



CIRCLE OF ATONEMENT

Dedicated to *A Course in Miracles*

Meditation in *A Course in Miracles* ACIM Radio #10 Episode Guide

In this podcast, Circle founder Robert Perry and executive director Emily Bennington discuss the topic of meditation in *A Course in Miracles*. You're invited to listen or watch by visiting <http://www.circleofa.org/10> and follow along using the guide below.

Definition of meditation

An intentional mental (and usually spiritual) practice that involves a minimum of inner verbalizing and discursive thought, in which the mind is quieted and a technique is used—such as mindfulness or a concentrated focus on a thought, object, or sound—to train attention and reach a heightened level of spiritual awareness.

Course meditation in context

Course meditation has much in common with many other meditation techniques, fitting quite comfortably alongside them. As one example, Name of God Meditation (based on Lesson 183) is a variety of *japa*, the meditative repetition of a divine name, and is extremely similar to the technique taught in *The Cloud of Unknowing*, a medieval mystical text.

Daniel Goleman, in *The Meditative Mind*, divides meditation techniques broadly into two categories: *concentrative* and *insight*. Course meditation fits firmly in the concentrative category, where you concentrate on a single object of awareness, and where the depth of your absorption in that determines entirely the quality of your meditation. Course meditation is *not* insight meditation, in which attention is intentionally kept broader, with a focus that is more open and fluid, with the result that the object of attention may shift from moment to moment. Mindfulness meditation, which is currently so popular, is a variety of insight meditation.

Meditation in the Course

Meditation plays a part throughout the Course, from the very beginning to the very end. This, however, can be difficult to spot, for the word is used only twice in the FIP edition (though 8 times in the CE). In the Workbook, where the emphasis on meditation is greatest, the word is used only once (in Lesson 124), the Workbook calling it instead “this kind of practice” (W-41.7:6).

Pre-Course

After Helen and Bill joined in “another way,” Bill began reading spiritual literature and suggested that the two of them meditate and Helen finally agreed. It was during these times that Helen’s first inner visions began (*Absence from Felicity*, by Ken Wapnick, p. 87)

The day before the Course began coming through, Jesus recommended to Bill a meditation technique that would allow him to hear guidance better: “Suggest a very short phrase, like ‘Here I am, Lord’ and don’t think of *anything* else. Just pull in your mind slowly from everywhere else and center it on these words.”

Text

Once the Text began, Jesus spoke approvingly of Bill and Helen’s efforts to meditate. Twice he counseled Helen on how to get past the fear reaction to meditation that she was having. Meditation is mentioned seven times in the (CE) Text. Here is one notable example:

Meditation is a collaborative venture with God. It cannot be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me (T-4.VIII.21:4-5).

Workbook

Meditation plays a major role in the Workbook, beginning in Lessons 41 and 44. These two lessons almost blare trumpets at the announcement of this important practice, which is billed as “a major goal of mind training” (W-44.3:3). They speak glowingly of “our first real attempt to get past this dark and heavy cloud, and to go through it to the light beyond” (W-41.4:3). They promise that this is a practice “we will utilize increasingly” (W-44.3:2) and that “We will go into more detail in connection with this kind of practice as we go along” (W-41.8:6).

The Workbook keeps these promises, making meditation an absolute staple of its program. It is easily the most common exercise for the morning and evening practice periods, the longest practice periods of each day.

Manual

This pattern continues beyond the Workbook. Post-Workbook practice is discussed in section 16 the Manual for Teachers (“How Should the Teacher of God Spend His Day?”), which portrays morning and evening “quiet time” as the foundation of our day. In this time we do what the Workbook taught us—close our eyes and spend time with God, attempting to “join with Him” (see M-16.4). Clearly, this is talking about meditation.

Song of Prayer

The Song of Prayer, the final supplement to the Course that Helen scribed, tells us that prayer on the lower rungs of the ladder consists of asking God for specific things. True prayer, however, is “a

stepping aside; a letting go, a quiet time of listening and loving...a giving up of yourself to be at one with Love” (S-1.1.5:1, 5). This sounds like meditation. True prayer, in other words, is successful meditation. This kind of prayer eventually becomes the state in which we spend eternity.

The three techniques

There are essentially three techniques in the Workbook, although each one has variations and there are no absolute boundaries between them, since they share much in common.

Down-and-Inward Meditation

This is the beginning method in the Workbook, taught initially in Lesson 41 and 44.

Summary: Concentrate on sinking down and inward toward the center of your mind, where God and your true identity wait for you. While doing so, hold a heightened sense of intention, filled with confidence, desire, and a sense of the importance and holiness of what you are doing. Whenever your mind wanders, draw it back with a specific technique.

Name of God meditation

This is taught mainly in Lesson 183, but is also referred to in Lessons 184, 187, 222, and 266. Its explicit appearance (and quick summary) in 222, at the beginning of Part II, implies that it can be used during that part, in addition to Open Mind Meditation.

Summary: Repeat God’s Name over and over, as an invitation that you are certain God will answer, as “the only wish we have, the only sound with any meaning” (W-183.6:6) and as “the all-encompassing idea that holds your mind completely” (W-183.8:3). Whenever your mind wanders to things of this world, repeat His Name to draw your attention back, realizing that those names signify nothing while God’s Name signifies everything.

Open Mind Meditation

This is the crowning method of the Workbook, which is featured in all the significant blocks of the last half of the year: Review V, Review VI, introduction to Part II, and Introduction to Final Lessons. Many of the Course’s references to going beyond words refer to this meditation technique.

Summary: Hold your mind in a state that is empty of words (no words to repeat), thoughts, and all you believe, and open to God, waiting in silent, restful expectancy for Him to dawn above the horizon of your mind. When your mind wanders, you can use words to draw it back to silent, nonverbal waiting. Be open to the Holy Spirit stepping in, with guidance for your day or even with specific instructions for your meditation time.

Essential characteristics of Course meditation

Based on all three techniques, we can say that these are the essential characteristics of meditation in the Course:

- Sustained concentration on a goal (most commonly, the experience of God)
- A minimum of verbalizing—repeating a few words, one word, or no words

- Keeping the mind clear of all other thoughts
- Using a technique to pull the mind back from wandering
- A heightened attitude of confidence, desire, and expectancy
- Appropriate variation—not rote

Course meditation is all about a total, stable, and single-minded focus on the goal. That goal needs to engage your mind as *continuously* as possible, and it needs to engage as *much* of your mind as possible—in that you consider it meaningful, desirable, important, and attainable. In that way, all of your mind’s energies are engaged in going to the goal. That is the beginning and end of the technique.

When do we meditate and for how long?

Morning and evening:

- Lessons 153-200: As long as possible; ideally, thirty or more minutes
- Lessons 201-220: At least fifteen minutes
- Lessons 221-365: as much time as we need for the result we desire
- Manual for Teachers: continue until a minute or two after you begin to find it difficult

On the hour:

- Lessons 93-110: five minutes

Why do we meditate?

The ultimate goal is to experience God and our true Self. The Workbook in particular wants to train us to have this experience increasingly. Yet even if we do not reach this supreme experience, the Workbook mentions experiencing a “sense of relaxation” (W-44.10:1) and “a deep sense of joy and an increased alertness” (W-74.6:4). In the Workbook, we use meditation to start the day in a different state of mind, a state of peace. And then we use our practice in the rest of the day to maintain and repair this state of peace. Meditation, then, is meant to be the foundation for a different kind of day.