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A BETTER WAY

The Holy Relationship: The Source of Your Salvation

by Greg Mackie

Students of *A Course in Miracles* are universally attracted to the idea of holy relationships. It sounds like such an exciting prospect—who wouldn't want to have such a relationship? The Course itself speaks of holy relationships in the most glowing terms, again and again extolling them with lines like "In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship" (T-20.V.1:1). Clearly, the Course regards holy relationships as crucial to its path.

Yet as desirable as holy relationships may be in both our eyes and the eyes of the Course, they are at the same time almost universally misunderstood by Course students. In this article, then, I'd like to clear up some of the confusion. Just what is a holy relationship? How does it develop? Why are holy relationships such a vital aspect of the Course's path to salvation? And if they are so vital, how exactly can I find one for myself? I hope my answers to these questions will help us all experience the joy and power of the relationships that the Course regards as "the source of your salvation" (T-20.VIII.6:9).

What is a holy relationship?

In a nutshell, a holy relationship is a relationship in which two people have been joined in a truly common purpose by the Holy Spirit. "The relationship is holy because of that purpose" (M-2.5:4). Thus a holy relationship need not be a romantic relationship, though it could be; the Course material mentions peer relationships (like Helen and Bill), teacher-pupil relationships, psychotherapist-patient relationships, and even a relationship between two people who pray together.

Three aspects of my thumbnail definition are important. First, it is a relationship in which *two people* (or more) have been joined. The holy relationship is mutual, not individual. This is a crucial point, and one that is often overlooked by Course students. A prevalent view in the Course community is that a relationship is holy whenever one person forgives or recognizes her oneness with another, whether or not the other person has any involvement. But as Robert has shown elsewhere, this simply does not match the Course's descriptions of the holy relationship. Without exception, whenever the Course talks about holy relationship, the mutuality of the relationship is either directly stated or implied. Here are just a few examples that make the point:

The ark of peace is entered two by two, yet the beginning of another world goes with them. Each holy relationship must enter here...." (T-20.IV.6:5-6)

Such is the function of a holy relationship; to receive together and give as you received. (T-22.IV.7:4)

You undertook, together, to invite the Holy Spirit into your relationship. He could not have entered otherwise. (T-17.V.11:1-2)

How could it be otherwise? The very term "relationship" by definition means two or more entities are involved; a "solitary relationship" is an oxymoron.

PUBLISHED BY

Circle of Atonement
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Bookstore: www.circlepublishing.org

SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

A Better Way is published monthly by e-mail. If you wish to subscribe, please visit our website.

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is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to *A Course in Miracles*. It was founded in 1993. Its publishing division, Circle Publishing, was founded in 2003.

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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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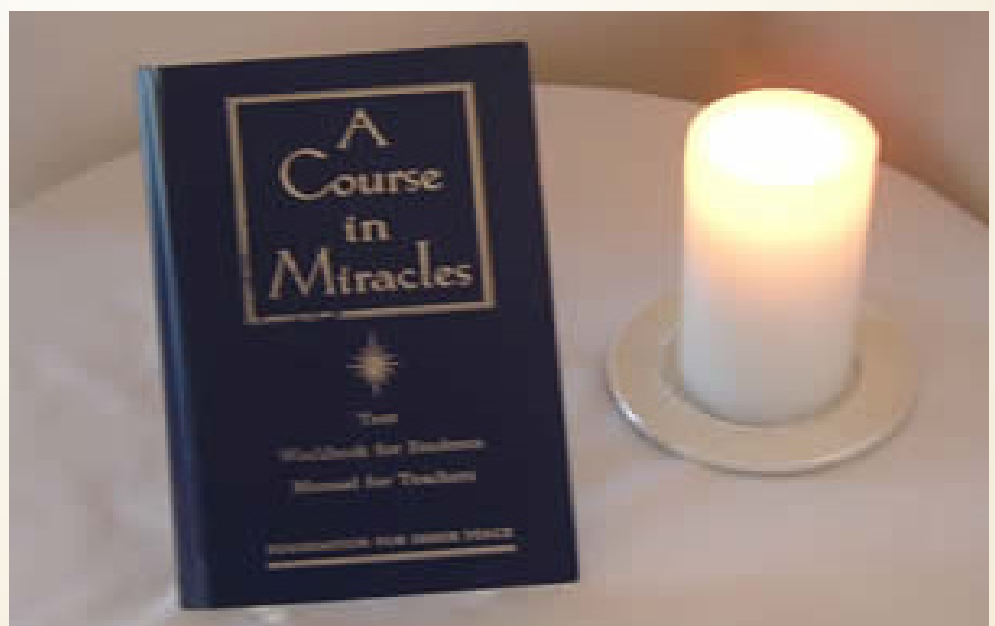
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Second, they have joined in a *truly common purpose*. This means a purpose that can be truly shared, which excludes many of the purposes we seem to “join” in. For instance, if we join in the purpose of making a killing on the stock market, we’re not truly sharing in that goal—I’m in it for my part of the dividends, and you’re in it for your part. As the Course says, “Egos do join together in temporary allegiance, but always for what each one can get *separately* (T-6.V(A).5:9).

What, then, *is* a truly common purpose that we can join in? The only thing that qualifies is an abstract idea that can in principle be shared not only with each other but with everyone—a purpose that transcends self-interest. A great example is the purpose that Helen and Bill joined in: creating more harmonious relationships in their work environment. This was clearly a goal that everyone could share in. Of course, the abstract idea that the two partners join in *can* be expressed in form—for Helen and Bill, it took the form of scribing the Course—but the idea is the content behind the joining.

Third, they have been joined *by the Holy Spirit*. While we can be open to holy relationships, we can’t manufacture them by going around to our friends and saying, “Wanna have a holy relationship with me?” Rather, the holy relationship is something that the Holy Spirit brings together for His purposes, and while it can be invited, it simply can’t be forced.

One implication of this is that you don’t have a holy relationship simply because you have superficially come together in some goal, even if the goal is one that can be truly shared. Course students sometimes ask me if they have a holy relationship with the other members of their Course group, since they have joined in the goal of studying the Course together. I would say that while certainly some holy relationships *might* form in such a situation, simply doing something together is not sufficient. Holy relationships are not so mundane. They are relatively uncommon, and when the Holy Spirit has truly entered a relationship, it is a major event.

The progression of the holy relationship

A holy relationship as the Course describes it goes through a process of development. Below, I’ll present a rough sketch of the elements in that process. I should mention that this progression is not strictly sequential, as if you go through one stage completely and then go on to the next. For instance, you may well begin to discover a common state of mind and find a joint special function (as Helen and Bill did) early in the relationship. As they say in those drug commercials, “Your results may vary.”

1. Two people join in a common purpose

This is what initiates a holy relationship. Two people set aside their usual self-centered goals and truly join in a purpose that transcends self-interest. How this happens varies from relationship to relationship. For some, like Helen and Bill joining in their “better way,” there may be a particular moment that both partners can identify as the moment of joining. For others, it may be difficult to pin down when exactly the joining happened or even know what exactly the common purpose is, even though both partners realize that something significant has happened. I think that in many if not most cases, the partners will go through a process in which they gradually come to understand the purpose they joined in, and it will evolve over time. But however it happens, this joining is a monumental, life-changing event that sets into motion a whole chain of events greater than the partners can even imagine, a chain that will lead them all the way to salvation.

2. The Holy Spirit enters the relationship and gives it the goal of holiness

This joining invites the Holy Spirit into the relationship. It’s as if our decision to join opens a door that has been tightly shut, and the Holy Spirit quickly rushes in to make the relationship His own. “If any two are joined, He must be there” (P-II.2:6:5). It is His entry that makes this joining so much bigger and more significant than it first appears. Think of Helen and Bill. All they did was decide to work on improving their work environment. But the Holy Spirit saw an opportunity in their brief moment of openness and made the most of it. He saw in their decision the seed of a much greater goal: the goal of holiness, of realizing each other’s holiness and the holiness of the entire Sonship. He took their simple goal of finding a better way and transformed it into *His* better way. This goal of holiness was the goal that set into motion the chain of events that led to the scribing of the Course, a course in realizing and extending holiness. And this is the goal the Holy Spirit gives every holy relationship, regardless of its form.

3. The partners may experience a period of discomfort

This is a step that pertains especially to relationships, like Helen and Bill’s, that are contentious special relationships before the joining takes place. The idea here (described especially in T-17.V) is that once the joining takes place, the

structure of the relationship—which is focused on specialness goals like great sex or cornering the widget market or keeping up with the Joneses—is now out of accord with its new goal of holiness. This tension is what brings about the “period of discomfort” (T-20.VII.2:1), an understated phrase that in some relationships could be rephrased as the “period of chaos.” The temptation in this period is to dump the holy relationship partner and pursue the old specialness goals in another relationship. But the only solution that will really bring happiness is to change the structure of your relationship to match its new goal of holiness.

But while every holy relationship brings up some discomfort (as anything that so dramatically changes your life will), I don’t think every holy relationship necessarily goes through this exact phase of “structure out of accord with the goal.” Unlike Helen and Bill’s relationship, some relationships *begin* as holy relationships. Since these relationships may develop a structure that is largely in accord with their holy purpose from the beginning, they may not experience this step to the degree that Helen and Bill did.

4. The partners embark on a process of forgiveness

The holy relationship at its heart is a process in which both partners gradually forgive each other. We see this idea especially in the Text discussions (which are about Helen and Bill’s relationship), where the two partners are constantly exhorted to look past each other’s bodies and flawed personalities and behold the face of Christ shining beyond. The entire “Obstacles to Peace” section (T-19.IV) is a tour through this process.

Given the emphasis on forgiveness in the holy relationship discussions, I’ve been asked: Does every holy relationship begin as a contentious special relationship with major forgiveness issues, as Helen and Bill’s did? No—as I said in the last point, some holy relationships *begin* as holy relationships. These relationships may well be relatively peaceful and harmonious as human relationships go.

Yet from the Course’s standpoint, even the most harmonious relationships have forgiveness work to do. Everyone carries around unforgiveness; if we didn’t have it, we’d be awake. We all disappoint each other in some ways. Holy relationships virtually always bring up stuff to forgive at some point, because we have such an emotional investment in them. Even if there are no apparent “big” issues, just wanting *anything* to be different (see W-pl.71.2:4) or seeing the other person as a body and a personality—even if you like that body and personality—is in the Course’s view a grievance to be forgiven. So, every holy relationship is a process in which the partners’ grievances are gradually set aside through forgiveness, revealing the Christ in each other.

5. The partners experience a common state of mind

As the holy relationship develops, the partners will gradually come to recognize the union of their minds; a holy relationship is “a common state of mind” (T-22.III.9:7). This manifests in a number of ways. The Course speaks of how in a holy relationship, “What one thinks, the other will experience with him” (T-22.VI.14:2). Because of this, each of the partners can extend healing to the other: The healing holy instant will “come to both at the request of either” (T-18.V.6:7). The implication of this is obvious: “What can this mean except your mind and your brother’s are one?” (T-22.VI.14:3).

As I said earlier, the partners may well experience this to some degree early on in the relationship. In fact, I think it is one of the indicators that you may have a holy relationship—we’ve all had that experience of a “spooky” connection with another person, and sometimes that connection may point to the joining that initiates a holy relationship. At any rate, this recognition of the union of minds will become more pronounced as the partners forgive each other more deeply and the barriers between them drop away. They will experience more and more the fact that they are one, that their minds are truly joined. Their relationship will become a living, experiential demonstration of the fact that *all* of us are one.

6. The partners reach the goal of holiness

The Holy Spirit planted the goal of holiness at the heart of the relationship in the very beginning. Paradoxically, He also brought about the goal’s *accomplishment* by healing the relationship on a deep level. The process of the holy relationship is one in which the Holy Spirit’s healing gradually works its way to the surface until all obstacles have melted away and the goal of holiness is achieved fully and consciously. This is a very advanced state—so advanced that I think few holy relationships reach that goal in this lifetime. Helen and Bill’s certainly didn’t. Yet even if a relationship doesn’t reach all the way to that goal in this lifetime—in fact, even if the partners separate—the Course’s promise is that the goal will be reached eventually: “All who meet will someday meet again, for it is the destiny of all relationships to become holy [in other words, to achieve the goal of holiness]” (M-3.4:6).

7. The partners are given a joint special function in the salvation of the world

The final flowering of the holy relationship is “the extension of the Holy Spirit’s purpose from your relationship to others, to bring them gently in” (T-19.IV.1:5). The holiness of the relationship shines outward to encompass and bless everyone:

Reason now can lead you and your brother to the logical conclusion of your union. It must extend, as you extended when you and he joined. (T-22.In.4:5-6)

Through your holy relationship, reborn and blessed in every holy instant you do not arrange, thousands will rise to Heaven with you....[Your holy relationship] is very useful to the Holy Spirit, Who *has* a special function here. It will become the happy dream through which He can spread joy to thousands on thousands who believe that love is fear, not happiness. (T-18.V.3:1, 5:4-5)

To facilitate this extension, the Holy Spirit gives the partners a joint special function. Just as each of us as an individual has a special function in salvation, so “each holy relationship [has a]...special function in the Holy Spirit’s plan” (T-20.IV.6:6). This too, as I said earlier, is something that may begin (and I think is actually likely to begin) early in the holy relationship, as it did with Helen and Bill’s scribing of the Course. But the broad pattern is that the closer the two partners get to reaching the goal of holiness in their relationship, the more they take on their function of extending that holiness to others in a form given to them by the Holy Spirit. Fulfilling this special function is what brings the holy relationship’s process to completion. What began as the joining of two people ultimately culminates in the joining of the entire Sonship.

The vital role of the holy relationship in salvation

We can see how vital the holy relationship is in the Course’s path simply by seeing how much emphasis the Course places on it. Chapters 17 to 22 of the Text are devoted to it. As I mentioned, the entire “Obstacles to Peace” section (T-19.IV)—perhaps the most important section in the Text—is devoted to it. The holy relationship is called “the same requirement salvation asks of everyone” (P-2.II.8:3). And Helen and Bill’s holy relationship was the very birthplace of the Course itself; *A Course in Miracles* was the fruit of a real-life holy relationship fulfilling its special function in salvation.

Why is the holy relationship so important to the Course? Why is it “the source of your salvation”? I can think of at least three reasons. First, the Course’s means of salvation is forgiveness, and the holy relationship is a process of forgiving one another. Second, the Course is aimed at helping us move from separation to oneness, and the holy relationship is an experience of oneness. Third, the Course’s way of completing our healing is extension to others, and the holy relationship is all about extension—first the partners’ extension to each other, and then their joint extension to others as they fulfill their joint special function.

For all these reasons and more, the Course never tires of telling us what a precious and glorious gift the holy relationship is. It is truly our pathway home. We saw earlier the Course’s statement that “In this world, God’s Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship.” In the following passages, we see that God’s Son also comes closest to *Heaven* in a holy relationship:

Just under Heaven does [a person in a holy relationship] stand, but close enough not to return to earth. For this relationship has Heaven’s Holiness. How far from home can a relationship so like to Heaven be? (T-22.In.3:7-9)

Heaven has come to earth at last, from which the ego’s rule has kept it out so long. Heaven has come because it found a home in your relationship on earth. And earth can hold no longer what has been given Heaven as its own. (T-21.IV.7:5-7)

Holy relationships that fully realize their holiness are nothing less than Heaven on earth. And when we find Heaven on earth, can the return to Heaven itself be far behind?

How do I find a holy relationship?

Whenever we at the Circle talk about the importance of holy relationships, the question of how to find one inevitably

and understandably comes up. When we hear about something so wonderful and essential to the Course's path, we naturally want to grab hold of it for ourselves. But how do we do that?

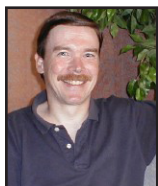
The first thing I would say is not to worry if you don't currently have a holy relationship. It doesn't make you a bad Course student; you can make great progress with the Course without a holy relationship partner. And you can rest assured that even if you don't have a partner now, you'll have one (or more) eventually. As the Course says, "There are no accidents in salvation. Those who are to meet will meet, because together they have the potential for a holy relationship. They are ready for each other" (M-3.1:6-8). When the time comes for you and your holy relationship partner(s) to meet, you will. It's guaranteed.

We shouldn't, then, desperately go trolling for holy relationship partners, nor should we try to force fit current relationships into the mold. Rather, I would recommend a couple of things. First, focus on walking the Course's path as diligently as you can. While holy relationships are a universal human phenomenon (though of course non-Course students have different terms for them), if the Course is your path you are most likely to find holy relationships in the context of walking your path. There's a great line in the Manual about teachers and pupils (a type of holy relationship) which says, "Certain pupils have been assigned to each of God's teachers, and they will begin to look for him as soon as he has answered the Call" (M-2.1:1). Adapted to holy relationships in general, this line could be rephrased: Certain holy relationship partners have been assigned to you, and they will begin to look for you as soon as you have answered the Call. So, answer the Call by walking the path to salvation that you have been given.

Second, simply be open to the possibility of holy relationships entering your life. I said above that they are brought together by the Holy Spirit for His purposes. If you are open to His purposes for your life and willing to join with others, I think those who are meant to share those purposes with you will be drawn to you, and you to them. And even though I don't think it's a good idea to go trolling for holy relationships, if you feel guided it may well be appropriate to invite another person to share a goal with you, as Bill did with Helen. Just remember that the Holy Spirit is in charge of the process, and that He is the one who will pair you up with those whom you are meant to join in holy relationship. Again, it's guaranteed.

And when you do finally meet someone whom the Holy Spirit has designated a holy relationship partner for you, I think you'll know it. You'll sense that something "big" has happened. The relationship will grab both of you and take you on a stirring ride down whitewater rapids to its goal. It will seem to have a life of its own, independent of your own plans and mental machinery. It will have a sense of inevitability to it. It will lead to significant changes in your life. A holy relationship can be both a scary experience (because of the changes it brings about) and an exhilarating one.

In conclusion, from my own experience I can say that the holy relationship is the most fulfilling thing life has to offer. Relationships are the beating heart of our lives, and holy relationships are the beating heart of God's plan for salvation. So, I wish you the all the best as you open your heart and mind to joining whomever the Holy Spirit sends you and embarking together on the journey that is truly "the source of your salvation."



E-mail your comments to the author at: greg@circleofa.org

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.

Facing the Topic of Holy Relationships

by Robert Perry

I want to add my own voice to Greg's article because I believe it brings up an important issue for us as students of *A Course in Miracles*. Holy relationships is a central topic in the Course, yet one that I believe has largely dropped off the map. So far as I can see, it is talked about even less today than it used to be many years ago.

As Greg says, the topic is granted enormous importance in the Course itself. Much more space is given to it than to the subject of special relationships (which is far more talked about among Course students). Not only are six chapters of the Text devoted to it, but it also shows up in the Manual and in the two supplements, *Psychotherapy* and *The Song of Prayer*.

In these places, the Course invests the greatest importance in the holy relationship. In addition to calling it "the source of your salvation" (T-20.VIII.6:9) and the one "requirement salvation asks of everyone" (P-2.II.8:3), as Greg points out, it also calls it "a phenomenal teaching accomplishment" (T-17.V.2:3) and "the home prepared for [God and Christ] as earth is turned to Heaven" (T-22.I.11:9).

Furthermore, as Greg also mentions, the story of the Course is really the story of a holy relationship. As we all know, Helen Schucman and Bill Thetford joined in a common purpose, and this invited a spiritual presence into their relationship, which then took them on a journey. This journey involved the two of them collaborating on a function which would bless the world. That is Helen and Bill's story as told by those who knew them, but it is also the story of the holy relationship as told by the Course. The implication is worth noting: The Course itself was born out of a holy relationship. We only have this priceless document because of a holy relationship.

Yet, in contrast, we Course students don't seem to talk much about the holy relationship, at least as far as I can tell. When we do, we often redefine it as something that exists in my mind alone. Or we water it down to the point where it becomes true of a wide range of relationships, as if what's important is being able to claim its title, rather than undergo its transformation. About ten years ago, I heard from a Course author who was polling a number of Course teachers on the question, Does the holy relationship take two or one? After he was done, he told me that Allen Watson and I were the only teachers he had polled who believed it took two. He concluded it must take only one. As a result of this gap between commonly held views and what I see in the Course, I confess that I have more or less fallen silent on the topic. It has stirred up such turbulence when I have talked about it that it doesn't seem to be a very useful thing to bring it up. And so I have chosen to focus on other, more productive topics.

In the Course itself, however, as Greg says, the concept is abundantly clear: Two people join in a common goal, one that transcends separate interests. This joining invites holiness to enter their relationship at a deep level. From there it seeks to rise to the surface and become the relationship's dominant theme. It becomes an invisible driving force, as it takes them on a journey to the realization of itself. Along the way, they are given a joint special function, in which the holiness planted in their relationship actively reaches out through them to bless others. In the end, the two of them are profoundly changed by the relationship. It takes them to places within themselves that would be virtually impossible to reach otherwise. Actual union with another person teaches them the unreality of separateness in a way that nothing else could. The holy relationship indeed turns out to be the source of their salvation.

And this really happens. The early stages of it happened in the lives of Helen and Bill. I've seen these same early stages happen in my own life in several relationships, as well as in the lives of people I know. There really is this phenomenon whereby two people join in an ego-transcending purpose, after which a third presence noticeably enters their relationship and takes them on a new journey, to places they never expected—initially into chaos and confusion, but ultimately toward the embodiment of pure goodness. This is not some abstract, wishy-washy thing. It happens, and when it happens, it changes everything.

My hope, then, is that as Course students we can face this topic more fully. It's so vitally important in the Course's pages. It holds out such promise for us. Shall we not investigate it openly, take what steps toward it that we can, and see what happens?

CIRCLE MAILBOX

Comments on “Miracles Boomeritis Questionnaire” (*A Better Way* #77) and “Interpretation and the Future of the Course” (*A Better Way* #78)

Thank you so much for your boomeritis quiz and your ongoing discussion of the art and science of literary interpretation. I taught literature at the college and graduate level for forty-four years, and fought the unending battle against students' initial assumption that a book can mean whatever the reader thinks it means. (If that's true, why write books? And why read them?)

Then someone I know returned from studying at an ACIM center. Whenever she disagreed with what anyone else said, she airily excused them with the remark, “Well, they're just coming from the ego.” I remember getting the old Literature 101 feeling, wondering what made her so certain that she herself wasn't coming from the ego as well. So it's refreshing to hear several very competent interpreters of ACIM talking about restraining their own “wonky” minds and emphasizing the difference between “egoic condemnation” and “loving guidance.”

To the question, “What makes one interpretation better than another?” my response always stressed focus on the details in the text being interpreted: why this particular metaphor? that illustration? this repetition? that image as opposed to any other? etc. The interpretation that takes notice of textual details and marshals them efficiently in support of its the-

sis is the better interpretation—but is always open to noticing different details revealed by asking different questions as stimulated by new circumstances. In that process, new light keeps on pouring from classics like the Bible and ACIM.

Thanks, dear Robert and Greg, for this whole, sane discussion—and to whichever “office angel” has had the kindness to send me occasional print copies, since my 76-year-old eyes cannot read lengthy articles on the computer screen.

— Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

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Comments on “These Words Dispel the Night” (*A Better Way* #80)

This is such a powerful article! And such an important topic!

Thank you for the gift of this understanding. You have enabled me to much more fully understand and appreciate the power of Jesus’ use of words and its place in my working with the Course.

— Jeremy Stutsman

• • •

I am so excited about your article on repeating the words of the Course that I have shared it with all my students! Being steeped in your teaching and the Circle’s approach, I love Jesus’ words and understand the importance of them in my practicing. Nevertheless, your article has taken me to a new place in my practice and enriched it greatly. In just the few days since I first read the article, I have gone so much deeper in every practice—in my morning and evening quiet times, hourly remembrances, frequent reminders, and responses to temptation.

I am so grateful for the way you have drawn together all the different things the Course says about repeating the words in our practicing. There is a wealth of guidance here on how to practice the words in order to receive the maximum benefit from them. Pulled all together, these instructions have so much more power than they do individually. I see in them Jesus’ love for us and his desire for our awakening. He *has* given us everything we need!

I have been applying daily your exercise on how to repeat the words. In my longer morning practice, I repeat my lesson using all the ways you suggest. In every hourly practice I repeat it using a few of the suggestions. By the end of my practice day, I have used all of them. I am finding this so helpful that I will continue to make it part of each and every day’s practice. It takes me to such a deeper experience and relationship with my lesson for the day. By the end of my practice this morning, I found myself sitting there with a smile of joy and gratitude on my face—for Jesus and my lesson, for the deep feeling of peace I experienced, and also for you for giving me yet another gift to hasten me home.

— Mary Anne Buchowski
Course Oasis,
Ottawa, Canada

• • •

I very much appreciated your essay, “These Words Dispel the Night.”

It helped remind me of the importance of focusing on the words in ACIM, giving each of them the significance it deserves. I particularly liked the “How?” section, and have decided to keep the summary (page ten) at my desk where I study ACIM.

Thanks for this and all of your writings. They are extremely valuable to me, for I know nobody else who is studying ACIM.

— Marnie McGrath

• • •

Wow, Robert. Thank you for this. Nicola’s reference to the elephant in the room felt really appropriate, especially after I went through the practice you presented here for “God goes with me wherever I go.” The resistance I felt in myself was almost physical, it was so dark and fierce and heavy—like someone very strong was pulling me away from

my effort to do what the practice asked me to do. Exhausting! But so interesting. Something in me must be really terrified to go deeper. What great tenderness and trust is required to go ahead in spite of that resistance and get to the other side of it. Your article made me really aware of how hard I've been working against myself in this. I honestly didn't know I was doing that.

— Amy Speech

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Re your article "These Words Dispel the Night," well said. Excellent sense. Thank you for writing this because it prompted me to reflect on my own experience and practice and to see that I entirely agree with you. For me, repeating lines from the Course is foundational and, after a number of years, has become second nature. They are the touchstones to which I return many times during the day (and at night: should I wake up in the early hours, a conditioned response kicks in and I find myself saying "I rest in God"; inside my head, mind, not out loud, or my missus would kill me).

I think all the quotes and insights you marshal in your article help explain why Roger Walsh feels able to describe the Course as "the world's best cognitive therapy." And further convince me that his conclusion is absolutely right.

I hope your article will do the great service of giving people permission to wholeheartedly embrace the Course as a practical mind-training tool, and as a very well thought out and practical spiritual discipline and path. Coz when you start seeing the Course this way, it sure becomes hard as hell to go on confusing it with any of that wishy-washy happy-clappy New Age stuff.

— Phil Brisk

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Great article. I am reminded of a saying my mom used when she wanted me to really understand what she was telling me. Read, Mark, Learn and Inwardly Digest This. Also Biblically: Here is *the word of the Lord*; or as Jesus said, *verily verily I say unto you*. All this means that the words to follow are usually a Principle of Life to follow. Jesus also said his words are Life and Salvation. I also feel that I understand what you are saying better because I read both of your books. The methods listed are also a part of the old spiritual disciplines: contemplative prayer, meditation as centered reasoning, fasting.

— Chris Roig

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Thanks for answering my prayers somewhat with this article.

I have not applied the Course in a manner that I reaped the benefit of the lessons, and I felt very frustrated because my application seemed so mindless and conceptual, and it never seemed to open the "package" to peace. Hence I want to throw it away and try another path.

I've often asked fellow students who have really valued the Course and who say it's really worked for them in finding the place of peace within, and being able to let go of upset, and seeing the point of decision for peace in their mind. Which to me is a pretty good start. I've been frustrated, though, that they weren't more clear on the mechanics of the application. They didn't speak about the "how" so that the application really worked without making it ritualistic and effortful and introducing more strain and resistance. They didn't explain clearly what they did that worked and what they did that didn't work as they applied the lesson.

So thank you. This article really addresses a lot of that for me and helps point me to a different way of applying the lesson.

— Annie Liley

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