

A Course in Miracles:
A Hope-filled Spirituality

Excerpts from two Workshops held at the
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Part XII

1. Resistance

Q: Can you talk about the distinction between resistance to the Course if it is your path and resistance to the Course if it isn't your path? And then could you tell the story about Helen and the trees?

A: An excellent question! Practically all of you in this room have felt attracted to *A Course in Miracles* as your spiritual path and probably are not going to go back on that. You feel it speaks to you, and yet since we are all human and we all have split minds like everyone else, we all have resistance to it because it is the truth.

The section called "The Last Unanswered Question" in Chapter 21 of the text poses four questions. The first three are relatively simple to answer, but then Jesus says, you may not have answered the last one yet, which is, "*And do I want to see what I denied because it is the truth?*" He says that you do not realize that to answer "yes" to that question means to say "not no" (T-21.VII.12:4). In other words, if you are really saying that you want to see what you denied, that you want to see the truth, then you must first look at the denial of the truth—the ego—and say you don't want that anymore.

In fact, that really goes to the heart of the whole process of the Course. I often like to say that there is nothing positive in this Course. What is truly positive is God, and God does not play a part in the theory of the Course. God is not the problem. We don't know anything about God or reality, so there is not very much said about what God is like or what Heaven is. God is mentioned on every page, certainly, but not in terms of what God is, because that is not the issue. What is positive in this course is the *undoing of what is negative*. This is not called *A Course in Love*, but *A Course in Miracles*, because love is the truth. The miracle is the correction for the untruth. The beginning of Chapter 28 says, "The miracle does nothing. All it does is to undo" (T-28.I.1:1-2).

We could say the same thing about forgiveness. Forgiveness does nothing. In fact, the line I almost always quote from the workbook states, "Forgiveness...is still, and quietly does

nothing. It merely looks, and waits, and judges not" (W-pII.1.4:1,3). Thus, forgiveness is the correction, or the undoing of the ego's judgment. Everything in the right mind, which is what this course is about, is the undoing or the correction for everything in the wrong mind. The Course says that the ego speaks first and is wrong, and the Holy Spirit is the Answer (T-5.VI.3:5-4:2).

Therefore, what is positive in the Course, again, is the undoing of the negative. Another line I frequently quote from Chapter 16 says, "Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it" (T-16.IV.6:1). Our task is not to seek for love, which is Heaven, God, truth, and Oneness, but to seek and find all of the barriers we have placed between ourselves and love, which is the ego thought system, and in the context of that particular passage, the special relationship. When we find what we have placed between ourselves and love, we look at it without judgment, and then it disappears.

So, do I want to see what I denied *because* it is the truth? That is where the resistance to the Course is found. We all have chosen this as our spiritual path because we recognize the truth here. Whether we understand the theory of the Course or not, we recognize there is truth here, but that does not stop us from doing the exact opposite of what it says. One of the clear messages of this course is that we not judge. Well, that does not stop us, right? This course is all about undoing our special relationships. That does not stop us from continuing to indulge them, and especially to develop a special relationship with the Course itself. The fact that we do the very thing this Course, which we believe is the truth and is our spiritual path, tells us not to do, reflects our resistance. We resist the Course because it is our course, because it is our pathway home.

On the other hand, people could be resistant to the Course for right-minded reasons—because it is *not* their path. Even though part of you swears up and down that you love this course—it is the answer—there is something inside you that says this is not for you. As you know, the Course says it is only one path among many thousands (M-1.4), which is always a very impressive statement given the absolute nature of so many other religions. The Course says it is not the only form of truth. So this course may not be for you, but then you stick to it because of pride, because all your friends are students of it, or because you think you are going to be a failure and then Jesus will be angry at you, or because you hold this in such high esteem and this means you're flunking the Course, etc., when the truth of the matter is that you are just resisting it, and maybe you should accept that. The problem is that you don't know which one it is.

I remember something that happened to me many years ago when I was still laboring under the assumption that I was going to become a monk. This was before I met Gloria, and actually before I saw the Course. I had met Helen and Bill, but I had not seen the Course yet. I was

staying in a Trappist monastery in Israel. I thought I would just spend a week there over Christmas, and I ended up feeling very comfortable, very much at home. The abbot wanted me to stay there, and I really thought for a while that I would. I was there for three months even though I had not expected to spend that much time there. It was a French-speaking monastery, and I was not very adept at the language, but I did speak some French. The abbot, who could speak English, said to me, "If you are really going to stay here, you have to study French," which was obvious. I could read it better than I could speak it, but I would have to master the language. I could speak enough French to converse with him and the monks about passing the salt, or to ask, "What did you do today?" (which one was not even supposed to ask), but to have a more serious conversation, I could not.

So the abbot gave me some French books to study, and maybe I opened them once, but I just could not study them. Now I'm a very good student; I'm smart; and I already knew French, and I thought I was motivated to master the language so I could stay in the monastery. After a week or two of this, it occurred to me that two things were going on. And this is really the gist of the issue. Either I was resisting staying in the monastery, or I was not supposed to stay in the monastery, and that was why I was not studying French. It took me a while before I figured out that I was not studying French because I was not supposed to be there. I did eventually leave, one thing led to another, and I ended up back in the States. That is when I saw the Course for the first time.

But you don't always know, and when you don't know, as long as it is practically possible, don't make a decision. Sometimes you don't have a choice. Circumstances can demand that you make a decision right away, but very often you don't have to. You can delay, and you should basically assume that you will know the answer when you know the answer. And so in terms of the Course, if you find yourself resisting the Course over and over again, you should at least entertain the possibility that maybe this is not for you. It's not a sin. This is not the only way to get to Heaven, and if you think for one minute that *Course in Miracles* students have a speedier way to get to Heaven than anyone else, you don't know many *Course in Miracles* students. It is only one path among many thousands. So there is no easy answer.

Basically, it is the same question as "How do I know whether it is my ego or the Holy Spirit?" How do you discern? It is more helpful to say, "I don't know yet" than to rush into an answer when you don't really have to. It is helpful to at least open yourself up to the possibility that you are resisting the Course when you keep forgetting the workbook lesson, reading the text and falling asleep, not liking the language. You are having these experiences either because this *is* your pathway home or because this is *not* your pathway home, and you should listen to that. Again, there is no right and wrong, but you should at least be open to the possibility.

2. The Story of Helen and the Trees

Most people would not know what this is all about, and it's interesting that this has come up now, because the next newsletter article will be on that very same theme. [Editor's note: *The Lighthouse*, Dec. 2009]. It is the culmination of a series of Helen's experiences that I was actually able to share with her. It began one evening while we were sitting on her couch. That was the time of the day, after all our shopping had been done and she had gotten all her diatribes against Bill out of the way for the day, when we would sit on the couch and pray. That is when she would feel Jesus' presence, and sometimes she would come up with very interesting things.

This evening, she suddenly went into another state. She described herself standing with me. She was Helen, but she had on a white dress that was tattered, torn, and dirty. I was a boy. It was not clear whether I was her son, nephew, or just a very close friend, but it was like a mother-son relationship. We were standing on the grounds of Qumran, which is where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in Israel. Actually, the summer before that, Helen, Bill and his friend, Helen's husband Louis, and I were in Israel. While we were there, Helen had two experiences that were striking:

1) One was about her looking over to the Dead Sea, which one could see from Qumran, and saying, "The height is wrong." I forget whether she said it should be higher or lower, but she said it was wrong. Bill opened up the guidebook, and sure enough, it said that two thousand years ago the Dead Sea was at the height Helen said it should have been.

2) The other experience took place while I was alone with her in Qumran, the site of the ruins of the Essene community that was destroyed by the Romans in 70 A.D. The Essene community was a Jewish community, a kind of monastic community, which was unusual in Judaism. It existed before the time of Jesus. They were very strict. Some of the scrolls that have been found talk about a teacher of righteousness who would come, which Christians like to think was a prophecy of Jesus' coming. There is also some New Age thinking that says Jesus was an Essene. They were destroyed by the Romans, but in the ruins you can see where the library and the kitchen were, where they slept, etc. Helen said to walk with her, and it turned out to be a graveyard. She felt really drawn to walk by the graveyard, and then she became very agitated. She said to me, "It (meaning Jesus) said: 'Let the dead bury the dead.'" Helen did not believe in past lives—the whole idea made her very uncomfortable—but she had a distinct feeling that she had been buried there. So "Let the dead bury the dead," was really Jesus saying the past is over, let's move on.

In this sequence, which began with Helen describing to me what she was seeing, as she described it, I could actually see it with her: We were standing at Qumran looking at all these ruins. Again, she was dirty and her dress was torn. What happened after that took place over a series of successive evenings. We went through a journey heading north. We walked by the

Jordan River, and all kinds of things happened, some of which I forget, but one of them I do remember very clearly. We were walking on the shores of the Jordan, and on the beach was a starfish that had a broken arm. Helen felt it was her function to put this starfish back in the water with the understanding that it would regenerate. That was a very meaningful experience for her. One day—I was not with her—she was with Jesus on Fifth Avenue in New York. She went into one of the jewelry stores, and she felt that Jesus bought her a gold star. (Actually, it's the star that I wear now.) She felt that was his gift to her. For her, the star was a symbol of Jesus, and I think that the starfish was, in a sense, a symbol of the broken Christ, and she was doing her part to heal the Sonship by putting it back.

The whole series culminated when we reached Lower Galilee, which was the biblical site where Jesus was raised—Nazareth, according to the Bible—, and where he did a lot of his ministry, a lot of his preaching. We reached a grove of trees. It was very, very beautiful. Helen suddenly burst into tears, and in the midst of the trees, she saw the figure of Jesus. She said to me, "I never thought I'd see those trees again." That's the story.

The journey really represents—and, again, I don't remember a lot of the specific incidents—a journey from the ego to the Holy Spirit, from the wrong mind to the right mind, beginning with the destruction of Qumran, which in terms of how Helen felt within these visions, was really devastation. It is almost like going from crucifixion to resurrection, and it culminated in this incredibly moving experience for her that she never thought she would see those trees again. It is as if the innocence we thought had been destroyed, that we had thrown away and was forever lost, we would now have again.

The sentence "Together we will disappear into the Presence beyond the veil, not to be lost but found; not to be seen, but known" (T-19.IV-D.19:1) is about the innocence we thought we had lost because we had thrown it away, and all of a sudden, it is found. I don't think we can have a more important or joyous experience than suddenly recognizing that the innocence we thought we would never, ever get back is there. It comes from an experience of really knowing, almost for the first time, that you are truly forgiven. I don't think there is anything in this world that can match the sheer joy and happiness, or could be anywhere nearly as moving as that experience of knowing that no matter what awful things you believe you've done, or what awful thing you believe you've become, the love and the light in you have never gone out, and that innocence has always been there.