



## An Introduction to A Course In Miracles for Students of Non-dual Teachings

***A Course in Miracles*** (ACIM) is a self study course which clarifies the mystical teachings of Jesus. It was channeled by Helen Schucman, a professor of Medical Psychology at Columbia University, in the early 1970's. Helen was experiencing difficulties in a relationship with another professor at Columbia, Bill Thetford, and asked in her heart for assistance. She began hearing what she described as "the Voice", which she transcribed into notes and ultimately Bill Thetford typed into a transcript. Their collaboration over seven years produced ***A Course in Miracles*** used by thousands of students around the world in search of truth.

The course is comprised of three volumes. A workbook of 365 daily lessons, a text that explains the mystical teachings of Jesus, and a Teacher's Manual to support those called to share the message of salvation– that we are One with our Creator and all of our brothers. The Course outlines the specific means for undoing the thought system of the ego in order to recognize that unconditional love is True Nature and here Now.

The Course in Miracles begins thus:

Nothing real can be threatened.  
Nothing unreal exists.  
Therein lies the peace of God.

The desire to know the peace of God is available now is experienced by every student seeking to know their True Identity. Miracles, as taught by Jesus in the Course, are a means to transcend this world of duality– to ultimately discover that the Kingdom of Heaven, the peace of God, is within. In non-dual teachings True Identity may be called Oneness, Awareness, or The Self. In Sanskrit the word Sat-Chit-Ananda–truth, consciousness, bliss– refers to Absolute Reality or the state of experiencing oneness with all of existence. All these expressions point to the same thing– awakening to true nature. This is the recognition and full acceptance of being synonymous with God; What is. In ACIM Jesus refers to "Choiceless awareness" and the "Happy Dream". In this state of mind the consistent experience is causeless peace of mind, happiness and joy.

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True Identity can be discovered by many means, because it is always here. It is simply recognition– an admission– of what is already true. Everything in this world points to it, because nothing in this world arises without Love. It is only an idea that unconditional Love, the Kingdom of Heaven, is not here. These ideas believed form the basis for the “ego” or the idea that there can be an identity separate from God.

Anyone dedicated to non-dual teachings who reads ACIM will see it is “not of this world” and points to many of the same teachings described in other spiritual traditions, including Mystical Christianity, Hinduism, Advaita Vedanta, the Quran, Buddhism, and the Kabbalah/Jewish Mysticism. Every one of these teachings point to the light within all beings and each in its own way provides a path to recognize it.

“There is the light of Truth, that lights everyone who is born.”

John 1:9 from Vic Alexander’s Aramaic to English translation of the Bible.

The inner light that lights everyone who is born is easily recognized, as it is always here. This is the power of teachings such as Advaita Vedanta which encourages direct looking to see what is true. This is also pointed to by Jesus in ACIM Lessons such as 44 and 189 that encourage students to drop all ideas and concepts about the world and “go empty handed to God”– a deep listening and noticing what is here beyond the world and a body.

These teachings point to silence described in many spiritual traditions. In silence “What is” reveals itself. Repeatedly going empty handed to God, through Lessons 44 and 189 from the course, meditation in silence on the Self in the manner described by Ramana Maharshi, meditating on the sense of presence in the body as described by Nisargadatta Maharaj, and attending Satsang with a realized teacher are all helpful for recognizing what is already here.

Often in this silence/sense of presence there are revelatory experiences that make clear what the greatest sages have pointed to– direct recognition of the Self. In some non-dual traditions this recognition of awareness is

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described as “emptiness or void”. In this “seeing” many beliefs and concepts about the world may collapse. Some call this recognition “Awakening”; however, it is just the beginning for many spiritual seekers of “spiritual transformation” from doing to being. In full awakening the experience is what some teachers refer to as ‘Being Lived’, or as Jesus says, ‘Being done through’ as opposed to experience of the ‘doer’ of the ego.

Even after recognizing the “void or emptiness” that is shared by all beings, or seeing that the world is “within” many seekers feel almost haunted by the feeling that something is still not complete. They may experience times of peace and happiness yet continue to experience the pain and suffering in the world from the dream of a separate identity. Pain may seem to intensify following “seeing” or glimpses of true identity as old thoughts/beliefs and identity patterns– *vasanas*– start flushing into awareness. These incidences are sometimes referred to as ‘attacks of the mind.’ Jesus calls this activity of the mind ‘attack thoughts’. These are attachments to the sense of personal identity– the desire for the feeling of ‘me’ and ‘mine’ that remain in the subconscious mind. Ramana Maharshi and other nondual teachers emphasize the importance of clearing *vasanas* for Self realization.

For most beings the full recognition and “embodiment” – sometimes called unbroken awareness–of the recognition of the Self requires “purification”, a retranslation of the energy invested in the experience of separateness to the direct, continual experience of void/emptiness is also full. It is Life itself and synonymous with the manifest world as an expression of Love celebrating Itself. Jesus calls this knowledge. It is not the knowledge of an object. It is the knowing of True identity, which is objectless, formless, timeless and unchanging. Jesus calls the full recognition and unbroken experience of oneness with God “Choiceless Awareness”. In Heaven there is only One, thus nothing to choose “between”. This is the end of the experience of duality. It is happiness and peace of mind as True Identity, the full expression of pure innocence.

Thus, while this inner light–true identity– can easily be recognized, within ego based consciousness there are often many habits of denying the light in order to perpetuate the experience of limitation in the world. In non-duality

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this is called dreaming– maya– the illusion. Thus what is very simple and easily recognizable is quickly “covered over” by thoughts and ideas that are believed to be true. This is the “veil” that is so often referred to in non-dual traditions. The veil seems to cover over the recognition of pure unborn awareness– the inner light; the light of totality. These passing thoughts believed are what make the direct recognition of the Self seem to “come and go”. Thoughts and ideas arise in the Light of totality and are not apart from it. Jesus says in the course, “Thoughts leave not their Source.” However, as long as there is a desire for the experience of limitation– the experience of a person in a body in the world in the subconscious mind, then the experience of peace and harmony, the natural expression of the light within, will not be a consistent experience.

In ACIM Jesus provides the means to break the habits of investing in personal identity so that the untrue veil of separation dissolves and true Vision– the expression of Light within, is recognized as all that is.

The light within is often referred to as the “I am presence” in non-dual teachings. This is the “memory” of Oneness with God– the Absolute– Choiceless Awareness. In ACIM this light, or the memory of God is referred to as the Holy Spirit. When Jesus directs students in the course to look toward the Holy Spirit he is directing to look toward the light of Truth within. Any being who looks toward this light and follows this inner light (intuition) on a consistent basis will discover (awaken to) True Identity, recognizing this light is the Self.

At first the concept of the Holy Spirit may seem like “something outside” the student. This is helpful so that students start to look outside the investment in the experience of separation. In other words, outside the habits of the ego’s thought system. Beliefs in the thoughts and concepts of a personal identity hold the feeling of separation from God in place. Mooji, a non-dual teacher, calls this ‘person poison’.

The Holy Spirit is the symbol of the light that is shared with all brothers. Jesus encourages students to take thoughts and beliefs (attack thoughts) to the “light”– the Holy Spirit for “reinterpretation” to see that thoughts as

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identity are untrue. In ACIM this is called joining with the Holy Spirit or a brother in truth. In some non-dual traditions this is called "Satsang"—standing together in truth by taking thoughts, beliefs and concepts to the light of truth.

The Holy Spirit is the light described in the Bible that "burns the chaff and leaves the good wheat." Burning the chaff is burning up the untrue. Leaving the good wheat means leaving only what is true, True Nature. This is the "washing away" of "sin"—sin being the idea that separation from God is possible. Thus the Holy Spirit's function is the washing away of the untrue—an identity/belief system of being separate from God.

In non-dual traditions the ego is referred to as the mind. In ACIM the thoughts of the ego is called "wrong minded" and the thoughts of the Holy Spirit are called "right mindedness". Jesus emphasizes the power of learning to discern between "right mindedness"—choosing with the voice of the Holy Spirit and "wrong mindedness"—the voice of the ego.

What is unique in ACIM is that Jesus strongly emphasizes consistently turning toward the voice of inner intuition, the Holy Spirit, in all decision making as a means to greatly speed the path to enlightenment. This inner intuition will quickly bring into awareness through experiences in the world all the "darkness" (denials of True Nature) in the subconscious mind that need to be cleared so that the Kingdom of Heaven is a consistent experience. Awakening is seeing that every belief and concept about the world is untrue. Consistently "stepping into" or what might be called "facing fear", which is all the ideas and concepts of the world, is the opportunity to see that fear is untrue. Facing fear with the guidance of the Holy Spirit—some non-dual traditions call this stepping into the fire of truth—is a powerful opportunity to quickly 'undo' the world of duality. This is Jesus' fast track method of "shadow work" to transcend personal identity.

Since following the Holy Spirit is acceptance of Divinity and denial that the ego is true, all the power of God within is accepted and darkness is cleared from the mind. What seems miraculous to the ego becomes direct experience. Lesson 77 is "I am entitled to Miracles." Jesus says, "I will go

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before you clearing your path.” Life becomes more intuitive and is experienced with ease and flow. Synchronicities that are beyond explanation become common experience. All these ‘Spirit guided assignments’ lead directly to the recognition that Happiness is Identity. It is the transformation from seeking happiness and love in form– the desire to experience death– to Love as Identity. It is recognized that the only thing that ‘dies’ or falls away is the idea of a separate identity. The valley of death is seen to be only a shadow.

Everyone in the world of duality experiences what might be called “difficult relationships”. Relationships in the world are often the means through which the ego perpetuates a sense of separation and autonomy and thus can be filled with strife. Since all is One any argument is a desire to feel separate: an investment in maintaining the experience of duality. These are all denials of divinity. In ACIM Jesus describes how to use relationships to see where Divine nature is denied and thus as an opening to unconditional Love. Relationships used in this manner are a straight path to the recognition of the Light within. In ACIM Relationships used in purpose to see what is true– to identify and clear from consciousness the investment in the experience of “otherness”/duality– are called Holy Relationships.

Jesus, through His great wisdom, has provided a means to find peace through forgiveness in Holy Relationships to ultimately see that there is only one true relationship– the relationship with God– our Divine nature. Holy Relationships are Jesus’ answer to Helen Schucman’s prayer for help with her ‘difficult’ relationship with Bill Thetford. The relationship we seem to have with an ‘other’ is actually the relationship we have with ourselves and God. To deny love to an ‘other’ is to deny unconditional Love– the experience of divine nature, our natural inheritance, to ourselves. In the introduction to the course Jesus says:

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

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In both the bible and in ACIM Jesus points to the power of forgiveness for removing the blocks to the awareness of Love. This is not the forgiveness of “another” person that is often used in the world. Forgiveness as taught by Jesus is a form of self inquiry to uncover where there is an idea that there is something wrong in the world or something “wrong” done by a brother.

These thoughts and ideas that are held in the mind against a brother or the world are called “grievances”. Grievances are a desire within the subconscious mind to maintain the experience of being separate from God. These are the basis for all pain and suffering in the world. Forgiveness is a means of offering these thoughts and beliefs over to the Holy Spirit for purification– a change in perception. What was once seen as a grievance is cleared from consciousness by the fire of truth. In this the feeling of “other” falls away and peace is found. Perception becomes unified. This change in perception from emotions such as anger, hatred, and anxiety to peace – is a miracle. Jesus taught ‘love your brother as yourself’ because there is no other. Seeing there is only One is seeing that your brother is yourself.

These grievances– the beliefs and desire to feel separate from God-- must be allowed to move into awareness and cleared from consciousness in order to see through the falsity of the “veil” that seems to block the consistent experience of Oneness with God. In ACIM this is called “unlearning” or “unwinding the mind” from everything that is not true. Some non-dual traditions call this shadow work. Christian traditions have called the experience of undoing ego consciousness the dark night of the soul.

To pure awareness–True Identity– nothing is painful. To egoic consciousness– the investment in the feeling of separation arising from a personal identity– anything that reveals its non-existence is often interpreted as painful. In ACIM Jesus says that this pain may not be necessary; however, it is often necessary to reveal the need for “correction in perception”. A correction in ACIM is seeing that what is believed and held as a grievance against a brother or the world is untrue. If grievances are true there is more than one, duality is true, and hell, pain and suffering are real.

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Grievances are an attempt to prove God wrong, meaning these are an attempt to prove there are “others” (more than One) and problems in the world. Denials of unconditional love through grievances miscreate the illusion of a world of hell and suffering where “things happen to people” rather than One-all is Love that is available to be recognized now.

Grievances are projections– the mis-creation of a seeming “other” and thus misperception where the world is perceived as fragmented. This is the dream of separate bodies and objects seemingly acting on each other– the experience of duality. A miracle through forgiveness is the solution to seeing that all is already unified. Thus, Holy Relationships are a means to uncover vesanas. Forgiveness is a simple, fast and practical way to clear vesanas from consciousness.

In ACIM Jesus shares how Revelation and Miracles work together for spiritual awakening:

The Revelation unites Souls directly with God.

The Miracle unites Souls directly with each other.

Through purification via Miracles the mind is prepared for the revelatory experience of oneness with God.

God’s Creations cannot lose their holiness, although it can be hidden. The miracle uncovers it, and brings it into the light where it belongs. Holiness can never be really hidden in darkness, but man can deceive himself on this point. This illusion makes him fearful; because in his heart he KNOWS it is an illusion.

The miracle acknowledges only the Truth. It thus dispels man’s illusions about himself, and puts him into communion with himself and with God.

In ACIM Jesus describes the many other means that the ego uses to maintain a sense of separation and autonomy from Source. He describes the energetic investment in sense of specialness (the desire to be ‘different’ or ‘better or superior than others’ or ‘less than others’, a form of arrogance), people pleasing (acting to “make others happy” is a denial that all is One), and Face of Innocence (the denial that the dream of separation is desired experience).



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Healing the body is not often discussed in non-dual teachings. One teacher, Jean Klein, discusses the natural healing of the body through relaxation and opening of the mind in his book, *The Ease of Being*. In ACIM Jesus provides an in depth discussion on the power of forgiveness in all forms of healing, including the body. The body does not “heal” per se, it merely reflects the thoughts and beliefs in the subconscious mind. As these thoughts/beliefs are cleared the form of a body reflects the health and wellbeing of a purified, forgiven mind.

Many non-dual traditions emphasize the use of Self Inquiry for recognition of the Self such as Ramana Maharshi’s question, “Who am I?” Other questions such as “Can the perceiver be perceived?” and “Who is the one who noticing thought? Is this an object?” can be helpful for recognizing what is always here and for the process of purification– uprooting the “I” thought, as Ramana Maharshi suggests. That said, many students of non-dual teachings find self inquiry difficult at first. This is usually because of the high level of mind activity (inner chatter) for many students as they start their spiritual journey. Jesus calls this mind wandering. The mind or “wrong mind” tends to fill in the answer to questions with words, while self inquiry questions in proper use lead the mind back to emptiness, the natural state. As Maharshi suggested, “Through inquiry the mind rests inside the Heart.”

Jesus focuses on mind training at first. This is noticing thoughts and forgiving thoughts and beliefs. As the mind settles self inquiry questions can be much more potent for collapsing the “I” thought back into the Heart (Source) as they arise, leaving the recognition of what is always here. For example, Lesson 351 is the question “What am I?”.

Whether there is “seeing” of divine nature through self inquiry and meditation on the Self and the subsequent experience of peace of mind, as long as there is a subconscious (hidden) desire for the experience of limitation, peace of mind will not be a consistent experience. This is where diligence is necessary to see the denials of unconditional love and quickly offer them to the light of Truth.

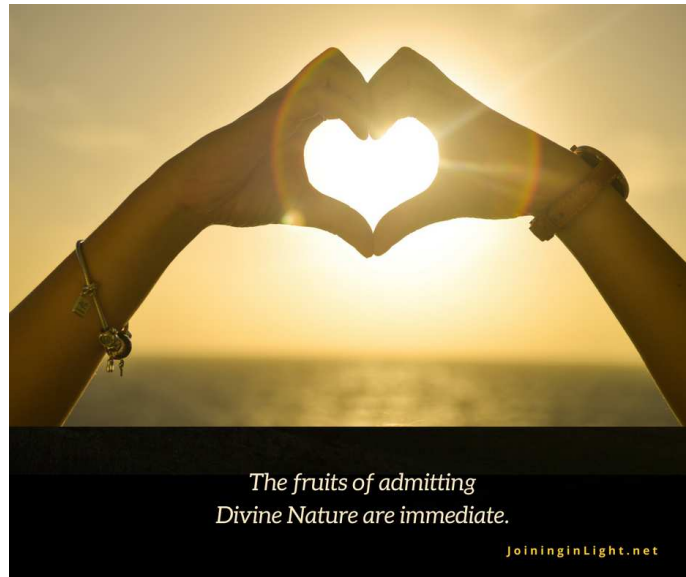
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Although most of the 365 daily lessons in ACIM are not questions, per se, they are simple and very potent self inquiry into the nature of true reality and identifying where energy (desire) is invested in denial of Divine nature. Bringing attack thoughts to the light within through forgiveness is a gentle and fast means to find peace from seeming attacks of the mind. Following the Holy Spirit and joining in Holy Relationships as described by Jesus in ACIM are time saving means for uncovering the deep desires for the experience of separation (vasanas) that must be released for the consistent experience of the Kingdom of Heaven within. As the mind is cleared through forgiveness going empty handed in silence to God frequently is the opening for God to show you there is no 'you'. Resting as this open communication with Source– Lesson 94, 110 and 162, 'I am as God created me' – the Self that never sinned, is happiness. Jesus says these teachings are the 'best use of time' to discover the timeless. The laughter that arises in a forgiven world is the celebration of pure joy as Self.

### **About Cay Villars**

The truth of who we are is infinite, unchanging and always here. Cay finds joy in joining with beings devoted to the discovery of true nature– the unending celebration of unconditional love. Cay spent many years 'exploring the ways of the world' as a executive in corporations, an executive coach and business consultant to high technology companies, and a trainer for Anthony Robbins, yet there always seemed to be something missing in these experiences. The 'search' for truth began through volunteering as a coach in prisons and exploring many mystical traditions including a *A Course in Miracles*, mystical Christianity, non-dual teachings and Advaita Vedanta. All of these experiences pointed to love and ultimately lead to the realization that what Jesus is pointing to– the Kingdom of Heaven within– is our true Identity, a direct experience that is always available. It is pure joy to celebrate this message through writings, joining in one-on-one and group talks and the website [joininginlight.net](http://joininginlight.net). Happiness is the celebration of true nature as all there is.

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### Resources

<http://JoininginLight.net>

Visit Cay Villars on Facebook: Cay JoininginLight

A Course in Miracles can be purchased through Amazon.com:

<https://www.amazon.com/course-Miracles-Foundation-Inner-Peace/dp/1883360269>

It is also downloadable as a PDF Here:

<http://stobblehouse.com/text/ACIM.pdf>

Jean Klein, *The Ease of Being*

<https://pgoodnight.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/the-ease-of-being-jean-klein.pdf>