

A Better Way

A Magazine for Students of *A Course in Miracles*
Published by the Circle of Atonement

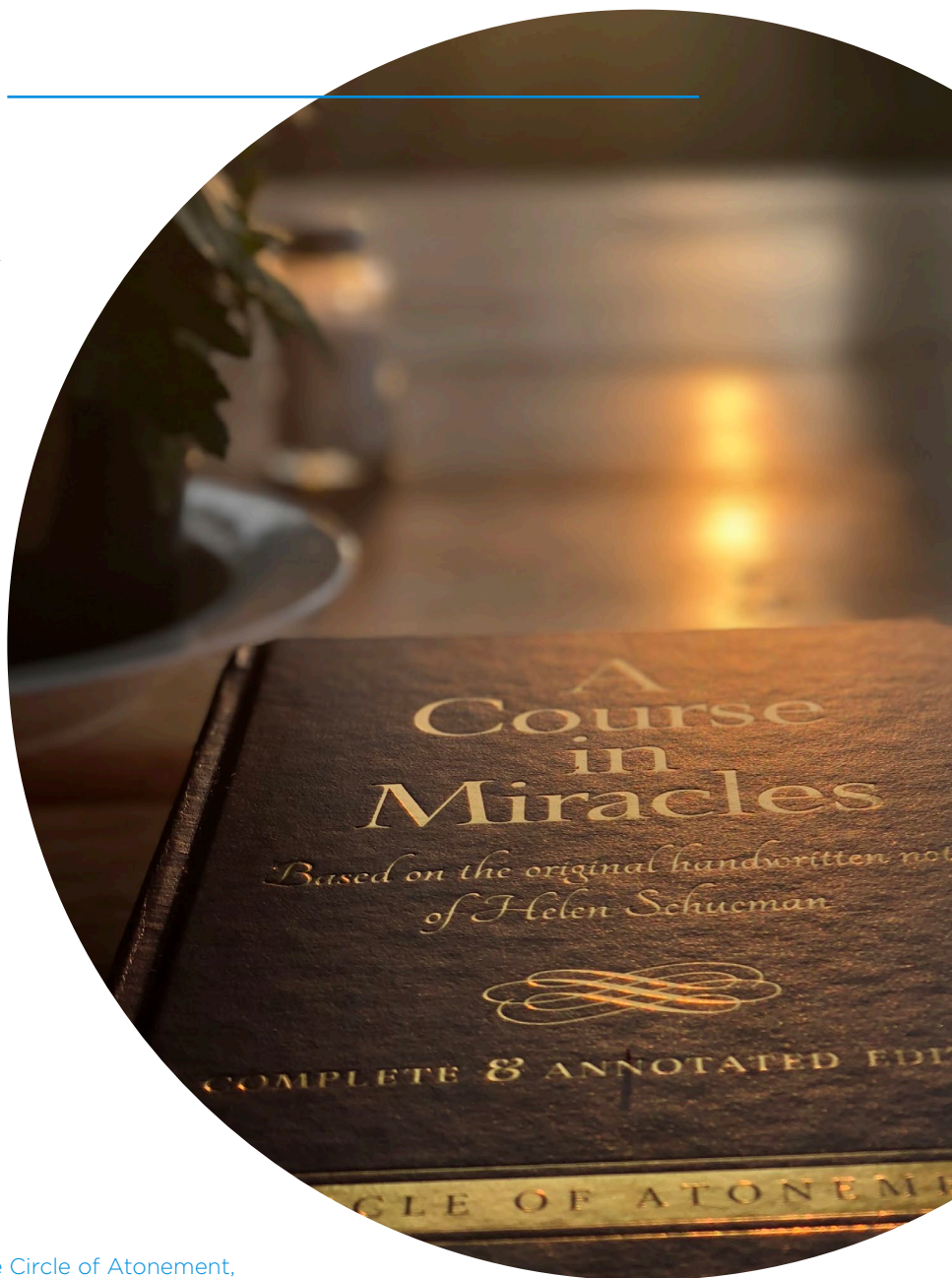
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- An Update on the Circle's Visioning Process and Where We Go From Here
- The Circle's Approach to *A Course in Miracles*
- Our Purpose & Values
- Meet Our Board Members



CIRCLE OF ATONEMENT
Dedicated to *A Course in Miracles*

A Better Way is a bi-monthly publication from the Circle of Atonement, a nonprofit sharing the spiritual path of *A Course in Miracles* since 1993.



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Editor's Letter: A Vision for the Future



Welcome to *A Better Way*. We have designed this issue to provide an organizational overview of the Circle of Atonement as well as a look at our purpose, values, and vision. I find it helpful to envision the Circle as a large spiritual structure that provides a home to *A Course in Miracles* students. Within this sacred structure are numerous rooms providing specific offerings, all designed to serve a unified purpose.

If you're new to the Circle, please visit circleofa.org and explore the website thoroughly. There you will find a goldmine of treasures in our library of articles, podcasts, blogs, glossary of terms, and much more. All offerings here are free in support of your journey with the Course. There are also items for purchase in the bookstore and webinar/workshops. The foundation of our offerings has consistently been to remain faithful to the Course's teachings, which has always been my primary draw to the Circle.

Within the rich architecture of the Circle's home, you will also find a "circle within the circle" for Course Companion membership. This is a group where students join in a deeper Course study together with teachers, classes, and special events. Please refer to the Course Companions News section of this magazine for a full listing of member benefits. We are thrilled to be hosting another mid-year Course Companions launch in June and we look forward to welcoming many new members. If you're not already in the program, we hope you will join us!

In this issue of *A Better Way* we are pleased to bring you a lead article by the Circle's executive director Emily Bennington. Emily, Robert, and the Circle's Board of Directors have recently completed a visioning process and this article shares the

results of their efforts. Emily offers a roadmap for the Circle's journey over the next two years and, by all indicators, it's going to be an exciting ride!

We are also thrilled to have a companion article from Robert on the Circle's approach to *A Course in Miracles*. In this article, Robert examines the conventional way students tend to view the Course and offers a picture that, as he says, is "dramatically different." Robert's article has caused me to think deeply about my own journey with the Course and I hope it has a similar effect on you as well.

In this issue we are also introducing you to our Board members, featuring a Course Companion member profile, and launching a new section called "Mailbox" where you are welcome to provide feedback and comments.

Chapter 14, Section VII of the Text, entitled "The Circle of Atonement," offers a glimpse into our name's inspiration. Within the holy circle of peace is everyone whom God created. "Joy is its unifying attribute, with no one left outside to suffer guilt alone. The power of God draws everyone to its safe embrace of love and union. Stand quietly within this circle, and attract all who believe themselves to be outside to join you there." (7:4-7)

I am so grateful we are fellow travelers on this miraculous path of light. I invite you to join in this Circle as we practice and extend Jesus' teachings in service to our brothers and sisters. "I stand within the circle, calling you to peace. Teach peace with me, and stand with me on holy ground." (8:5-6)

With love and blessings,
Janet Chandler
Project Manager
Circle Certified Teacher

From the Paper on Which It Was Written into the Hearts for Which It Was Intended:

An Update on the Circle's Visioning Process and Where We Go From Here

By Emily Bennington Executive Director

On New Years' Eve 1975, three years after the scribing had been completed, Helen Schucman received a "special message" from Jesus about the future of *A Course in Miracles*. He spoke of the Course growing "from infancy into a helper of the world" and went on to say:

I will direct its growth as it reaches from the paper on which it was written into the hearts for which it was intended.

In the forty-five years since this message was received, the Course has reached the hearts of many—and it's just getting started. With the decline of traditional church and the rise of personal spirituality, the gifts of the Course are being discovered by an ever-increasing number of students who are drawn to its core teaching of unconditional love. As this trend continues, we envision *Course in Miracles* one day gaining enough authority to stand alongside the ancient scriptures of the world's religions.

Imagine a time when you walk into your local bookstore and see an entire section devoted to the Course, when a candidate running for office can stand for its principles without being labeled as fringe, and when stories about the Course like the one that appeared in the New York Times last year

aren't being passed around in amazement that such a thing could happen. And from this, imagine a time when a global network of Course-based teaching ministries, study groups, centers, and organizations rise from this path and become more and more interconnected.

The Circle has always had its eye on this expanded future for the Course. Over the years, Robert has written beautifully about the goal of eventually building an enduring global tradition in which students would be united in walking this path as Jesus intended. In service to this goal, the Circle has, over nearly thirty years, produced an extraordinary collection of resources, including and especially the *Complete and Annotated Edition of A Course in Miracles*.

And yet, what has been missing so far has been a more effective vehicle for getting these resources into the hands of students who could benefit from them. As a result, for the past few years we have felt it is time to remake the Circle on an organizational level. We have realized that if we are going to truly help the Course grow into all it's meant to be, we will need to transform the Circle into a well-organized non-profit capable of serving many thousands of students around the world.

To determine how we can best achieve this goal, as well as how to measure our efforts along the way,

the Circle's Board of Directors, along with Robert and me, recently completed a year-long visioning process. Together, we decided that the main areas of concentration for the Circle over the next two years will be:

1. Strengthening our organizational and financial base.
2. Significantly grow the community of students in our programs through consistent outreach.
3. Publicly addressing major societal and personal issues from a Course-based perspective.
4. Building a global network of CE study groups.
5. Developing a capital campaign to fund an education and retreat center that would also double as the Circle's physical home.

What I'd like to do for the remainder of this article is to provide an overview of what we're doing in each of these areas and, if you feel called to join us, I'd like to invite you to be part of this very important work.

1. Strengthening our organizational and financial base.

It's a real privilege to share the Course with the world but, again, to do that well we know we need to get our own house in order. Right now, this side of the Circle has a lot of momentum. While Robert and I are the only full-time employees, our team has grown to include five contractors, four Board members, and some very dedicated volunteers. The work we do is meaningful, it's fun, and we all share the same commitment to coming together and building an organization that will be here for generations.

But whether we succeed tomorrow, of course, depends in large part on what we do today. If the Circle is to live on and help the Course reach more hearts for which it's intended, we will need a larger organization with more staff, volunteers, and donors.

Our goal is to build a solid internal structure that will allow for the Circle's growth. Two of the most important projects we're working on in this area are:

- Deepening relationships with our donor community through more financial transparency,

developing a monthly giving program, and frequent communication on how gifts are being used.

- Nurturing teachers, group leaders, additional volunteers, and committee members who are willing to come together to be the arms and legs of this work in the world.

These items are just a start, but they are very important groundwork for the Circle's future.

2. Significantly grow the community of students in our programs through consistent outreach.

A Course in Miracles promises that we will experience God's love, guidance, peace, holy relationships, joy, and so much more if we just walk the path it gives us. This is why taking students through the Course has always been central to the Circle's mission, and why Course Companions has evolved into our main program.

Our goal is to grow Course Companions into a community of thousands. We believe the

Course is here to change the world and, to do that, it needs to be part of the world in a more mainstream way. Currently, our outreach efforts include the magazine you're reading now, our podcast *Exploring A Course in Miracles*, our weekly newsletter *Circle News*, and our new video series *A Course in Miracles Shorts*. But there are additional projects in the works, including:

- Significantly improving our social media presence.
- Beginning online advertising campaigns through Facebook and Instagram.
- Sharing the Course on popular podcasts, blogs, and other media outlets.

While we believe these projects will go a long way towards helping the Course reach new students, at the very top of our wish list in this category is a Course Companions app. We don't have the funding or the expertise to develop this at the moment, but we envision an app that would be as functional and as beautiful as our membership site. This app would feature the Course reading for the day, the commentaries, the classes, the cameos, and practice reminders right on your mobile device.

A well-designed app would instantly open Course Companions to anyone with a smartphone or a tablet, and we hope to begin this project soon.

3. Publicly addressing major societal and personal issues from a Course-based perspective.

As I write this, we are all in the grips of a global pandemic, unemployment rates are in double-digits, and many people are afraid, alone, and hungry. As students of the Course, how should we respond to these and other events? Does the Course send us out to give comfort and care to our brothers in need—or should we say the world is an illusion and focus merely on our own minds?

A Course in Miracles teaches unconditional equality and complete courtesy to others. With so much hatred and suffering all around us, its voice is desperately needed because its message is one of love. For this reason, we are more proactively sharing Course teachings in response to personal suffering and global crisis.

Our goal is be a place where students can turn for support and guidance through difficult times, both individually and collectively. Projects we are committed to in this area include:

- Issuing statements from Circle leadership in response to major news events.
- Hosting workshops on a Course-based approach to issues including illness, death, divorce, and other challenges that are common to all of us.
- Thoughtfully exploring societal issues through our podcast, newsletter, and magazine articles.

We have made this a priority because we believe the Course is far more than just a way to relieve our own fear. It contains the seeds of a thought system that heals, which means it can, and should, help us bring forth a whole new world.

4. Building a global network of CE study groups.

One thing we hear often at the Circle is that students are longing for a sense of community. We do our best to provide this in Course Companions, while also recognizing that large webinars cannot

replace the value and intimacy of small group work. There is a clear need for study groups, but what we've discovered is that the complexity of the Course often prevents many would-be leaders from stepping forward to host them.

Our goal is to offer resources for study groups that will simplify the process from beginning to end. We want to make it easier for groups to come together and go through any volume of the Course. Materials we will create include promotional emails to recruit members, agendas and discussion guides for each meeting, as well as answers to questions that are likely to come up. In addition to helping the leader in a way that encourages more groups to form, our hope is that offering these resources will enhance the teachings and allow for a better learning experience overall.

Currently, we are in the process of developing study guides that will take a group through the Text in one year. When this piece is completed, we plan to continue with offerings for Workbook and Manual groups. Other projects we're working on in this area include:

- Hosting an online training this fall as a first step to starting an ongoing study group leader program.
- Building a website hub for study groups that offers all the resources needed to begin and maintain a group, as well as a directory where students and teachers can find each other regardless of where they live.

We are very committed to this initiative, and we would love to support a network of study groups where students are drawn into deeper relationship with the Course and with each other.

5. Developing a capital campaign to fund an education and retreat center that would also double as the Circle's physical home

Given how deeply felt the need is for spiritual belonging and community, it has been a long-held dream at the Circle to have a home where students can come to connect and be spiritually renewed. This would be a place to study Course teachings, experience the practice, and carry its gifts home to others.

A BETTER WAY

FROM THE PAPER ON WHICH IT WAS WRITTEN INTO THE HEARTS FOR WHICH IT WAS INTENDED: OUR VISION OF THE CIRCLE'S FUTURE

The Circle's center has often been pictured as a garden in the desert, a place near Sedona that would serve as a Course retreat center, an education center, and our headquarters. We've been picturing this place for years now, daydreaming about a location that would have the white dome that Helen saw in her own vision of a Course center, a gallery that walks you through Course history, a nature walk with Course quotes along the path, and a bell that rings as an hourly practice reminder.

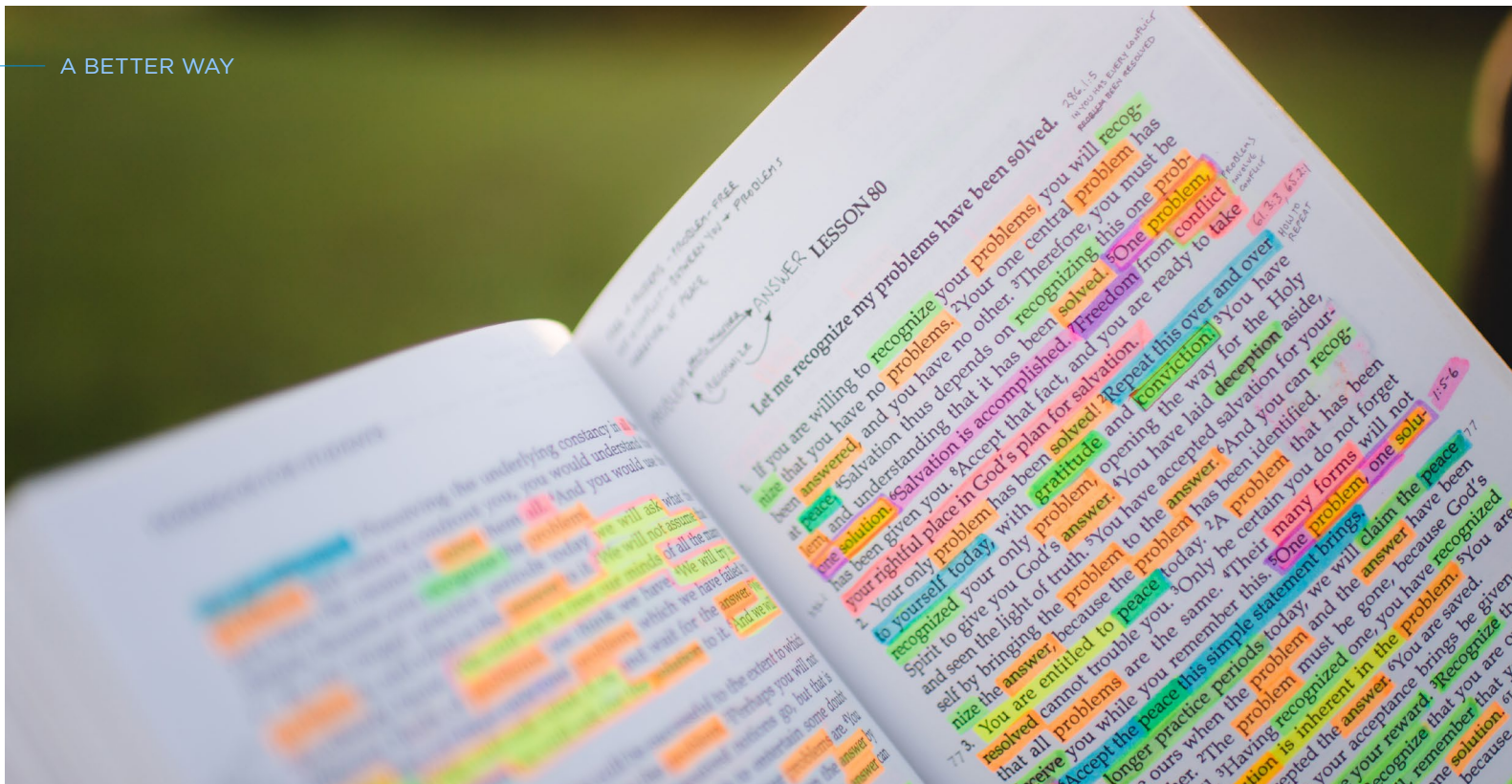
But I'm certainly getting ahead of myself here. We are years away from making this happen and by now you know we must first get the Circle more structured before we can consider taking the initial steps toward this goal. But within the next two years we do hope to make some progress on this, ideally with the beginnings of a capital campaign.

So there you have it. The Circle's roadmap for the near future. We recognize these are lofty goals and, as I mentioned, we will need far more staff, volunteers, committees, and income than we currently have to achieve them. We also feel that we must achieve them if we are to build an organization worthy of being called a home of the Course and the students it serves.

If you feel moved to support any or all of this mission, we invite you to join us. You can do so by becoming a member of Course Companions, volunteering, making a contribution, or simply praying for the success of our work.

This is a big vision. Course students are sitting on something known to relatively few, but something that clearly has the power to change everything for the better. If Helen's special message is right and the Course is destined to become a "helper of the world," then what more meaningful purpose could there be than helping it get there? I hope you will consider how you can support the efforts I've outlined above. There is so much to do, and we cannot reach the many hearts for which the Course was intended without you.

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The Circle's Approach to A Course in Miracles

by Robert Perry
Founder

The foundation for everything we do at the Circle is a particular approach to *A Course in Miracles*, one that has developed over time and is indeed still developing.

There is no question that the Course is difficult for our minds to grasp. Trying to comprehend it can feel like being lost in a giant maze. A single sentence often contains multiple terms used in non-standard ways, expressing multiple unfamiliar ideas. And there are over a thousand pages of such sentences. What do we do?

The conventional approach

Having been active in the Course community for nearly forty years, the main thing I feel we have done so far is a perfectly natural human response. I just don't think it's the right response. We can see the conventional approach as consisting of two closely related parts.

1. Seeing the Course in light of our expectations

One part of this response is to project onto the Course our expectations and preconceptions. When we open the Course, we are faced with a mountain

of difficult verbiage. Sentences seem impenetrable. We finish a section and have no idea what we have read. We desperately need a key to unlock these words. And so we naturally turn to what we have picked up out there, what we have heard from Course teachers and students and from spiritual teachings in general.

Then we take this body of ideas and attitudes and pour it into the sentences and paragraphs we read. We have heard, for instance, that it's only about changing our own mind, and so when we read "*The sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself*," we naturally think, "Ah, here is the Course saying it's only about my mind" (while conveniently overlooking the term "miracle worker," which refers to someone who works miracles *for others*).

The problem with this approach is that to interpret something in light of our preconceptions is what the Course means by "Projection makes perception" (T-1.21.1.1:1). It amounts to

seeing something as we expect it to be and want it to be, rather than how it *is*.

Not surprisingly, the author of the Course, who I believe is Jesus, displays concern that we will do this very thing with it. He encourages us not to interpret the Course based on our familiarity with the New Testament (see T-6.I.23:2-3), the teachings of Edgar Cayce (see Cameo 15), or our own ego (W-196.2:2-4). Because we can be so "inventive when it comes to twisting symbols around" (T-3.III.6:3), Jesus asks us to "read these teachings carefully" (T-4.I.8:8) and to "not read this hastily or wrongly" (M-29.7:3). In a personal aside to Helen and Bill after one of the miracle principles, he said, "*Be very careful* in interpreting this."

You can understand why we would need such cautions about misinterpretation. Given human nature, we could easily end up pasting over the Course with our own ideas and what we have picked up from various teachers, books, and traditions, to the point where the Course itself is barely visible under all the layers. After all, isn't that what we did with Jesus himself?

Isn't this what is driving our search for a simple formula for the Course—the need to “make a vast area of experience more manageable”?

2. Boiling the Course down to a simple formula

The other part of our attempt to get a handle on the Course is trying to boil it down to a simple formula. Every Course student is in search of that formula, and every Course teacher is supposed to supply it. There are many different formulas, of course, but the basic template is roughly the same. The formula must contain a few ideas that can ideally be compressed into a sentence or two.

This desire to simplify is an inherent tendency of the human mind, one that Jesus talked about. In guidance that led up to the *Song of Prayer* supplement (which can be found

in *Absence from Felicity*, by Ken Wapnick, pp. 445-446), he spoke of the process of formulating prayers, in which we condense a more general sense of need into the specific words of a prayer request. This, Jesus said, is an attempt “to limit, and by limiting, to make a vast area of experience more manageable.” Isn’t this what is driving our search for a simple formula for the Course—the need to “make a vast area of experience more manageable”?

Jesus then goes on to criticize this need in relation to prayer: “But that means manageable by *you*. For many aspects of living in this world that is necessary. But not for asking.” Could we perhaps add to this, “But not for *A Course in Miracles*”?

After all, while we are condensing the Course into “manageable” form, we are making an enormous number of subjective decisions about what to include and what to leave out. These, in turn, will inevitably be guided and influenced by the very unconscious biases the Course is trying to free us from. What are the odds that the formula thus produced will accurately reflect the Course?

As a result, boiling the Course down to a simple formula is not so different from seeing it in light of our preconceptions. The result of both is the same: We end up seeing in the Course what our own

biases and expectations have projected onto it. We see more the contents of our own minds than the Course itself.

The Circle’s approach

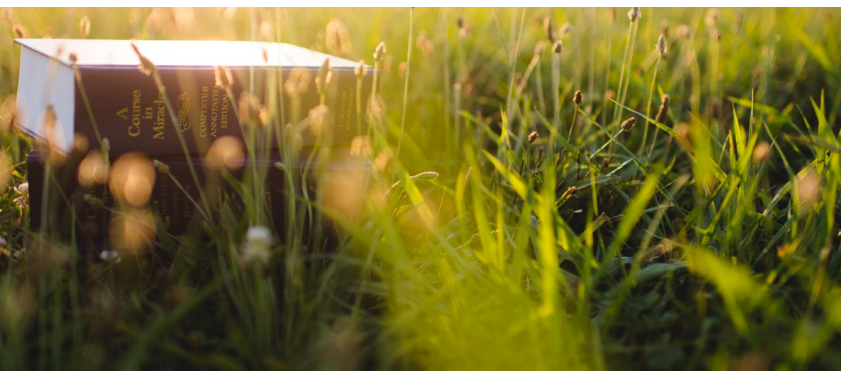
Our approach at the Circle is to do more or less the opposite of what I describe above. Rather than seeing in the Course what we have unconsciously projected onto it, we try to draw out and discern what the Course itself is really saying. With any book, you want to figure out what the author is trying to say. But how much more is this the case if you believe that the author is Jesus, if you accept the claim that “This course has come from him” (M-23.7:1)? At that point, wouldn’t you hang on his every word? Wouldn’t you want to set aside your old worldview and open your ears to his new message?

Our approach of drawing out its intended meaning can be captured in two points that are the counterparts to the ones I described above.

1. Setting aside our preconceptions and trying to carefully discern what he really means

When we talk to others, we are, of course, trying to get across a particular meaning, a meaning that we want the listener to understand. The same is true when Jesus speaks in the Course. He is trying to convey a specific meaning, which he wants us to understand.

I think there is a degree of collective denial about this. We often tell ourselves that the Course is meant to be open to each person’s interpretation, that it means whatever feels right to each of us. But that’s not how communication works, and that’s not how the Course talks about itself. One



of the sections in Chapter 3 describes itself as being “not open to more than one interpretation” (T-3.IV.7:2), and this attitude is reflected throughout the Course. Further, as we saw earlier, the Course is definitely concerned about us misinterpreting its words. Which brings us back to where we started: Jesus is conveying a specific meaning that he wants us to understand.

Our aim at the Circle, then, is to approach the interpretation of Jesus' words with the utmost care and respect, as if we are entering a holy temple. There is a particular meaning there, and our goal is to uncover it, as fully and accurately as possible. This involves an abundance of detailed work and methodology, but it is fundamentally no different than carefully listening to what the person in front of you is saying.

Yet if we are going to uncover Jesus' intended meaning, there is one more thing we need to do. We need to set aside our expectations—what we believe the Course *should* say and what we *want* it to say. We have to entertain the possibility that our preconceptions could be wrong and that our desires could lead us astray. How else can we be truly open to what Jesus is trying to say?

Speaking for myself, I try to take this openness into every sentence and paragraph and section I study. I must be open to the idea that what I saw before was *incorrect*, and I must be certain that what I saw before was *incomplete*. Without those assumptions, how could my understanding ever grow? Yet with those assumptions, my understanding of the Course undergoes constant growth and revision. The growth comes from investigating new themes and from understanding familiar themes and sections better. The revision is mostly in the small things but sometimes in the big things. In the last few years, for instance, I've gone through a major revision in my understanding of time.

If we are going to contact Jesus' intended meanings, this is the way we have to do it. We have to work hard at accurate interpretation, and we have to actively consider that what we have believed could be wrong.

2. Focusing on specific passages, not on sweeping generalities

The formula-based approach that I described earlier is all about generalities. In my experience, Course students and teachers talk mostly in generalities, and everyone has their favorite few. And then when questions arise, we consult those same generalities rather than the Course itself. For instance, I've been told by a number of teachers over the years that a holy relationship can't take two because that would go against some general principle in the Course. But there are *six chapters* on holy relationships in the Text. Shouldn't we just open the book and see what they say?

Our approach at the Circle is to focus first and foremost on the small scale.

Our approach at the Circle is less like a flyover and more like a mining expedition.

What does Jesus say in this key passage or in this relevant section? And then, only as we excavate those specific sites do we carefully extrapolate more general principles from there. The problem with jumping immediately to general principles is that the more general we get, the more subjective we're getting. With each level we go up from the words on the page, the more risk there is of our own distortions sneaking in. We do need to arrive at generalities—they're crucial—but we need to do so very carefully, making sure that they accurately reflect the evidence on the ground.

So often, I feel like Course students and teachers are gliding above the Course, talking in vague generalities, rarely touching down on the page. Our approach at the Circle is less like a flyover and more like a mining expedition. There is treasure in the Course, treasure like the world has never seen, but this treasure cannot be obtained by flying over the Course. You have to mine it; you have to dig into the words.

When we hear about using scholarly tools to mine the exact words of the Course, we naturally expect this to lead to arid analyses of abstruse metaphysical concepts. The flyover method looks more enticing, for we assume it gives us more room to make the Course practical, relevant, and

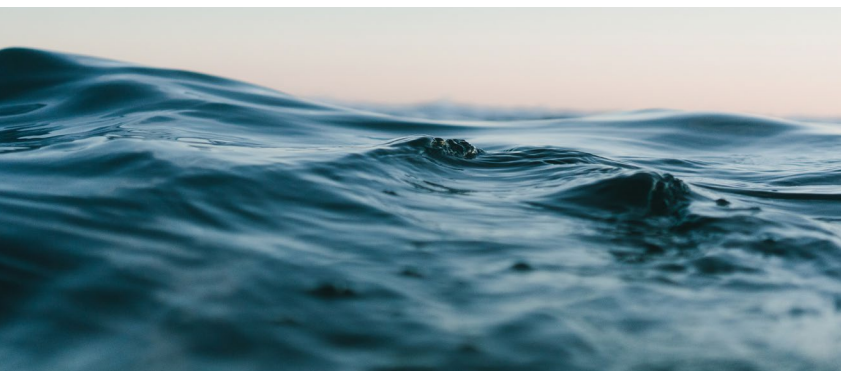
emotionally resonant. In my experience, though, the exact opposite is the case. Through the mining approach, the Course comes alive with practicality. It suddenly sparkles with insight into our minds and lives. Its beauty becomes more visible; its ability to move us more powerful. As I said above, the mining approach is what draws out the treasure.

What is the resulting picture of the Course?

The approach I have just outlined results in a dramatically different picture of *A Course in Miracles*. I cannot stress this enough. It produces not only different views on a long list of important teachings, it also yields a different understanding of the basic nature and character of the Course itself. I'll attempt to outline that different picture in the form of six points.

1. Rather than being about a few simple themes, the Course is an ocean of wisdom. It is incredibly rich and varied.

Though we typically talk about the Course in terms of a handful of simple themes, the Course itself is the opposite of that. There is an unseen wealth of meaning in each sentence. I've often said that I couldn't adequately draw out the meaning of a particular section without writing a small book. One reason for this is that there are so many themes interweaving with each other in every section. If, for instance, you track how many themes are in a given Text section (a theme being defined as a key term that repeats in the section), you will find that there are around fifty—just in that one section! They're there; we're just not seeing them. If there are fifty themes in one section,



imagine how many there are in the entire Course. The Course is truly oceanic. It's beyond the ability of the human mind to either devise or encompass. It's the opposite of our simple formulas.

2. The Course is constantly saying things that cut against the grain of both conventional Course wisdom and contemporary spiritual thought.

It is hard to overstate just how different the Course's teachings are from what we usually think. We tend to assume that it teaches exactly what Course teachers and students say it does. But it doesn't. A few years ago, I wrote an article on what I call "Course lore," ideas that Course students repeat so often that we all assume they are found in the Course itself, when in fact they are not. My list consisted of fifty items, including such familiar ideas as "The Course is a self-study course," "God is impersonal," "The Course is not about behavior," and "The miracle is just a shift in

perception." If you can find support for these ideas in the Course, you win the prize; I've never been able to find it.

We also tend to assume that the Course is teaching the same things as we read in contemporary spiritual teachings, such as those of Eckhart Tolle or Adyashanti. But again, it's not. Despite having many important points of agreement with contemporary spiritual teachings, on many basic issues, the Course goes its own way.

3. The Course is already practical. We don't need to make it practical.

We all know the Course is full of amazing ideas, but then we wonder how to apply them. In search of how to make the Course practical, we turn to any number of outside teachings and methods, or we devise our own ways to apply it. Yet all of this represents a fundamental misunderstanding of the Course, which says, "it is the practical with which this course is most concerned" (M-29.5:7). The Course provides extensive, explicit instruction in how to practice its ideas. Indeed, it has an entire *volume* devoted to this: the Workbook. And there are frequent practical instructions in the Text as well. The Course is quite aware that we don't think it's practical, but it claims—perhaps with some reason—that this is only because we don't do the practical things it tells us to do:

You may 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. This is not a course in the play of ideas, but in their practical application. (T-11.IX.4:1-3)

**We haven't understood
the true nature of any of
the volumes of the Course,
which is why we haven't
understood that it really is a
course.**

4. It is a genuine course.

The Course is not just the same simple message endlessly repeated. It really is a *course* that seeks to guide us through an educational process. The Text is like a series of lectures in a college course, with each “lecture” (section) presenting new ideas that build on what has gone before. The Workbook, in spite of how it’s often treated, is not a shorter Text. Its main purpose is not teaching but *practice*. It slowly guides us into a sophisticated structure of spiritual practice that we are meant to live within for the rest of our days. The Manual for Teachers is not just an FAQ; it is an actual teacher’s manual, meant to guide teachers of *A Course in Miracles* as they proceed on their journey and teach new students of the Course. We haven’t understood the true nature of any of the volumes of the Course, which is why we haven’t understood that it really is a course.

5. It is a spiritual path, not just a teaching.

We typically think of the Course as a teaching, a thought system. But it always refers to itself as a *course*; not a spiritual teaching, but a spiritual *path*. As such, for those whose path this is, it is meant to be both *long-term* and *exclusive*. Long-term, because a

path doesn’t get you to its lofty goal overnight. Exclusive, because a path is a *particular* route to a destination. Even if other paths arrive at the same destination, they are different ways to get there. You can’t walk two roads at once. That is why the Course says, “You are not making use of the course if you insist on using means that have served others well, neglecting what was made for *you*” (T-22.VII.8:1).

In order to make actual progress on this road, we have to undergo training. As Jesus says early on, “This course is a *mind-training course*” (T-3.I.1:2). Hence, we must do more than learn and discuss the ideas (however crucial that is); we must also submit ourselves to the training. *A Course in Miracles* is more than a book to read; it is a path to walk.

6. It is a way of life.

It is only recently that I have begun to call the Course a way of life, yet when you think about the extent to which the Course wants to govern our lives, I think the term is perfectly appropriate. Once we enter fully into its way, we get up in the morning, read our scripture (*A Course in Miracles*), and use meditation to establish our day in a state of peace. We then pause for a few moments every hour to renew our peace. We reinforce that peace still further by repeating a spiritual thought during the hour. We repeat that same thought to restore our peace whenever it has been disturbed. And we end our day of peace with a final quiet time spent with God.

This different way of conducting our inner life spills over into a different way of conducting our outer lives. Throughout the day, we turn to the Holy Spirit for guidance on even seemingly small decisions. That guidance tells us to devote our



behavior not to getting for ourselves, but to giving miracles (expressions of love) to others. As we grow in this way of life, our days are filled with holy encounters. We slowly join with others in holy relationships, in which both individuals are united in a common purpose. Through all this, we gradually discover our special function—our life purpose—through which we make our unique contribution to the world's salvation.

True, this way of life has few outer trappings. Yet a “way of life” is simply “the manner in which a person lives” (Cambridge Dictionary). If there is a way that, through various practices and habits, governs your mental life, your behavior, your decisions, your relationships, and your purpose, what else could you call it but a way of life? *A Course in Miracles*, then, is indeed a way of life.

This is the Course the world needs

I realize this sounds daunting. An ocean of wisdom? A way of life? This is more than we bargained for. In a quick-fix culture in which everyone is selling us total transformation in five minutes, that's what we want. Yet that is not what we *need*. The real job of transformation is a multifaceted, lifelong affair. For this job, we don't need a little bathtub whose water is never changed. We need a bottomless ocean of great depth, power, and majesty, whose waters we can endlessly swim in and explore, and whose bounty can forever sustain us.

If this is the *Course in Miracles* we need, it is also the one the world needs. Surely that is where the Course is headed—to the world. Do we really think Jesus would dictate over a thousand pages of groundbreaking wisdom for just a few? How can the man who transformed Western civilization not have his eye on the whole world?

Jesus addressed this question in guidance that Helen Schucman received on December 31, 1975 (the same guidance that Emily quoted at the beginning of her piece). Referring to the Course, he said, “It will grow from infancy into a helper of the world.” He said that he will be the one guiding this process: “I will direct its growth.” But the key to this growth, he said, is for the Course's life to develop purely, with “no misunderstanding and misinterpretation.” It is destined for the world, but it must reach the world in its true form. To wash up on every shore, it must do so as the ocean it really is.

**The Course is truly oceanic.
It's beyond the ability of
the human mind to either
devise or encompass. It's
the opposite of our simple
formulas.**

Our Purpose & Values

As part of the Circle's recent visioning process, we have developed a new purpose statement and organizational values. Sincere thank you to our wonderful consultant Patricia Moore, the Circle's Board of Directors, and Robert and Emily, for their work on this project. We consider the following purpose and values to be a sacred trust entered into by all board members, staff, teachers, volunteers, and contractors so that, together, we may build a home for the Course that reflects its highest ideals.

Our Purpose

We believe *A Course in Miracles* came to give the world an incomparable gift. We are here to extend that gift as faithfully as possible, to help it reach "from the paper on which it was written into the hearts for which it was intended," so those hearts can, in turn, light the world.

Our Values

Faithful Interpretation of *A Course in Miracles*

We consider our foundation to be the faithful interpretation *A Course in Miracles*. We are committed to the Course itself as the authority and we seek to represent its meaning to the best of our ability. We attempt to adhere to the words on the page without bias or personal preference as we seek an ever-deepening understanding of Jesus' teachings.

Service to a Higher Calling

We serve a sacred calling, which provides the basis for the way we conduct operations. The business dimension of our organization is secondary to this higher calling and is considered purely a means to its accomplishment.

Sincere Care for the Spiritual Development of Those We Serve

We facilitate the spiritual growth of students in their study, practice, and extension of *A Course in Miracles*. As a student-focused organization, we treat their progress as our own and act out of love and genuine care for those who come to us for help on their journey with the Course.

Guided Decision-Making

We are a guidance-based organization. We are committed to seeking and following God's will in all aspects of operations, and we make this process central to our planning and decision-making. Recognizing that we are imperfect channels, we exercise careful discernment of the guidance we receive.

Application and Demonstration of Course Principles

We aspire to live the teachings of *A Course in Miracles*. We are serious about our personal study, practice, and extension of this path. We endeavor to demonstrate Course principles in all our actions and relationships. We strive to view every interaction as a holy encounter, an opportunity to show love, respect, and forgiveness.

Responsible and Wise Stewardship

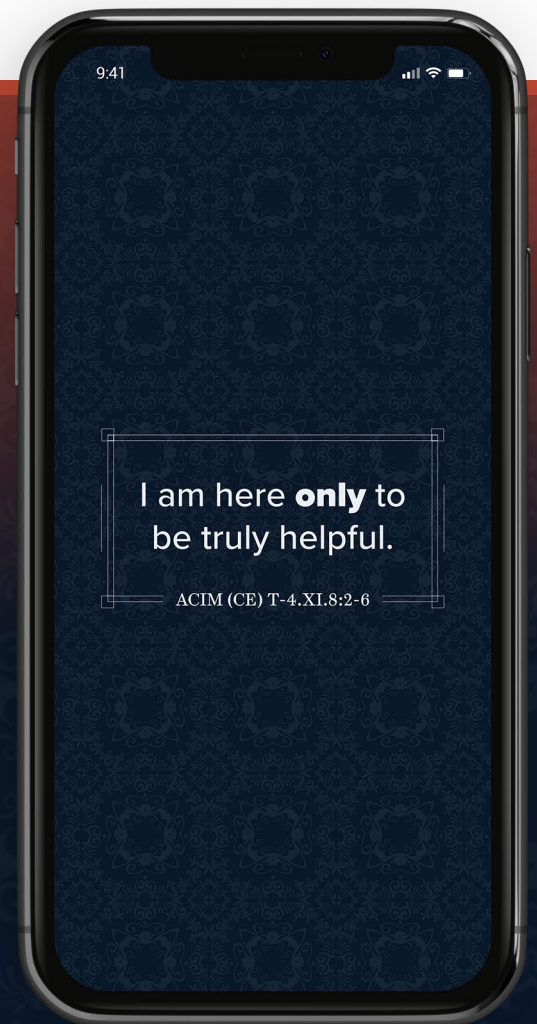
We are committed to being loving and accountable guardians of all aspects of Circle operations. We strive to maintain a high standard of excellence in our programs and services. It is our intention to be wise and responsible stewards, and to always act with integrity and honesty.

ACIM STARTER KIT

Join our mailing list to receive our free *Course in Miracles* Starter Kit that includes an ACIM Practice Pyramid, Truly Helpful Prayer screensavers for your phone and desktop, and more.

DOWNLOAD ↓

<https://circleofa.org/subscribe/>



Meet Our Board Members

Rick Baker

What initially drew you to the Circle of Atonement?

I encountered the Course in 1994, and quickly knew that it was for me. I wanted to talk with others about these mind-boggling concepts. So, I searched online (primitive in those days) and in local study groups for several years until I found the Circle. Their writings seemed to be fundamentally different than others I had seen. Explanations were consistently very thorough, but most importantly they were dug out of the Course itself! Rather than opinion or someone's perceptual filter, clarity came from a thorough examination of context and references elsewhere in the volumes. It all fit together so beautifully! But examining all the source material in that way isn't an easy task. With the Circle, someone had already done it – and far better than I ever could have. Only someone with deep experience and encyclopedic knowledge of the full Course could provide that analysis and perspective, and I found that at the Circle with Robert Perry. I stopped looking elsewhere.



What about the Circle's vision for the future makes you feel moved to be a part of it?

A foundational belief is that there are many seekers for whom the Course has answers. Like myself and so many others, people “find” the Course, begin to wrestle with it, and eventually look for help and a community with which to share the journey. The Circle can provide both of those, and now has capability on a larger scale to help realize the vision that the Course move “from the paper on which it was written into the hearts for which it was intended”. People are open, eager and motivated, and the Circle provides what many are searching for in their journeys with this priceless work.

Can you share your favorite Course quote?

No single quote comes to mind, and for me this shifts over time. The quotes that come up right now are mostly in the category of the “problem solving repertoire” as described in Lesson 194. For

instance, if I awake in the night with troubles churning, I repeat: “My mind holds only what I think with God,” and I remind myself that this is not an aspiration or a goal, but simply a fact. So those apparent worries are not even there, God’s thoughts are! I can decide to set my trouble thoughts aside with comfort and assurance, find peace in what’s really in my mind, and go back to sleep. In waking hours, as I encounter unforgiveness within myself, I go to one of the many forgiveness statements: “forgive, and you will see this differently”, or “forgiveness is my function as the light of the world”. These direct me to the fundamental question of what forgiveness means in whatever situation I am facing.

Mary Anne Buchowski

What initially drew you to the Circle of Atonement?

I was drawn to the Circle before there was a Circle! I was first exposed to Robert’s teaching in 1989 and then again in 1991, and I was impressed with his love for Jesus and his teachings as given in the Course and by his solid, thoughtful approach to them. The teachings came alive for me through Robert’s teaching. In 1992, I had a deep sense of calling to join with Robert in Jesus’ work. The Course was having such a transformative power in my life, and it was natural for me to want to learn it better and to share it.

I was part of Circle’s official opening in 1993, and in 1999 I moved to Sedona to begin my work there. I spent several years fulfilling administrative, programming, and teaching duties, while being trained as a teacher and mentored by Robert. I moved back to Ottawa, Canada in 2004, and since then I have continued to teach from my home here. What has always drawn me and kept me here at the Circle has been Robert’s (and hence the Circle’s) commitment to sharing the Course in as faithful a way as possible, the belief that we are here to fulfill a holy function with Jesus’ teachings, and my desire to join in fulfilling that function.

What about the Circle’s vision for the future makes you feel moved to be a part of it?

I have always been on a quest for finding a better way and helping people find it too. How could I not want to be part of a ministry with the vision of bringing the powerful gift of the Course more and more into the world, reaching out to “the hearts and minds for which it was intended”? The world is changing in so many ways, and people are looking—and will be looking—for something to hold on to. Something to give them hope in this crazy world. I believe that the Course holds out that hope by offering a vision of a different world and a different



way of relating to one another in that world. The Circle through its programs and activities—and the people involved—offers practical and loving help to Course students navigating their way through the world and learning to live the vision of a more loving, caring, and kind world—and to join with others in doing that.

Can you share your favorite Course quote?

These two reflect how I want to live and *try* to live:

Teach not that I died in vain. Teach rather that I did not die by demonstrating that I live in you. (T-11.VII.8:3-4)

Your mission is very simple: You have been chosen to live so as to demonstrate that you are not an ego. (T-4. VIII.14:2)

Like Helen, I tend to place my faith in disaster (T-16.II.9:4), and this quote always provides me with a helpful “reality check”!

Today, let us resolve together to accept the joyful tidings that disaster is not real, and that reality is not disaster. Reality is safe and sure and wholly kind to everyone and everything. (T-16.II.9:5-6)

I love the beauty of these words. What a reminder:

God keeps His promises, His Son keeps his. In his creation did His Father say, “You are beloved of Me and I of you forever. Be you perfect as Myself, for you can never be apart from me.” His Son remembers not that he replied, “I will,” though in that promise was he born. (T-18.VI.6:1-4)

I always chuckle at the first sentence in this one and find welcome relief in it:

The self you made, evil and full of sin, is meaningless. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God, and light and joy and peace abide in you. (Lesson 93.6:6-7).

Bob Simpson

What initially drew you to the Circle of Atonement?

Emily and I were colleagues at an accounting firm and worked together well on a number of projects. I retired to teach accounting at Marshall University and I invited Emily to speak to students—at first just my classes, and then later *all* students—because her message so powerfully resonated with young people finding their way in life and in their careers. At dinner one night after class we discovered we were both Course students. We kept in touch and when she joined the Circle as executive director I was close behind.



What about the Circle's vision for the future makes you feel moved to be a part of it?

Very simply, the Course is just what we all need right now—more than ever. And the Circle is focused on communicating the message of the Course as widely and faithfully as possible.

Can you share your favorite Course quote?

There are just so many to choose from, but I have a great interest in the application of the Course, and this passage is very powerful for me (it is in the form of an affirmation—p. 193)

I am here **only** to be truly helpful.

I am here to represent Him who sent me.

I do not have to worry about what to say or what to do,
because He Who sent me will direct me.

I am content to be wherever He wishes, knowing He goes there
with me.

I will be healed as I let Him teach me to heal.

Mark De Bruijn

What initially drew you to the Circle of Atonement?

I first heard about *A Course in Miracles* around 1983 from growing numbers of visitors to the spiritual community I was living in at the time. I decided to purchase the book (at that time the FIP) to find out what all the fuss was about, but was totally turned off by the Christian-sounding language. I put it aside on my bookshelf for the next 30 years.

By that time, I had matured enough and had gone through enough life struggles to finally open up sufficiently to begin truly hearing the Course's message and was deeply struck by its depth, its irrefutable logic and its consistent and completely integrated wisdom.

About a year later an old friend and a Course Companion introduced me to the new CE version of the text. I could immediately tell the big difference between it and the FIP. Even though the FIP was one of the finest spiritual writings I had ever encountered, I quickly experienced how the CE takes that another huge step forward. For me, there's simply no spiritual material more clear or compelling.



Having longed for spiritual clarity for most of my life, I was thrilled with the CE. Soon I learned about its primary editor, Robert Perry, and the Circle of Atonement organization that sought to bring this amazing material to the world. In 2018, I met Robert and the Circle in Sedona, and sensed an immediate brotherhood which persists to this day.

What about the Circle's vision for the future makes you feel moved to be a part of it?

The world as we've known it for many generations is in an enormous state of flux. The current pandemic, and even more so the coming climate catastrophe, will give humanity an opportunity to utterly transform how we experience our world. As these profound changes sweep through all our lives, there will be no physical "new world" to which we can escape to pioneer a new way of life. Instead, more and more of us the world over are hearing and feeling a deep call rising from within ourselves to discover a new world within our own minds. Learning to recognize this call and how to respond to it, for me is the only way forward for humanity. And it is this to which the Circle's vision is directed. I feel an inexorable urge to be part of this, to heal myself by helping my fellows as together we awaken from the nightmare we've all known, and discover the truth of ourselves. This is the Circle's lofty and irresistible vision, as it is mine.

Can you share your favorite Course quote?

Wow, what a question! There are so many, virtually on every page of the text! However, in times of confusion and losing my way, there are a few standouts that can be very helpful in calming my racing mind and restoring a vision of true purpose. Perhaps the main one is "I am still as God created me." A few of others: "There is no order of difficulty in miracles," "There is no peace except the peace of God," "Let me be still a moment and go home," "Forgiveness is the key to happiness," "I will but to remember You (God)," and "Let me remember what my purpose is."

“Where darkness was I look upon the light.”

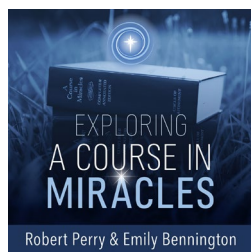
(Workbook Lesson 302)

Look Upon the Light: A Celebration of Good News

Text Gatherings Offer Support Through COVID-19

In response to the coronavirus pandemic, Robert and Emily have been offering Text discussions over Zoom every weekday morning for approximately 10 weeks beginning in March. These Gatherings are free and open to the public as a way to draw strength from the Course and from each other during a very difficult time. Following the Circle’s Text reading calendar, the Gatherings have become very popular – so much so that the group has started meeting on Saturdays without Robert and Emily to keep the connection and stay on schedule. THANK YOU to everyone who has participated in the Text Gatherings. Replays of the weekday Text Gatherings can be found at www.circleofa.org/textgathering.





13K+ Downloads of *Exploring A Course in Miracles* and Counting

Thank you to all who are listening to our podcast! We have recently passed a milestone of 13,000 downloads and could not be more delighted that so many of you are enjoying the one-hour deep dive by Robert and Emily into a wide variety of Course-related topics. New episodes of *Exploring A Course in Miracles* are released every other Monday and you can listen at circleofa.org/podcast or on iTunes.



Cindy Lantier Promoted to Customer Care Manager!

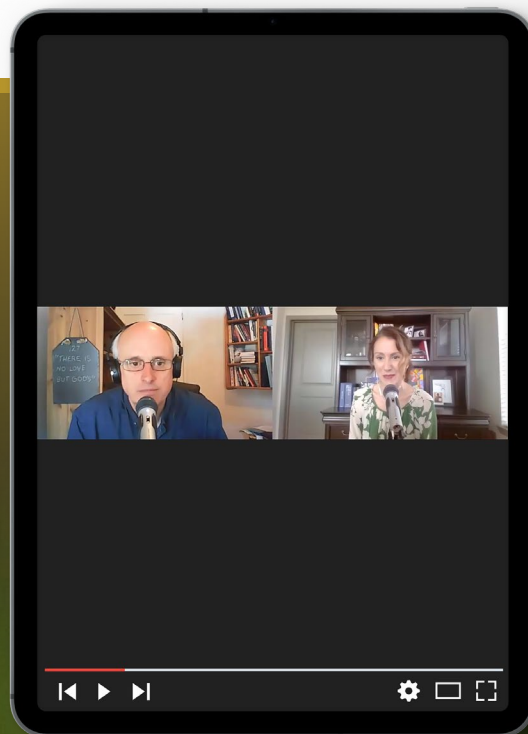
Cindy Lantier was recently promoted to Customer Care Manager! Cindy's devotion to her work here at the Circle and to our Course Companions is evident in everything she does. She is an absolute light, and this recognition is 100% deserved. We love you, Cindy!

FREE WEBINAR

UNCOVERING HIDDEN TREASURES IN *A COURSE IN MIRACLES*

In this free webinar you will:

- Discover a series of new and important teachings that have been edited out of previous versions of the Course.
- View hidden gems from the pages of Helen Schucman's handwritten notes.
- Learn how *A Course in Miracles* was originally edited and what's different about the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE)



**New teachings from the
Complete and Annotated
Edition**

WATCH NOW ↓

circleofa.org/notes

Course Companions News

What is Course Companions?

If you would like to begin or recommit to a Course practice, we would love to support your journey in our Course Companions online learning community. As a member of Course Companions, you will receive:

- Text, Workbook, and/or Manual commentaries written by Robert Perry delivered to your inbox each morning by 5:30am local time.
- A reading plan that will walk you through the Text in one year, reading just 2-3 pages per day.
- Access to a beautiful membership site where all of your commentaries, class recordings, and handouts are stored in one place for easy reference.
- Weekly Workbook and Text classes led by Robert Perry and Emily Bennington, offered on Tuesdays and Wednesdays respectively at 11am Eastern.
- A private Facebook group where you can interact with fellow Course Companions in a loving and safe space.
- Sunday Gatherings where we join together for a time of Course-based practice, prayer, meditation and discussion. Gatherings are held on the 2nd and 4th Sunday of each month from 11 a.m. – 12 p.m. Eastern.

To become a member of Course Companions, please visit CourseCompanions.com.

Please note that no one is turned away from Course Companions for an inability to pay. For information on partial or full scholarships, email support@coursecompanions.com.



Member Profile: Nicole Sirois

1. How did you find *A Course in Miracles*?

I was always interested in religion, even as a child. After growing up in the Episcopal church, I started looking elsewhere, which led me to an institution right down the road where I lived in Virginia Beach, the Association for Research and Enlightenment, founded by Edgar Cayce. I studied all his spiritual teachings and learned that I had an affinity for tapping into past lives. (This was only helpful twice. Most of it was a waste of time.) I then discovered a like-minded church when I moved to Houston: Unity Church. My husband and I checked out an ACIM study group at Unity one Wednesday evening. That was in 1986. The start of my journey. (I only discovered much later the deep connection between the A.R.E. and ACIM.)

2. How has Course Companions changed your experience of the Course?

As mentioned, I have studied ACIM for 34 years, including a year-long intensive Teachers Training course in 1991 taught by Judy Allen. I had taken a

bit of a hiatus over the last eight years, believing it was “my way,” yet something was missing....I believed it, yet felt empty.

I only recently remembered how I stumbled on the CE; my voice told me to go online and check out what was happening with ACIM. I almost didn't listen, what new could possibly happen with this 40-year-old book? I googled and searched, something caught my eye. I had read articles written by Robert Perry before; had taken classes with his old partner Allen Watson, so I decided to give the CE a try. I signed up for Course Companions and started to use Robert's study guide, listening to his weekly classes. I chose the Workbook in 2018, the Text in 2019.

ACIM went from being a philosophy I believed in and thought was supposed to only affect my inner world, to a challenging new way of life, with all new priorities. It has been, at different times miraculous, frustrating, challenging, joyful, and downright scary. I am changing. My goal is slowly changing from having more happiness, friendships, success, abundance, and better relationships in my life, to a new goal. My goal now is to see every single person as a holy, perfect Son of God (no matter what my eyes and ears tell me) who deserves only my love, gratitude and forgiveness. And to listen to what the Holy Spirit tells me to do every minute I remember to do so. The journey is just beginning.

3. What advice would you give a new student of the Course?

To new students: Understand that for most of us, this will be a very long, long, journey. I remember thinking, when I was first into Unity and the Course, that enlightenment was probably about 5 years away! Not that it can't be. Also, try not to get sidetracked by questions like “Are we even supposed to forgive Hitler?” “Why did I choose to separate?” “Is there a devil?” “Why do bad things happen to kids?” And so on. The best time you can spend is focused on either practicing forgiveness or learning to hear the Holy Spirit's guidance better. The Course teaches you how to do both. Robert and the CE explain it so beautifully and simply and bring it down to earth.

Thank You Companions!

Gratitude from one of our members

As a member of the Course Companions online Facebook community and a longtime student of Robert Perry, I've learned the lessons of generosity and compassion—and the miracle of love. Following a painful divorce and return home to a very simple lifestyle, a GoFundMe Page was started in my name and approximately \$500 was raised on my behalf as I courted illness, poverty, and garden-variety madness.

As difficult as asking for and receiving such help can be, the fundraiser humbled me and created an opening in the steel trap of my ego and the rusted armor of my pride. An opening just big enough for me to become receptive to abundance for the first time in a long while after playing the rugged individualist for decades.

Funny thing, not long after the generosity of the Course Companions Community, a group of people from my past gathered and a benefactor made a significantly generous donation as well. I am paying it forward in many ways, namely by starting a spiritual direction practice and continuing training towards certification in that profession.

Thank you to all of you for sharing this path with me and for all the love and generosity you have expressed.

“The hush of Heaven holds my heart today.”

-Anonymous Member



Neda Boin Joins Sunday Gatherings!

Huge thanks to Neda Boin for sharing her beautiful voice with us during two of our recent Sunday Gatherings. She sang “*The Light Has Come*” and “*I Rest in God*” for us. Both songs can be found on her album, *The Light Has Come*. There is something so joyous about coming together on a Sunday and Neda’s singing amplified that joy immeasurably. We were blessed to have her share her gift with us and look forward to more opportunities to come together.

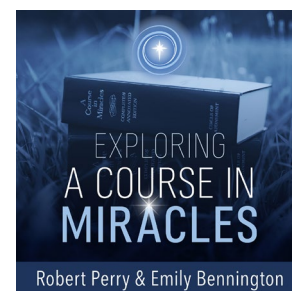


Exploring A Course in Miracles Highlights

Exploring A Course in Miracles is our biweekly podcast that brings you in-depth conversations on Course topics from Circle Founder, Robert Perry, and Executive Director, Emily Bennington. Each episode features a complementary discussion guide as a resource to deepen your experience of the podcast and the Course principles referenced. The following is the discussion guide from a recent podcast called “Where Can I Go for Protection?” which seems

fitting to share in these times of great uncertainty. To listen to this episode, please visit circleofa.org/19.

We perhaps do not associate the theme of protection with the Course, but it's in there. There are 237 references to it, which means it's a huge topic, with many facets to it. The Course does, in other words, talk about how we can find real protection.



What does it say? In simplest terms, it says something like this:

You constantly strive to protect yourself, but it doesn't work and you don't need to protect yourself. God is your real protection, in body, mind, and spirit. However, you need to accept His protection before it can truly dawn upon your mind and become active in your experience. You do that by protecting your mind (from fear and anger), by following His guidance, and by extending a sense of safety and protection to others (by giving them miracles).

What follows is this same picture in more detail:

You constantly strive to protect yourself

You think you are a weak, vulnerable body, and so you must figure out the rules that, if obeyed, will protect you. Then you make constant plans for this protection. You also attack for the sake of this same protection. These defenses, however, do not work. But that's all right, because you don't need them; you aren't in danger. Recognize this and they'll disappear, and then you'll accept your real protection.

You still have too much faith in the body as a source of strength. What plans do you make that do not involve its comfort or protection or enjoyment in some way? (T-22. VII.1:1-2)

You operate from the belief you must protect yourself from what is happening, because it must contain what threatens you. A sense of threat is an acknowledgment of an inherent weakness, a belief that there is danger which has power to call on you to make appropriate defense. (W-135.2:2-3)

[Psychotherapy's] whole function, in the end, is to help the patient deal with one fundamental error; the belief that...by justifying attack he is protecting himself. (P-2.In.1:5)

You must question your ideas about your protection

You need to open your mind about where real protection comes from. Fear has gripped your mind so strongly that you won't relinquish your ideas about what protects you. But you must. You need to consciously and genuinely ask, "Where can I go for protection?"

Being told by the ego that it is really part of the body and that the body is its protector, it is also constantly informed that the body cannot protect it. This, of course, is not only true, but perfectly obvious.

Therefore, the mind asks, "Where can I go for protection?," to which the ego replies, "Turn to me." The mind, and not without cause, reminds the ego that it has itself insisted that it is identified with the body, so there is no point in turning to it for protection. The ego has no real answer to this, because there isn't any, but it does have a typical solution. It obliterates the question from the mind's awareness. Once unconscious, it can and does produce uneasiness, but it cannot

**God is your real protection,
in body, mind, and spirit.**

be answered because it cannot be asked.

This is the question which *must* be asked: "Where can I go for protection?" Only an insane mind fails to ask it. Even the insane ask it unconsciously, but it requires real sanity to ask it consciously. (T-4.VII.5:-7:3)

God's protection is the real source of your safety

God is the real Source of your protection. You are protected by God in all things. This is because of His care for you and His love for you, because He is always with you and because you are one with Him.

You are a ray of light in God's Mind, protected and sustained by His being. (T-10.II.4:1)

Only the love of God will protect you in all circumstances. (W-50.2:3)

My Father supports me, protects me, and directs me in all things. (W-58.5:6)

Today we will not doubt His love for us, nor question His protection and His care. (W-124.3:1)

The thought of God protects you, cares for you, makes soft your resting place and smooth your way, lighting your mind with happiness and love. (W-165.2:6)

God's protection is always there, but you must choose to accept it and feel it

Though His protection is always there, you need to accept it and then it will dawn on you and you will feel it. You will feel peace flowing over you like a blanket of protection. You will feel covered with soft protection. You will

feel safety surrounding you, hovering over you, and holding you up. You will know the warmth of sure protection always. Once God's protection dawns on you, you will no longer see the need to protect yourself.

Allow peace to flow over you like a blanket of protection and surety. (W-50.4:2)

And we will feel salvation cover us with soft protection and with peace so deep that no illusion can disturb our minds. (W-140.12:4)

I need but accept my Self, my sinlessness, created for me, now already mine, to feel God's love protecting me from harm. (W-337.1:6)

[Think] of yourself as completely at peace with everyone and everything, safe in a world which protects you and loves you and which you love in return. Try to feel safety surrounding you, hovering over you, and holding you up. (W-68.8:1-2)

**Though His protection is
always there, you need to
accept it and then it will
dawn on you and you will
feel it.**

To accept your real protection is to realize you don't need to protect yourself

When you protect your ego and body yourself, you are assuming that you can be hurt. When you no longer see the need to protect yourself, the protection of God will dawn upon you. Conversely, when you experience the protection of God, you will no longer try to protect yourself.

The truly helpful are invulnerable, because they are not protecting their egos, so that nothing can hurt them. (T-4.X.10:3)

You think you made a power that can save you from all the fearful things you see in dreams. It is not so. Your safety lies not there. What you give up is merely the illusion of protecting illusions....Your defenses will not work, but you are not in danger. You have no need of them. Recognize this and they will disappear. And only then will you accept your real protection. (M-16.6:4-7, 11-14)

How simply and how easily does time slip by for the teacher of God who has accepted his protection! All that he did before in the name of safety no longer interests him, for he is safe, and knows it to be so. (M-16.7:1-2)

You need to protect your mind

Above all, you need to protect your mind. You do this through your practice. You need to refuse to value worldly things, which merely lays chains upon your mind. You need to deny that anything that is not of God can affect you. You need to think about and feel the protection that comes from God. Throughout the day, you need to protect yourself from temptation and stay in touch with the ideas that are your real protection.

Consider how much vigilance you have been willing to exert to protect your ego, and how little you have been willing to expend to protect your higher mind! (T-4.V.17:3)

Protect your mind throughout the day as well. (W-128.8:1)

Yet will there be temptation along the way the teacher of God has yet to travel, and he has need of reminding himself throughout the day of his protection. (M-16.8:1)

It is only your awareness that needs protection, because your being cannot be assailed. (T-6.VII.C.10:4)

Turn to His guidance; it will protect you

Your present trust in the Holy Spirit and His guidance is the way to ensure a safe future. If you follow the right involuntary Guide, you will be told how to avoid both physical and spiritual dangers. This is why you need be anxious over nothing, because He will tell you what to do, where to go, and what to say, and His guidance will lead to safety. Along these same lines, Jesus asks you to entrust your body and ego to him. Your ego has had the function of protecting them, but Jesus is asking

**Above all, you need to
protect your mind. You do
this through your practice.**

you to turn this function over to him instead. He will protect your body and ego if you follow his guidance.

Your present trust in Him is the defense which promises a future undisturbed, without a trace of sorrow, and with joy which constantly increases, as this life becomes a holy instant, set in time but heeding only immortality. (W-135.20:1)

Your healing Voice protects all things today, and so I leave all things to You. I need be anxious over nothing. For Your Voice will tell me what to do and where to go, to whom to speak and what to say to him, what thoughts to think, what words to give the world. (W-275.2:1-3)

The reason why I can be entrusted with your body and your ego is simply because this enables *you* not to be concerned with them, and *me* to teach you their unimportance. (T-4.II.24:1)

Following the right involuntary Guide will enable you to recognize both physical *and* spiritual dangers, and will provide the means for avoiding each of them in the most efficient way. (T-1.21.2:2)

If (by extending miracles) you make others feel safe, your own safety will dawn upon you

Your safety comes from making others feel safe. You do this by being harmless. You do it by forgiving them for what they have done (so they don't fear retribution). You do it by generally being a channel of God's protection for them. This will cause His protection to dawn upon your mind. Now that you are one of God's ministers, who could be more mightily protected?

Your only real safety lies in extending only the Holy Spirit, because as you see His gentleness in others, your own mind perceives itself as totally harmless. Once it can accept this fully, it does not see the need to protect itself. The protection of God can then dawn upon it, assuring it that it is perfectly safe forever. (T-6.IV.5:4-6)

God is praised whenever any mind learns to be wholly helpful. This is impossible without being wholly harmless, because the two beliefs must coexist. The truly helpful are invulnerable, because they are not protecting their egos, so that nothing can hurt them. (T-4.X.10:1-3)

The safety that I bring is given me. Father, Your Voice protects all things through me. (W-275.2:4-5)

What really protects your body is viewing it as a neutral instrument in God's plan

The best protection for the body is to see it as being quite apart from you, as being merely neutral, with no power to make you feel things, so that only its usefulness remains. This will make it a healthy, serviceable instrument and will leave it free to help in a plan that far exceeds its own protection.

**Your safety comes from
making others feel safe.**

The “self” that needs protection is not real. The body, valueless and hardly worth the least defense, need merely be perceived as quite apart from you, and it becomes a healthy, serviceable instrument through which the mind can operate until its usefulness is over. (W-135.9:1-2)

[The body’s] neutrality protects it while it has a use. (W-294.1:6)

Protect the things you value by giving them away

You can protect the resources you value by giving them away in true generosity. This makes it certain that you will never lose them.

Protect all things you value by the act of giving them away, and you are sure that you will never lose them. (W-187.4:1)

For more guides and episodes of *Exploring A Course in Miracles*, please visit circleofa.org/podcast or listen on iTunes.

**You can protect the
resources you value by
giving them away in true
generosity.**



Q & A

What is Q & A?

Our Q&A section provides a place for questions about the Course. Is there a particular part of the Text which you find confusing? Are you looking for clarity on certain aspects of the Course's thought system? Are you seeking more clarification on Course-based practice and application? Please send your questions to janet@circleofa.org and Robert will answer them here as space allows. Note: If your question is printed, we will list your first name and last initial unless you specifically request otherwise.

Jackie H.

I struggled this morning with the section “The Question of Karma” (T-5.VII), especially where he speaks about delving into childhood experiences. When I started exploring ACIM 6 years ago, I ended all 12-step programs and counseling. I did okay but I think I used it as a spiritual bypass—just think good thoughts, this world isn’t real, nothing is real, etc. Since studying with you the last 2 years, I have a deeper understanding of what the Course is about and my life has changed on a very, very deep level, and continues to do so daily. But I still struggled with old behaviors and ideas. So I went back to therapy and to a 12-step program: Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA). I did have a traumatic childhood which resulted in much dysfunctional thinking and behavior as well as PTSD. So much is being undone as a result of the marriage of ACIM and ACA. I’m exploring my childhood wounds with the intent of seeing where some of my behaviors and thoughts come from. But having read this morning where Jesus challenges looking at the past, I don’t know if I’m being led to embrace the Course and nothing else.

Answer: Thanks for writing. That’s a really good question. As you may have heard me mention, I have been surprised by how strongly Jesus comes out against the “historical approach.”

I think you can still derive value from delving into childhood experiences, but just add additional ideas to the story you tell yourself. Rather than thinking that you had “a traumatic childhood which resulted in much dysfunctional thinking and behavior,” you can think “I had certain experiences that I chose to internalize as true statements about me. That was understandable, given how small I was. But as I matured and grew stronger, I still chose to believe in

those statements about me. And I did it because I wanted to make those people guilty, to send them the message ‘Behold me, brother, at your hand I die.’ However, I don’t have to accept those statements about me anymore. I chose to accept them in the past and I can choose to completely discard them now. And when I do, I will internalize and know the liberating fact that no one ever hurt me.”

In this view, those childhood experiences do correspond to the ensuing trauma and dysfunctional thinking and behavior, but the experiences were not *themselves* the cause. The real cause was an invisible factor in between: your decision to *internalize* the experiences, and then to keep internalizing them even as you became an adult.

This view can be a tough pill to swallow (although you are steeped enough in the Course that it may not be so hard for you), but it has the

advantages of a) putting the power entirely in your hands and b) affirming that no one ever hurt you. Those are huge advantages.

I did a class several weeks ago on “The Essential Goal of Therapy” (T-3. VIII), which teaches this view, and I experienced a real miracle in it. There was an experience I was hurting over (in my adult life), where I felt injured at the hands of others, and doing that class and going through the exercises just removed the hurt. I realized and truly felt that no one had hurt me, which meant that they were innocent and I was uninjured. Admitting that I had done it to myself seemed like a small price to pay to be free of the hurt. That is the gift of this point of view—freedom from the hurt.

I hope this helps you with your conundrum, so that you can retain something of the childhood exploration that has helped you, while doing so in a way that is in keeping with the Course.

Molly D.

Is the ego the same in each of us?

Answer: Yes and no. It’s true that we each have our own individual ego. The Course says, “Each person makes one ego for himself, although it is subject to enormous variation because of its instability” (T-4.III.2:1). This is why the Course so often speaks of “egos” in the plural. For instance, it says the ego “always evaluates itself in relation to other egos” (T-4.IV.1:5).

So we all have our own ego. It varies and it’s unstable, but it’s unique to us.

That being said, each ego is made of basically the same cloth. The ego’s fundamental ways are strikingly consistent from person to person. If you read the Course’s discussion

of special relationships, for instance, they sound applicable to everyone. Likewise, the Course’s description of the “face of innocence”—a picture of ourselves in which we are always the good guy trying to make our way through a hard world—fits the self-image of virtually everyone alive. When you step back far enough, it’s remarkable just how similar all our egos are.

The reason for this is that each ego carries the same basic thought system. The idea that we are separate from God—alone and on our own, that we want to feel better than others, that we have to attack to survive and get ahead, that we are required to feel

guilty for our attacks, and that we should fear all our chickens coming home to roost—these are foundational premises that every ego believes in.

It's as if we have all bought the same software program, and we're all running it on the computer of our minds. Yet once we installed the program, we all then customized it. This accounts for the differences between egos. For instance, in the Course's original dictation, Jesus often stressed the differences between Helen's and Bill's egos. Helen's main defense was dissociation, while Bill's was repression.

Helen bounced back and forth between different goals, while Bill stepped back from all goals. Helen had an almost superhuman will that she funneled into the wrong things, while Bill had virtually disowned his will altogether. They had the same ego software, they had just customized it.

In summary, then, we all bought our own individual copy of the ego's software and then we customized that software so that it operates somewhat differently on our various computers. The ego is the same in all of us, yet also different.

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**During quarantine,
when the whole
family is at home, this
is a touchstone each
weekday.**

Just wanted to thank you for the excellent newsletter/magazine *A Better Way*. This is sooooo helpful. It gives tremendous clarity and is extremely motivating. Excellently written, super inspiring. I also appreciate your podcasts and other input including all the material on your website.

Irma H.

I wanted to express my heartfelt thanks for the weekday Text Gatherings. Each day, I read and spend time with the day's Text section, the commentary, and exercises hours before the gathering (I am in the UK) but going through sections together has facilitated significant personal insights and it feels as though I have fast-tracked through some of the outstanding issues I had with the Course (specifically with Jesus, and my personal level of resistance). I don't have the words to describe what a difference it has already made.

In an attempt to figure out why the gathering seems to be so impactful, I have concluded the following:

- The support of a great teaching duo and the opportunity to have live Q&A is immeasurably helpful
- The gathering/coming together in shared purpose with other Course students is obviously a key component. Even when I don't *think* I have questions, hearing other people's questions and comments is so helpful, even if it is just reaffirming my own understanding of something
- On a practical level, during quarantine when the whole family is at home and we can't work, etc., this is a touchstone each weekday. A sacred half hour. Something to look forward to. It's uplifting.

As much as I can empathize with people who are upset about being in quarantine, I have to say that I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity it has provided to gather like this each day and am in no hurry for it to end!!! THANK YOU.

Sarah K.

A Better Way is fantastic!! I'm loving the issue. On a personal note, I'm thrilled the magazine is back. I found it online about four years ago at the Circle of Atonement's website. It resonated with me on some profound level when I was so lost that I was unable to read the Course proper. Reading the stories, essays and articles gave me hope that there was something other than the grind of life. Ultimately, the magazine opened my mind so that I was able to start reading the Course. And that's the best effect of the miracle in my mind for sure!!! Now it will be able to do that for countless other people too! Hooray!!

Jenny S.

For me, one of the positive outcomes of being quarantined has been finally connecting with the world of podcasts and stumbling on the Circle of Atonement. I've been following ACIM on my own for over 25 years and have never experienced the richness that is out there to help enhance one's understanding of the principles. For the last two days, I've been walking up a mountain next to where I live in Bethlehem, PA and listening to Emily and Robert. I am so grateful for the content you've been putting out to the world and am beyond elated to have finally found you and your teaching. May you remain safe and healthy and continue to be blessed in all that you do.

Fred R.

I am so grateful for the content you've been putting out to the world and am beyond elated to have finally found you and your teaching.

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Turn you to the stately calm within, where in holy
stillness dwells the living God you never left, and
Who never left you.

T 18.18.9

June 2020

MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
1 Circle News Release Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	2 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	3 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	4 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	5 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	6	7
8 Circle News Release (New podcast) Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	9 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	10 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	11 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	12 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	13	14 Sunday Gathering (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern
15 Circle News Release Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	16 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	17 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	18 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	19 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	20	21
22 Circle News Release (New podcast) Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	23 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	24 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	25 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	26 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	27	28 Sunday Gathering (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern
29 Circle News Release Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern	30 Text Gathering (Open to all) 10 a.m. Eastern Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern					

Let me remember I am one with God,
at one with all my brothers and my Self,
in everlasting holiness and peace.

W 124.11:2



July 2020

MO	TU	WE	TH	FR	SA	SU
		1 Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	2	3	4	5
6 Circle News Release (New podcast)	7 Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	8 Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	9	10	11	12 Sunday Gathering (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern
13 Circle News Release	14 Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	15 Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	16	17	18	19 Webinar Workshop: Special Function 1 p.m. – 4 p.m. Eastern Open to all but registration required. For information, visit circleofa.org/function
20 Circle News Release (New podcast)	21 Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	22 Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	23	24	25	26 Sunday Gathering (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern
27 Circle News Release	28 Workbook Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	29 Text Class (Course Companions members) 11 a.m. Eastern	30	31		

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