

*A Course in Miracles:*  
**A Hope-filled Spirituality**

Excerpts from two Workshops held at the  
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Temecula CA

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**Part I**

**Question:**

I come here to classes and listen to you, I read the Course, and I try to the best of my ability to practice it but, boy, I am becoming more aware of how much I don't want to do it. I'm a projection machine and I'm serious about it. Sometimes I lose hope and then begin to doubt that we can get to that decision maker and choose another DVD. Really, can we do that? Or are we doomed to live this DVD for the rest of our lives and just become aware that it is a DVD, instead of choosing peace and choosing to be loving? There's lots of high pressure in my job at the moment, a lot of anxiety, and I don't know how *not* to choose that. It sometimes gets a bit hopeless.

**Ken:** I think everyone would agree with what you are enunciating. Everyone has that experience. Most people come to the Course because their lives aren't working but they are not aware of just how bad things are until they start working with this material. And that is because the world does offer hope. There's always something: another relationship, another bank to rob without getting caught, a drug, alcohol, etc. There are things to distract us, but when we really start to understand what the Course is saying, we become more anxious. We recognize that there really is no hope within the ego system, that it is an all-powerful thought system, made all-powerful because we like it.

This can be very disconcerting on our good days and downright hopeless on other days. Yet, we cannot get to the light without going through the darkness. That is a major theme in this course. Jesus says that together we hold the lamp that will dispel the ego (T-11.V.1:3). That means looking at the ego, and some of the descriptions of the ego in this course paint a horrifying, very scary picture. What makes it worse is realizing it is talking about *us*. There are some very powerful sections that talk about flesh ripped from bone (T-24.V.4:8), throwing your brother over the precipice (T-24.V.4:2), and choosing to suffer so someone else will be killed (T-31.V.15:10).

These kinds of descriptions are not easy to process and can result in feelings of hopelessness. The hope lies in understanding—which is one of the reasons that I always stress the

metaphysics—that there is a reason for our feeling that way. The reason the world is so hopeless is that when we identify with our bodies there truly is no hope. We think we are free when we die, but the Course says, "There is a risk of thinking death is peace" (T-27.VII.10:2). Then, before we know it, we are right back here again or in another aspect of the dream. There is no hope within the world. There is no hope within the illusion because once we identify with the illusion, we will not see anything else. It takes time and a great deal of discipline to begin to understand the world is not what it seems.

I frequently say, "Do not believe the lie" and "Do not believe those who tell you two and two is four" because they are coming from a belief that there are logical laws in this world that hold, when the fact of the matter is that any sane person knows two and two is five because nothing here makes any sense. Beginning to understand that is extraordinarily helpful because at least it gives us a meaningful lifeline.

The world offers lots of lifelines, all kinds of addictions. There is a very powerful section near the end of the text called "The Real Alternative," which says that every road here leads to death (T-31.IV.2:11). There is no hope in the world! I sometimes have said that *A Course in Miracles* is the only spirituality I know that offers true hope in the sense that it does not offer any hope of change in the world. The hope the Course offers is its teaching that everything that seems to happen here is happening in our decision-making mind. That is where the hope is, but the problem is we don't see any alternative, which is what this question is articulating, and that's true. The ego's truth begins to break down when we recognize that the ego is hopeless and seems all-powerful only because we believe in it. That is when we begin to have a semblance of hope, which then can grow and grow, but it should not be directed toward making the world work better for us. Recall the line, ". . . seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7), meaning we have power over it.

And so you could have a very stressful period at work and even if you are not able to choose peace, you could at least know on some level that you *could* choose peace. You could go to your job and do whatever you have to do and take whatever guff you have to take but you could still be peaceful. At least knowing that is a possibility would give you a sense of hope. It also helps to be aware that feelings of hopelessness and despair represent a decision.

It takes a lot of work, a lot of study of what the Course is saying to be able to integrate this in our lives so that we begin to see that, yes, I do not have to be upset, and while this may not be the happiest thing to have happen to my body, I could still be at peace. It takes work! But it does pay off because then we will not labor under the illusion that something here is going to make us happy: I will finally find the right relationship, the right job, the right climate, the right body-build—whatever will make me feel good about myself and make me happy. We now realize that none of that will work. We are all old enough now that we know. We have tried so many different things in the world and they just do not work.

The reason *A Course in Miracles* will work is that it will lead us from the body to the mind, from the symbol to the source. We have control over that. The beginning of Lesson 70 clearly states how nothing in the world can make us happy or unhappy; nothing in the world can give us pain or pleasure. It then says this puts us in charge of the universe where we belong—we are in control of the universe of the mind whether we are happy or sad (W-pl.70.2:3). This has nothing to do with outer circumstances. Even if we don't experience that, at least knowing it intellectually is a very good start because it restores power to us. Otherwise we are all powerless and doomed to eke out a modicum of power. We think we can control a part of our lives or a particular person sometimes, but what we really believe is that we are at the mercy of forces we cannot control, especially the forces of aging and economics. Things happen: people lose their jobs and their homes, and they did not do anything. That's just how it is today, our thinking goes. Or, we get cancer or a loved one gets cancer, and on the level of the world, we do not have control over that, but we do have control over how we see it.

The line that says the world we see is an "outside picture of an inward condition" (T-21.in.1:5) gives us the way out. The world we see is a projection, a symbol of an inward condition, which is the mind's decision for the ego or the Holy Spirit—the power to choose. That gives us hope that even in the midst of horrendous circumstances we could still be at peace. At first we believe it intellectually or we work toward believing it intellectually. At some point if we keep working at it, it will become more of an experience, but it takes a lot of hard work because we are unlearning a lifetime, if not lifetimes, of dedication to making the symbol real and forgetting about the source.

The question also reflects, even though it didn't mention this, the resistance we all have to accepting that what I am saying and what the Course is saying is true. The world seems to be such a powerful witness. As Wordsworth said, "The world is too much with us." It is too powerful. Sickness is too powerful. The financial situation in the world is too powerful. War is too powerful. Disease is too powerful. Death is too powerful. We cannot overcome any of that; on the level of the body, we can't. But we *can* overcome our belief system because we have the power to change it. That is where the hope lies.

Is it *really* possible? Yes, it is really possible. I would tell you that you could even do it this afternoon, but that would throw you into a panic, so I won't say that.