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## A BETTER WAY

## The Urgency of Doing Our Part in Salvation

by Greg Mackie

“Urgency” isn’t a word that gets a lot of good press in alternative spiritual circles. Didn’t we give that up when we left the frantic rat race to seek the peace of God? Isn’t saying that something is “urgent” an invitation to the very fear and

distress *A Course in Miracles* wants us to undo? Aren’t we supposed to do nothing, to let go and let God, to patiently await the certain outcome of salvation that the Course promises us?

It’s true that the Course’s goal is the peace of God, and it does counsel patience regarding the outcome of our journey. However, my sense is that most Course students, myself included, tend to fall into a state that is not so much a patient peace, but rather a sleepy complacency. We say we want the happy things the Course holds out to us, but when it comes to really doing what the Course tells us to do in order to find those happy things, we say, “Maybe after the game’s over.” We’re like would-be dieters who dream of a svelte body but are always saying we’ll start the diet tomorrow.

This is where “urgency” comes in, for while the Course tells us to be patient regarding the ultimate outcome of salvation, it also tells us that it is *urgent* that we snap out of our sleepy complacency and start doing our part to bring about salvation. True, the term “urgency” usually has a connotation of fear and distress, but it doesn’t have to: all it means is “the fact or state of requiring immediate action.” Like a well-trained ER doctor, we can (with the Course’s training) bring an attitude of calm confidence to even the most urgent situation. And from the Course’s point of view, the world situation *is* urgent, as we’ll see below; we are called to “take [our] place among the saviors of the world” (T-31.VIII.1:5) without delay. The Course is constantly trying to light a fire under us, to inspire us to roll up our sleeves and get to work, because only if we fulfill our part in salvation will we find salvation for ourselves and be truly happy.

Awakening that sense of urgency is the purpose of this article. I’ll begin by describing some of the ways we put off doing our part in salvation. Then, I’ll describe the urgency the Course wants to instill in us and present some ways that we can spark it in ourselves. My hope is that this will help get that fire lit under us, so we can rise from our slumber and really take hold of both the mission that the Course asks of us and the rewards that fulfilling that mission offers us.

**Our typical stance regarding our own salvation: impatient procrastination**

The phrase “impatient procrastination” sounds odd, but once I describe it I think you’ll see what I mean. Let’s start with the “impatient” part. I don’t know if I’ve ever met a Course student who is totally satisfied with his or her progress. Who among us hasn’t impatiently asked, “Where’s all that peace and love and joy I was promised? Why do I still get sick and feel depressed and have relationship problems? Why aren’t I experiencing more miracles?” We also tend to be impatient regarding the endpoint of the journey: “How long until I am out of here?” This impatience leads some of us to seek elsewhere for what the Course doesn’t seem to deliver. Perhaps the newest “channeled” book will do the trick. Perhaps that teacher promising “instant enlightenment” will give me the boost I need.

Yet as impatient as we can be with our progress on the Course’s path, oddly enough — and here’s the “procrastination” part — we constantly find ways to put off doing what the Course actually tells us to do in order to *make* progress. If we’re honest with ourselves, we can’t deny the truth of what Jesus once said to Helen and Bill: “You complain that this course is not sufficiently specific for you to understand it *and use it*. Yet it has been *very* specific, and *you have not done what it specifically advocates*” (T-11.VIII.5:1-2, Urtext version). To a greater or lesser degree, even those of us who have been with the Course for years fail to do what it specifically advocates. We don’t study its teaching on a daily basis. We find ways to opt out of doing

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## WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS

*A Course in Miracles* is a spiritual path. Its purpose is to train us to work miracles—to accept and extend to others the shifts in perception that awaken us to God. It consists of three volumes, which signify the three aspects of its program:

- ◆ Text : Through studying the teaching, the Course's thought system first enters our minds.
- ◆ Workbook for Students: Through doing the practice, the Course's thought system penetrates more and more deeply into our minds.
- ◆ Manual for Teachers: Through extending our healed perception to others, the Course's thought system receives its final reinforcement and becomes the only thing in our minds.

The Course's message is that the source of our suffering is not the world's mistreatment of us, but rather our egocentric attack on the world. This attack convinces us that we have defiled our nature beyond repair, that we are irredeemably guilty. Yet the Course says true reality cannot be defiled; it is a realm of pure, changeless, unified spirit. This realization allows us to forgive the world's apparent mistreatment of us by recognizing that it did not actually occur. And as we see this forgiveness come forth from us—see that we are capable of something genuinely loving and egoless—we gradually realize that we never defiled ourselves. Thus we awaken to the untouched innocence of our true nature.

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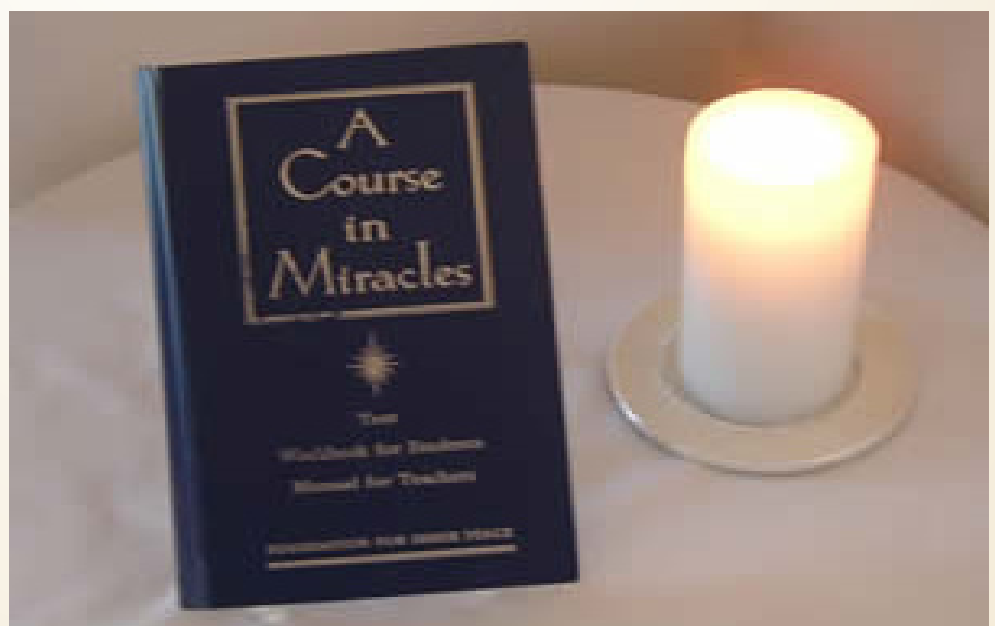
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the practices the Course instructs us to do. We forget that each day is supposed to be devoted to extending miracles to others (T-1.I.15:1). While we're procrastinating with the Course like this, is it any wonder we don't experience the rewards of salvation we're so impatient to have?

### **Our typical stance regarding the world's salvation: "patient" procrastination**

I put "patient" in quotes here because I'm referring to a kind of pseudo-patience that is really a way of minimizing the importance of saving the world. The Course itself says that saving the world is our function — "I came for the salvation of the world" (W-pII.319.Heading) — but this idea can be pushed away in a variety of ways. I'm sure you've heard at least a few of these: "What world?" "Seek not to change the world." "Don't make the error real." "Thinking the world needs saving is just your judgment." "It's all perfect." "It's just what is." "Even Hitler was just doing his part in the plan." "I need do nothing." "The Course says salvation is inevitable, so why worry about it?" "The Course says the journey is already over." If we let all of these sink in, the message is clear: Thinking that there is an urgent need to save the world is a form of egoic impatience. Just relax, be patient, don't be so concerned about it. Don't just do something — sit there.

Unfortunately, this kind of "patience" is another form of procrastination, another way of putting off what the Course actually tells us to do. Jesus tells us that "the members of *my* party are *active* workers" (Urtext). He says that "while in time, there is still much to do" (T-25.VI.5:8) and speaks of "every busy doing on which you are sent" (T-18.VII.8:3). The Holy Spirit is constantly asking us, "Are you ready yet to help Me save the world?" (C-3.9:1). If we're constantly giving ourselves reasons *not* to help Him save the world, these pleas to get up and do something fall on deaf ears. We fail to notice our inner promptings to help others. We look askance at things like charitable service and political activism, as if the people engaged in such endeavors don't really "get it." Again, while we're procrastinating with the Course like this, is it any wonder we don't experience the rewards it promises?

### **Why do we procrastinate so much?**

Speaking on a more theoretical level, we procrastinate when it comes to doing what the Course would have us do because we're identified with the ego; therefore, we fear the salvation the Course offers us and push it away to keep our ego in business. This is true, but I'd also like to offer a more down-to-earth version of this answer. Quite simply, as much as we may say we want real change (something all the presidential candidates are hawking this year), we have a deep attachment to staying the way we are. And a big reason for this is that, even though we may not like everything about our current lives, we think we'll be happier the way we are than if we do what the Course is calling us to do.

Whether we like to admit it or not, we all think to some extent that the Course demands that we "sacrifice [our] own best interests on behalf of truth" (M-4.I(A).5:5). Even as we tell ourselves that we want what the Course offers us, a voice constantly whispers in our ear: "Giving your life over to this course will be a tremendous sacrifice. Look at what happened to Jesus. If you commit to salvation you'll be doing something very noble, but it will be at the cost of your happiness." And we all put off things that we think will cost us our happiness.

### **The Course's stance regarding our and the world's salvation: patient urgency**

Like "impatient procrastination," "patient urgency" is an odd-sounding term, yet its meaning will become clear as we proceed. First, we'll look at the "patient" part. As I mentioned earlier, the Course wants us to be patient regarding the ultimate outcome of the journey to salvation. This, in fact, is one of the attributes of the advanced teacher of God: "Those who are certain of the outcome can afford to wait, and wait without anxiety" (M-4.VIII.1:1). Later on, the Manual says, "It is only the outcome that is certain...If the way seems long, let [the teacher of God] be content. He has decided on the direction he wants to take" (M-22.2:4, 6-7). A corollary of this patience regarding the ultimate outcome is patience with both our own and our brothers' progress. God, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus have "infinite patience" (T-5.VI.12:1) with us, because they know we will make it in the end. We should adopt Their attitude of infinite patience when we're tempted to get impatient with anyone who doesn't seem to be "getting with the program."

But, as I also mentioned earlier, while the Course counsels patience regarding outcome, it never counsels complacency. Instead — and here's the "urgency" part — it counsels *urgency* regarding our doing what we need to do to bring about that outcome as soon as possible. Indeed, the very genesis of the Course is rooted in that sense of urgency. I'm speaking here of Jesus' message to Helen that the reason she was called to scribe the Course was to do her part in what he called a "celestial speed-up." Here is part of Helen's account of that message, as recorded in Ken Wapnick's *Absence from Felicity*:

According to this "information" [that Jesus gave to Helen], the world situation was worsening at an alarming pace. People all over the world were being called back to help, and were developing what to them were highly

unexpected talents, each making his individual contribution to an overall, prearranged plan. I had apparently agreed to take down a course in miracles which the Voice would dictate to me as part of the agreement, and my doing it was actually my reason for coming. It did not really involve unexpected abilities, since I would be using abilities I had developed very long ago, but which I was not yet ready to use again.... And that was why I would have so much trouble doing it. However, people had reached a point where they were losing more than they were gaining. Thus because of the acute emergency, the usual slow, evolutionary process of spiritual development was being by-passed in what might be called a “celestial speed-up.” I could sense the urgency that lay behind this explanation, whatever I might think of the content, not to mention my not understanding it. The feeling was conveyed to me that time was running out. (1st ed., pp. 201-202)

This passage has always had a deep effect on me. There’s no lackadaisical “it’s all good” attitude here; as Helen says, “I could sense the urgency that lay behind this explanation.” There’s an acute emergency and it’s all hands on deck; we need to start bailing water *now*. As I look at my own life through the lens of this message, I ask myself all sorts of questions, which you may want to ask yourself now: How have I been called back to help deal with this acute emergency? What is my individual contribution to the overall, prearranged plan? What is my reason for coming? What have I agreed to do? What unexpected abilities do I have, perhaps abilities I developed long ago? What abilities do I clearly have but seem to have trouble using? Might this be because, due to the celestial speed-up, I’m being called to use abilities that I don’t feel quite ready to use? Even so, given the acute emergency, am I willing to do my best to use them in service to the plan, in spite of the difficulty?

Jesus referred to the celestial speed-up a number of times in the early dictation of the Course. Here is another reference:

You [Helen] and [Bill] *do* have special talents which are needed for the Celestial speedup at this time. But note that the term speed-up is not one which relates to the *transcending* of time.

When time is abolished, and all of the Sons of God have come home, no special agents will be necessary. But do not underestimate the power of special agents now, or the great need there is for them. I do not claim to be more than that myself. No one in his Right Mind, (a term which should be specially noted) ever wants either more or less than that. Those who are called on to witness for me *now* are witnessing for all men, as I am. (Urtext)

Again, the tone here is a far cry from our usual complacency. As long as we are here in time, “special agents” are necessary — clearly the same people who are being called back to help deal with the “acute emergency.” While it’s true that the job of special agent is only temporary, “we should not underestimate the power of special agents now, or the great need there is for them.” If we were in our right mind, we would want nothing more *or less* than to be such a special agent. This is what Jesus was, and we are called to work on his behalf for everyone *now*. Again, this leads to some important questions for all of us to ask: What special talents of mine are needed for the celestial speed-up at this time? How am I called to be a special agent? Given the power such special agents have and the great need there is for them, am I willing to answer the call to work for Jesus for the sake of everyone *now*?

Some passages referring to the celestial speed-up made it into the Course itself, with the speed-up references removed:

Just as the Separation occurred over many millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps even longer. Its length depends, however, on the effectiveness of the present speed-up. We have frequently noted that the miracle is a device for shortening but not abolishing time. If a sufficient number of people become truly miracle-minded quickly, the shortening process can be almost immeasurable. But it is essential that these individuals free themselves from fear sooner than would ordinarily be the case, because they *must* emerge from basic conflict if they are to bring peace to the minds of others. (T-2.VIII.2, Urtext version)

“Many are called but few are chosen” *should* read, “*All* are called, but few choose to listen. Therefore, they do not choose *right*.” The chosen ones are merely those who choose right *sooner*. This is the real meaning of the celestial speedup. Strong wills can do this *now*. And you will find rest for your souls. (T-3. IV.7:12-15, Urtext version)



Undermining the foundation of an ego's thought-system *must* be perceived as painful, even though this is anything but true. Babies scream in rage if you take away a knife or a scissors, even though they may well harm themselves if you do not. The speedup has placed you both [Helen and Bill] in the same position.

You are *not* by any means prepared, and in this sense you *are* babies. You have no sense of real self-preservation and are very likely to decide that you need precisely what would hurt you most. (T-4.II.5:1-4, Urtext version)

The speed-up material adds a new twist to these familiar passages. The Last Judgment can be shortened immeasurably if the speed-up is effective, but for this to happen we must free our minds to become miracle workers "sooner than would ordinarily be the case." Choosing right sooner is, in fact, what facilitates the speed-up; we can and should do this *now*, so we can both free others and find rest for our own souls. But because we're being called to free our minds sooner than would ordinarily be the case, the quick dismantling of our egos is likely to feel painful, and we're likely to resist the process out of an upside-down sense of "self-preservation" (though the third passage goes on to tell Helen and Bill that this pain and resistance is only a temporary stage: "Be patient a while...the outcome is certain as God!").

My point in bringing up all these celestial speed-up references is that it's clear Jesus meant for Helen and Bill to see the Course in the larger context of the celestial speed-up, the Holy Spirit's urgent response to an acute emergency. Scribing the Course was Helen's part in the speed-up, the Course was meant to be an aid in the speed-up, and Helen and Bill were being trained through the Course to be "special agents" in the speed-up. Therefore, this is how *we* should view the Course and our journey with it as well. It is not just a self-help program to be used whenever the mood strikes us in order to feel better (though it does want us to feel better). Rather, it came as a response to an acute emergency, as a training manual for people who have been called to play a part in God's plan to deal with this acute emergency. We are meant to be God's EMTs. We should thus take Jesus very seriously when he says, "I am making His plan perfectly explicit to you, and will also tell you of your part in it, and how urgent it is to fulfill it" (T-5.VII.4:4). We should take it to heart when he says, "While in time, there is still much to do. And each must do what is allotted him, for on his part does all the plan depend" (T-25.VI.5:8-9).

Yet a question may arise for you as you read this material: If the outcome is certain, then why this sense of urgency? Even if people are currently losing more than they're gaining, that'll get sorted out eventually, so why is acting quickly so important? For a very simple and compassionate reason: Even though a happy outcome is certain, the current situation is *painful* for all of us, and because God loves us, He wants us to be free of that pain as soon as possible. Think about it: If you had a child with an extremely painful illness that would go away on its own in ten years, but you had a remedy in your hand that could cure it in an hour, would you say, "Well, there's really no urgent need to give her this remedy; we just need to be patient, since this illness will go away in ten years"? Of course not. Because you love her and she's hurting, you would give the remedy without delay.

That's the stance God wants us to take. Yes, we should feel confident that a happy ending is assured. We should bring the peace of mind this confidence inspires to every situation we encounter. But the fact is that right now the world is in horrible pain, so we should do our part in God's plan for salvation as soon as we can in order to alleviate that pain as soon as possible. There are many Course passages that emphasize recognizing this pain and relieving it without delay:

God in His knowledge is not waiting, but His Kingdom is bereft while *you* wait. All the Sons of God are waiting for your return, just as you are waiting for theirs. Delay does not matter in eternity, but it is tragic in time. (T-5.VI.1:1-3)

[Immediately following the above line about "how urgent it is" to fulfill our function:] God weeps at the "sacrifice" of His children who believe they are lost to Him. (T-5.VII.4:5)

Your brothers are everywhere. You do not have to seek far for salvation. Every minute and every second gives you a chance to save yourself [through saving your brothers]. Do not lose these chances, not because they will not return, but because delay of joy is needless. (T-9.VII.1:4-7)

God's Son has such great need of your willingness to strive for this that you cannot conceive of need so great. (T-15.VIII.2:5)

There is much to do, and we have been long delayed. Accept the holy instant as this year is born, and take your place, so long left unfulfilled, in the Great Awakening. (T-15.XI.10:9-10)

Do not withhold salvation longer. Look about the world, and see the suffering there. Is not your heart willing to bring your weary brothers rest? (W-pI.191.10:6-8)

[The various forms of the universal course] merely save time. Yet it is time alone that winds on wearily, and the world is very tired now. It is old and worn and without hope. There was never a question of outcome, for what can change the Will of God? But time, with its illusions of change and death, wears out the world and all things in it. Yet time has an ending, and it is this that the teachers of God are appointed to bring about. For time is in their hands. (M-1.4:3-9)

Let's look at the picture Jesus paints in these passages. Yes, a happy outcome is certain, we'll always have another chance at salvation, and delay doesn't even matter in eternity. But at the same time, there is a tremendous need in the world, a need so desperate that "you cannot conceive of need so great." He calls us to look around the world and see just how much everyone and everything is suffering. As great as this need is, though, we've been dropping the ball in our response to it. There is much we've been called to do to address this need, but we've been delaying — procrastinating. We've been withholding salvation. We've been given countless opportunities to give salvation, but we've let them slip away. This delay is tragic, for it ensures the suffering will continue. But now we're being called to reverse this: "Do not withhold salvation longer....Do not lose these chances....take your place, so long left unfulfilled, in the Great Awakening." For we have the power to do this. We are appointed to bring about the end of all this suffering. Time is in our hands.

The message is clear: While we should be *patient* regarding the ultimate outcome of salvation, we should also have a sense of *urgency* regarding fulfilling our part in the plan for salvation. The Holy Spirit is patient with us, but we must, as the Course tells us, "meet His patience with [our] impatience at delay in meeting Him" (T-17.II.8:4). Notice that the Course is actually counseling a kind of *impatience* — impatience with our procrastination. Given the acute emergency, it is foolish to waste time. We need to prepare ourselves for our function in salvation by doing the training program the Course has given us, so we can go out to fulfill that function as the Holy Spirit directs without delay. This will not only save the world from its pain, but it is also, as several of the passages above make clear, what brings about our own salvation. *This* is how we experience the happy rewards the Course promises us.

### **Why not lay aside our procrastination and really go for it?**

The key to doing this is to reverse the belief that leads to our procrastination: the belief that staying the way we are will make us happier than doing what the Course is calling us to do. We need to realize that walking the path of the Course and committing to God's plan for salvation doesn't force us to sacrifice our happiness. On the contrary, it is *through* doing these things that we find happiness, because changing our mind and saving our brothers through extending that change of mind is the way we save ourselves: "In his glad salvation you are saved" (T-29.III.5:7).

I believe that underneath our attachment to staying the way we are, we have a deep yearning for real change. Indeed, I think it is this yearning that brought us to the Course. We're tired of being self-centered hunks of meat; we want to be something greater, to be truly helpful to others, to have a meaningful function in a plan that serves a larger and more noble goal than just our own selfish needs. The Course speaks poignantly of this desire. It says, "The lonely ones are those who see no function in the world for them to fill; no place where they are needed, and no aim which only they can perfectly fulfill" (T-25.VI.3:6). It tells us that as long as we keep pushing away our function of helping our brothers, "Futility of function not fulfilled will haunt you while your brother lies asleep, till what has been assigned to you is done" (T-24.VI.9:3).

The bottom line, which I think we all know deep down, is that doing what the Course calls us to do is the only thing that will really make us happy. So why not set aside our silly procrastination and really go for it? Why not throw ourselves into the Course's path wholeheartedly? Why not light that fire under ourselves, roll up our sleeves, and get to work? Why not study the Course's teaching and train our minds through its practices with the understanding that this is a course preparing us for the holiest and most fulfilling function imaginable: miracle working in the service of the world's salvation? Why not act as if becoming a miracle worker is the most important and happiest thing we could possibly do — because it is? What have we got to lose?

### **Exercise**

The following is a brief exercise aimed at lighting that fire. You could do it by itself, or as an adjunct to whatever other Course practice you're doing. The idea behind the exercise is that the inner work the Course wants us to do — studying its teaching, doing its Workbook practices, etc. — is meant to be preparation for assuming our function of extending salvation to the world. Therefore, if we are motivated to assume this function, we will be motivated to prepare ourselves for it by

following the Course's training program as it directs.

The exercise consists simply of saying the following words to yourself slowly, and letting their call sink deep into your mind. It will help to apply them specifically to your life; for instance, when you say "Then let me not withhold salvation longer," you might think of a particular brother who is suffering and apply this sentence to him or her. May these words inspire you to commit to your function of saving the world as never before.

*Time winds on wearily, and the world is very tired now.  
It is old and worn and without hope.  
Time, with its illusions of change and death,  
wears out the world and all things in it.  
Let me look about the world, and see the suffering there.  
Is not my heart willing to bring my weary brothers rest?*

*Then let me not withhold salvation longer.  
Let me take my part in God's plan for salvation.  
Jesus is making that plan perfectly explicit to me,  
and is also telling me of my part in it,  
and how urgent it is to fulfill it.  
I must do what is allotted me,  
for on my part does all the plan depend.  
God's Son has such great need of my willingness to do this part  
that I cannot conceive of need so great.*

*Let me remember that doing my part does not call me  
to sacrifice my own best interests on behalf of truth.  
It does not force me to sacrifice my own happiness.  
Instead, it is the only way to **find** my own happiness,  
for only by saving my brothers will I be saved.  
Futility of function not fulfilled will haunt me  
while my brothers lie asleep,  
till what has been assigned to me is done.  
Every minute and every second gives me a chance  
to save myself through saving my brothers.  
Let me not lose these chances,  
not because they will not return,  
but because delay of joy is needless.*

*Given the urgency of doing my part in salvation  
and the joy that this will bring everyone, including myself,  
let me do everything the Course would have me do,  
both to prepare for my function by healing my mind,  
and to fulfill my function by extending healing to others.  
Thus will I take my part, so long left unfulfilled,  
in the Great Awakening.*



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He has been a student of A Course in Miracles since 1991, and a teacher for the Circle of Atonement since 1999. He writes Course Q & A's and a popular blog on the Circle of Atonement's website, and teaches the Circle's weekday Workbook class in Sedona, Arizona (along with Robert Perry). He sees his primary function as helping to develop a tradition of Course scholarship.

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**“The Process of Changing Thoughts”** by *Allen Watson*. [Read more.](#)

**Course Meets World Commentary** by *Greg Mackie*. Greg has posted the following commentaries relating *A Course in Miracles* to a topic “in the news”: “The Uncommon Goodness of Greg Mortenson”; “Denial Makes the World Go Round”; and “Thoughts Can Be Our Best Friends.” [Read more.](#)

**Questions and Answers** by *Robert Perry* and *Greg Mackie*. Robert and Greg posted answers to several questions: “What is the Course's view of entitlement?”; “How do we uncover our guilt?”; and “Are all my thoughts really meaningless?” [Read more.](#)



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