found in all three books is that of letting aside all judgment and how difficult all that is. Because again, there's a way of admitting that we were wrong and God was right. And of course because it was in that initial judgment that we were right and God was wrong that the ego was born and then the world was made. And so what this is talking about is the process of really saying we were wrong and I prefer to be happy rather than right. And to realize that it's the Holy Spirit that knows, and not ourselves. Again, this is much easier said than done.

And now period six. "Finally there is a period of achievement. It is here that learning is consolidated. Now what we're seeing as merely shadows before become solid gains, to be counted on in all 'emergencies' as well as tranquil times. Indeed, the tranquility will vary result. The outcome of honest learning, consistencies of thought, and full transfer. This is the stage of real peace, for here is Heaven state fully reflected." All right, this is really talking about the real world. In other words, it's living in this world, in the body, and yet in a state of real peace. It doesn't mean that "terrible things don't happen to you," like "emergencies." It simply means that when they "do happen," then you have a different way of looking at them. You don't see them as terrible anymore.

The six stages talked about here spells it out a little more detailed, but basically I think the process we all do experience is the resistance of letting go of our judgments of unforgiveness and then the peace that comes when we do let them go, and then forgetting again and going back and forth.

Closing Narration:

As you become aware of the six stages, the ego's trapping is that your judging and competitive eye may try to assess "where" you and others in your life are within the stages. There could be a tendency toward comparing your "progress" against that of others, or to judge yourself harshly for not being at stage six yet. These stages are only designed as a guideline to remind you that there are stages to studying and integrating this material, and that it is not something that happens overnight.

You may wish to reflect on your life without judgment, while requesting the presence of the Holy Spirit. Make note of any blocks that might be

keeping you from moving ahead. If the competitive spirit in you arises, simply observe it, reminding yourself that it is merely the voice of your ego attempting to be heard.

Notes

Session 13: Projection Makes Perception

Opening Narration:

Gloria opens this session with selections from the Course along with a short meditation on the journey of separation and back again. She then illuminates the Course's theory of original miscreation by describing a journey that she took over an 18-month period. In this experience she relived the oneness, separation, and subsequent struggles that the Course describes. Listening to her account sheds a great deal of light on the struggle that exists for the decision maker in your mind. A struggle in which you must decide whether to buy into the voice of the ego and its ways, or to courageously follow the voice of the Holy Spirit.

Kenneth/Gloria:

While she was still taking down the *Course*, Helen saw something, was kind of a vision to her, which is a perfect demonstration of what these passages are talking about. She saw a solid, unbroken line which represented eternity. Or forget that this is linear for a moment. But that solid, unbroken line represented eternity. It should be a tiny dip or a tiny tick of time which represented the moment of separation. The problem we all share is that we believe this tiny tick of time is real and we believe this is where we are. And the entire world, the entire physical universe, the entire span of evolution, all occurred in this single instant, which we'll spend a lot of time over the course of the day talking about right here. And we have forgotten that reality and truth is this long blue line of eternity.

And so it says, "So very long ago, for such a tiny interval of time, [that's this little tick] that not one note in Heaven's song was missed." In other words, this tiny tick had no effect on Heaven. It had no effect on God, had no effect on Christ.

The problem is that we have made this a fearful instant. "And do you want that fearful instant kept, [which is this time of terror which you're going to talk about], when Heaven seemed to disappear and God was feared and made a symbol of your hate." And so what we're really talking about is this tiny tick of time and what occurred within this illusory instant, which seemed to cast us out of Heaven and seemed to shatter the unity of Christ and the love of God.

There's a part of our mind that only wants to attack and separate, that's the dark group, that's what the *Course* typically calls the ego or the wrong mind. And then

there's the part of our mind that has to choose. You know, the *Course* says over and over again and ends up in the text, "choose once again," that has to choose which voice we're going to listen to. That's the middle group. And you'll see later on how we'll get from these three kind of metaphysical or mythological groups to the psychology of the mind, which the *Course* spends a great deal of time talking about. And the *Course* line was that the dark group would be the thought of separation of the ego. The light group would represent the Holy Spirit in their right mind. And the middle group would represent the decision maker part of our mind that can either choose to listen to the right mind or the wrong mind.

But the principle was that she entertained the possibility that that thought of separation might be interesting, which meant somewhere in her mind she made it real. That's what sin is, and of course, that's what guilt is. And when the light group said that to her, the last thing in the world she wanted to do was to look within her mind and perceive the guilt or the darkness that was there.

All right, the other part of her mind represented the message of the light group, which was really saying look within and don't get so upset over what is literally nothing. But her guilt prevented her from merely looking within. And so what she did was she took the guilt and she projected it out on to the dark group. And she said the problem is not in me, the darkness is not in me, the darkness is in them, and we have to stop them.

And she goes back to the light group, which she'll elaborate on in just a minute, and what she tries to do is mobilize them to help her protect her guilt. It doesn't seem that way to her, what she experiences is she wants help in destroying the guilt that is out there. So again, as Gloria said, this is the first projection. I'm not responsible for where I find myself, I'm not responsible for the void of hell and of terror that I'm in, they did it to me. And now I'm going to stop them that are out there.

As the *Course* always reminds us, it's the way we look at something that's the problem, not what's out there, 'cause in reality, of course, there's nothing out there, it's the way that we perceive it. And what we perceive first within ourselves is what we perceive outside. Projection makes perception. And that's what all this is about.

Closing Narration:

This experience that Gloria shared is a vivid and pungent reenactment of the struggles that we each face with our egos. It is reflected by the projection that we make in our lives and throughout the world, as it exists today. She poignantly described her great fear and panic in the face of the dark beings and how she continually attempted to encourage the light beings to join her and rise up against them.

Take a moment to look within yourself and find the darkest thought that exists within you. Sit with that darkness for a while. What kind of fear or panic arises for you as you sit with it? What other things does your ego mind think about in order to avoid facing this darkness? Take note of this experience, being sure not to judge yourself. Call in the loving hand of the Holy Spirit for nurturing guidance and support. Note any new awareness that may arise after doing this exercise.

Notes

Session 14: *A Course in Miracles* and Money

Opening Narration:

Kenneth conducts a very powerful discussion about how money relates to the principles of the Course in this session. He illustrates how your beliefs about money clearly perpetuate the incorrect value system of the ego. The ego reinforces the state of lack in which your gain would only mean loss to someone else. Thus money remains a symbol of inequality. When you have money, you carry guilt that you stole it at the expense of others. When you lack money, you make others responsible for taking it from you. Either way, when you listen to the ego, you do not experience peace. You experience misery and separation.

Kenneth:

The world was made to be a place of scarcity. It was made to be a place of deprivation where we blame other people, other countries, and other forces for depriving us of what is ours — what we believe is rightfully ours. Again we made our bodies individually like that to always be in a state of lacking and need and wanting and craving, and of course we made a whole world like that. And we want it to be this way because this proves that it's not fair but it's not my fault. We are all martyrs of the ego, and we luxuriate in the pain and the suffering. So one of the great symbols of inequality in our world is money. Some people have it, some people do not have it. Most people when they make it, make it at somebody else's expense.

There are always exceptions, but typically when someone is running a business the purpose of the business is to make money. Well whom do you make money from? You have to make money from the customers. Or you have to give them something for it. And so typically shrewd, businesspeople will try to spend as little as possible on their product and get as much in return for it. Again, not everyone is like that, but certainly that seems to be the norm. Because the interests are separate. The customer wants the product. They want the best product possible. The businessperson needs and wants to sell it so he or she can make a profit. These interests are basically contradictory. Cause each is trying to get the best deal possible. Again, I'm not saying all businesses are run that way, but certainly most of them are. Because it's inherent in the human condition.

I don't know the exact numbers, but a very small percentage of people in the world owned or has the most amount of money. And the greater percentage to people in the world has very, very little money, you know, below poverty level. This should come as no surprise because again this is how the world was made and why the world was made. To take the problem of inequality and injustice and scarcity and power that's in the mind and say it's not in the mind. It's out in the world. So the question should not be how can this happen. The question will be how could people not recognize this is what it is. Again, that's why it's so important to always understand the origins of the ego thought system and the ego thought system itself. And especially to understand the whole concept of projection, because that will help you understand how something that is really inside appears to be outside. And whatever is outside must come from inside. Must be exactly the same as what is inside because ideas leave not their source.

So that money is not seen as an instrument to express "share" here, instead money is seen as part and parcel of the whole thought system of the ego of separate interest. I want as much money as I can get. Now I may think it's for alturtistic reasons, I want it for my family, I want it for my business, I want it for my not for profit organization which is supposed to help people, I want it for my country because my county is going to help people. But it's always about my country, my business, my foundation, my family. It's never about a collective. It's never about ours, it's always about my. It's always about separate interest, and money then becomes the great symbol for that.

Money then becomes the great vehicle, that is, in our world it becomes a great symbol of power. Power of having your interests met at somebody else's expense. It becomes the policy of governments, and world groups, and certainly it's the policy of individuals.

And money becomes the main vehicle. Even in religious circles, you have this whole strange idea of tithing. We have to give God back. You know God has given you. Whatever you think he's given you, and now you have to give him one tenth of your earnings. There's always a bargain. There's always some element of sacrifice. And we resent bitterly that we have to sacrifice, so there's part of us that resents merely having to buy things, and pay for things, because on some level we believe everything should be given to us. But that's not how the world is. We have to pay for it.

And so in our minds we always want to get away with as much as we can, and invariably this will take a financial form. Because money then becomes the vehicle of expressing separate interest and power.

One of the ways we try to cover over our guilt is to just keep covering it over with more and more money. Just as people who are anxious will try to quell the anxiety by putting more and more food in their stomach, as if the source of the anxiety is in their stomach. So we always need more. There's a wonderful passage near the end of the Anti-Christ section in the text where Jesus talks about how the ego always wants more, and it doesn't care more of what. It could mean more of something good, or more of something bad. Just as long as it's better than other people. I suffer more than other people. I'm happier than other people. You know it doesn't matter what form it is as long as it reinforces my specialness, which means my distinctiveness and my separation from other people.

So again, it is very hard to have money without there being guilt. Not because of anything inherent in money, cause there's nothing right or wrong about having money. It's the purpose that it serves. And again the ego will always try to satisfy the need for separate interests and justify it.

What he's (Jesus) saying is all you do is you shift the purpose. But in order for you to do this you must be aware of how you have abused power. How you have abused sex, how you have abused your body, how you have abused money. And you have abused money and sex and your body, or other people's bodies, anytime you see your interest as apart from anyone else's. No one escapes that in this world. So don't feel bad or guilty about that. That's why we're here. Because we all did that originally with God, or so we thought. So we're simply going to repeat this over and over and over again.

What makes this process possible is the willingness to look at the forms, to look at the behaviors and to look at these without guilt and without judgment. And the looking at them without guilt or without judgment is exactly what the *Course* means by looking with the Holy Spirit or looking with Jesus. That's all you have to do. Just look without guilt at how you have abused power, how you've expressed the ego's interest in separate interest, and realize, well, of course that's what I would do. And see that that's what the whole world was made out of. So again it's so important that you look at yourself and look at your ego without guilt and without judgment, without calling yourself dirty names. And you said, that's what I did. And I'm as insane as everybody else, but I am insane. And I realize now how painful my decisions have been for me. Forget about for

anybody else, how painful they have been for me. And what will motivate me to give up my misuse of the world, as a way of reinforcing my ego is to realize the pain it's caused me that I no longer want to experience. And that's what will enable me then to turn to the Holy Spirit as my friend.

Closing Narration:

As Kenneth reminded us, Jesus states in the Course that we would be happier leading a life of shared interests. In order to discover what "shared interests" might entail, we must give away the thought system that our possessions are a symbol of. How do you do this?

Well first, look within yourself with honesty and uncover what projections you have about money. Who do you claim has been guilty for taking it from you, or not giving you enough of it? How have you felt you have been wronged, and whom did you make responsible for it? Then, look at yourself. How have you abused power in your life? Where and when have you wronged others in your misguided beliefs?

Once you have done an inventory of when you felt you were wronged and when you wronged others, then with the guiding hand of the Holy Spirit, make the choice to forgive. Forgive anyone else for the way you believed you were wronged, and more importantly, forgive yourself for the mistaken belief that anyone's interests are separate from your own. Again, reinforce that the ego's world is self-made illusion. In reality, we are one with the divine. We have simply forgotten.

Notes

Session 15: The Gift of God: Love

Opening Narration:

Love is the gift of God. When we choose love over fear in our lives, we are welcoming God into our life's experiences. Although the divine is always present, we may not remember that He is. In this session Kenneth provides you with glimpses of the relationship that you are capable of having with the divine. He clearly articulates the errors that we all make in the world of the ego and explains how we can correct these errors simply by perceiving things differently. One of the ways we can do this is by humbly perceiving ourselves as a child of God. Doing so restores our relationship with Him to one of great love and compassion. Of course, this kind and tender relationship with the divine has always existed. We have just forgotten that it is so.

Kenneth:

When we speak about God as being our father and we being his child, these are symbols and it's a symbol really to express the relationship that we have with him here within the dream, which is the correction for what the ego has made of him and of us. But if I see myself as his child, then I'm restoring my relationship to him in its proper order.

Some believe there is something in this world that could really make me feel good, that could make me feel love, that could make me feel peaceful, that could make me feel happy. Any time you do that, then you are ensuring that these two shields remain firmly intact. And once again, none of this should be taken to mean you should feel guilty because you find pleasure in the world. You know, we certainly go to a great extent here to ensure that you're comfortable here. Right? That the food is good. Sometimes very, very good, and that you're comfortable here. So this is not something you should feel guilty about. But it is something you should look at in yourself. And if you find yourself dependent on something that is outside of you, if you find yourself needing something outside of you to be a certain way, otherwise you're not happy or peaceful, that's the red flag you should look at. Everybody in this world has preference. Ok? But it's when the preference becomes a demand. When it becomes an obligation you impose on another person. When it becomes something without which you will never ever be happy again, that's your red flag, that's when you should look, and that's when you should call Jesus up on the phone and say help, I'm doing it

again. And I'm doing it again because I hope that you won't be on the other side answering the phone.

"He (God) loves you as a father loves his son. Without whom would his self be incomplete. Whose immortality completes his own. For in him is the chain of love complete. A golden circle that will never end, a song that will be sung throughout all time and afterward, and always will remain the deathless sound of loving and of love." In the text, Jesus talks about — again using metaphoric language — how God is incomplete without us. All right, that when we believe that we had left home there was a vacant spot in Heaven and God yearns for our return, he misses us, he's lonely without us, he weeps for us. The pain of our leaving is so great. His sensing of our pain(which is so great), causes him to give an answer, (which is the Holy Spirit), which basically is the part of God again within the myth or fairy tale that Jesus is telling us. That the part of God that extends into the dream, into the far country, to bring us back.

The problem that we've set up is always something that is perceived outside of us, but to see the problem as it is, is to realize that what I've done outside is to try to protect myself and keep my own responsibility hidden from me so I don't realize the true problem, namely that I prefer my own self to the Self of Christ. I prefer your love, or the love of the world to the love of Jesus. That's the problem. And so again our true goal and our true need and our true desire are always to return home. And it's that desire that we always have to stifle. So the ego's always working very hard to keep these two layers of defense very active and very much geared towards keeping the secret place hidden from us.

Which means we're always trying to kind of suffocate that little child's cry that he talks about, that little child in us that yearns to go home. That little child that cries out in the long darkness for her father to come. And we're always trying to stifle that call by making up all kinds of things and distractions in the world that are more attractive to us. And once again, the idea is to look at that without judging yourself, or anyone else.

And then that point that that voice, the Holy Spirit, then speaks to us and reflects God's love that shines out, and in, and in-between. In other words, it's all-inclusive. And it must be all-inclusive because the mind is all that there is. There is no world; there is nothing else but the mind. And when I join with the right mind, when I take Jesus' hand and unveil with him that secret place,

unlock the door that kept that love hidden, and then I become that love. I become that Christ just as Jesus is, and there is nothing else.

Closing Narration:

The secret to peace is to look within ourselves. To the extent that we measure our world from the perspective of that which surrounds us is the extent to which we choose to perpetuate the illusionary world of our egos. First we must take responsibility for our problems. Then we must accept ourselves fully and without judgment, seeing ourselves as part of the light of the divine.

There are two exercises that you may wish to try at this point on your journey.

Try to practice this first exercise whenever you find someone causing you apparent anxiety or frustration. As early as you can while in the experience, repeat to yourself, "You are not my problem. I am my problem." Continue repeating this phrase, "You are not my problem. I am my problem." If you do not become aware until after the experience has passed, then think of the other individual and continue to repeat this phrase, allowing it to fully sink into your heart and mind. This would be a massive step towards taking responsibility for yourself and your experiences in this life.

Kenneth states that a "red flag" should be raised in your psyche if you find yourself dependent upon something that is outside of yourself to be a certain way in order to make you peaceful. The next time that you note that a preference that you have becomes a demand, or an obligation that you impose upon another individual, ask for the Holy Spirit's help in looking deeper within yourself to find peace of mind. Do not feel guilty; just simply become aware of any resistances, thoughts, or feelings that may arise as you practice this exercise.

Notes

Session 16: The Gift of God: Love (cont'd)

Opening Narration:

In the final session of this program Kenneth continues to read from some of the last words that Helen scribed. Jesus starts by informing us that he sent the Holy Spirit as our comforter. Calling the Holy Spirit to guide us brings comfort to our minds because within our minds is where the problems exist.

Throughout this selection, Jesus describes the light of the divine in a way that is wondrous and poetic. He clearly states that the door to oneness has always existed, but that we have to take the initiative to open it. The love and compassion that he feels for us is obvious in these passages. Our task at this time is to listen to the powerful words that Kenneth speaks with an open mind and an open heart.

Kenneth:

That indwelling, as it were, of the Holy Spirit's presence is a comfort. And the comfort is that everything you believe you are experiencing is not the truth. It is not a comfort that seeks to assuage our pain here in the world. It's a comfort that tells us that all of our pain in the world, that first dream, that is a dream of thought. The dream of the world is a dream of bodies. That first dream is a dream of thought, and there are misthoughts. They are not the true thoughts. And the comfort that the Holy Spirit brings to us, the comfort that Jesus brings to us, is that gentle reminder that says, my brother what you think is not the truth. Again, it is not a comfort that is experienced here. We may experience it here in the world, but the comfort can only be in our mind because that's all we are. And that's where the Holy Spirit is. That's where the comforting memory of God's love is, and it's that memory that again tells us nothing you believe, nothing you had ever dreamt, has had any effect on my love for you. And you are still a part of me, you are still one with me, your life still exists only in my love, and nowhere else, and that's the comfort. But our lives here really are lives of darkness, and the challenge to us as students of this *Course* is to always remember in the midst of our pain and our misery and unhappiness here, the comforting thought that this is a dream. And what has to be changed is not the figures in the dream, or the circumstance in the dream, this dream of bodies. What has to be changed are the thoughts that are the dreams origin.

"There is help indeed for one so near to Heaven. There is change in everything but this. Whom he has called, and who has answered him, as you have done, can rest in peace upon his loving arm, and trust his gratitude and thankful heart to beat for you, when yours appears to fail." All right, now again this clearly meant for her (Helen). We included it here because it's a message really that could be for everyone. So it was not only that Helen had answered God or answered Jesus by her taking down the *Course* as faithfully and fully as she did. But we all as students of this *Course*, or actually students of any spiritual path, are answering the call. The same call. So again, you always want to guard against the idea that Helen is special, or more special than you or anyone else.

So that there is change in everything in this world. In other words, nothing here is real. Nothing here is meaningful, except in this. So that the only true reflection of a fact in this world would be that we have answered the call. No matter how poor a student you may think you are, nonetheless as a student of this *Course*, as someone who has chosen it as his or her spiritual path, you will just stay with the *Course*. Now obviously there are thousands of other paths, but as one who has chosen a spiritual path or the *Course* as a spiritual path and has remained faithful to it or reasonably faithful to it, that is your expression of answering the call. You don't have to do this *Course* perfectly. You don't have to be totally faithful to it. Just the very fact that you are asking for help and saying that there must be another way outside of myself, that would fall into the same category here.

"Remember this, the thanks of God are yours and will not leave you comfortless for all." So again, God's gratitude to us is not that of a dualistic being who is grateful to us because we're being loyal and faithful to him and we love him. Again, it is a symbol that expresses that unity of love that is the relationship of God and his child. And even more specifically, you can understand when Jesus speaks of God's gratitude to us as being the correction for what the ego has always told us. How can God possibly be grateful to you? You stole from him. You believe you had murdered him. So in our thought system we believe God is not grateful to us. And so we need a correction that tells us that God is grateful to us. And beyond the correction and that truth being that God's love is one and it has never stopped being what it is. Our dreams, once again, have had no effect.

The ultimate goal of any teacher is to make himself dispensable. Well, the ultimate goal of any spiritual tool is to make itself dispensable, because at the end of the *Course*, end of your practice of the *Course*, which is at least a lifetime's work, then you then become like Jesus, you become the manifestation of the Holy Spirit, you become one with that love in that secret place. *A Course in Miracles* is a reflection of the love of that secret place. Helen's journey with Jesus was a reflection of the greater journey of God and Christ that that secret place holds the memory of.

Closing Narration:

What a radiant and loving picture of the divine that Jesus has painted throughout these passages! Our job now is to wake up and undo our ego's illusions, choose to hear the voice of the Holy Spirit, and open to the existence of another more real world, a Heaven — where there is no guilt, no fear, and no separation.

Although this task is simple, your ego does not make the journey an easy one. However your willingness to open to the teachings of this program is a reflection of your dedication to your spiritual path. Remember that as the veil of the ego falls, it reveals the light of the divine. This light permeates through you, and you become a living example of the tender and compassionate energy of the divine. You are then a reflection of the vast world of oneness and splendor that had so long ago been forgotten.

Notes

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