

Course Companions Sample Commentary

Volume III - Manual for Teachers

1. Who Are God's Teachers?

At the end of the Introduction, Jesus gave a brief list of questions the Manual for Teachers would answer. The first one was "Who are they?" (M-In.6:5)—who are the teachers of God? That is the question he now addresses. This section is brief, only four paragraphs, but it contains absolutely vital information on this topic. Today I'd like to reorder its themes into a linear narrative.

We learned in the Introduction that the world is caught in a "hopeless and closed learning situation" (M-In.5:1), in which the same false self-concept is endlessly reinforced. Thus, time grinds on, and the more things change, the more they stay the same. Waves of collective insanity sweep across the world, followed by periods of relative calm, after which the waves cover the globe once more. Time drags on, while that golden age we yearn for seems always just out of reach. "It is time alone that winds on wearily, and the world is very tired now. It is old and worn and without hope" (4:4-5).

Into this cycle of madness, a Call goes out. "It calls for teachers to speak for It and redeem the world" (2:6). Since this Call is from God, we might imagine that it goes out selectively to godly people, focusing on members of whatever religion is God's favorite. Yet this Call is completely indiscriminate. It favors no single religion nor even religions in general. It goes out to non-believers just the same as believers. It is like a radio signal broadcasting everywhere all the time, beseeching anyone who is listening to be a light in a darkened world.

How do we answer the Call? We might imagine that we say, "Yes, God, I have faith in You and I will place my life upon the altar and dedicate it to serving You." Yet the real answer is surprisingly non-religious and down to earth: We make a single, deliberate choice in which we see our interests as being the same as the interests of someone else (1:2).

There is a grace in this choice that we should pause to appreciate. We learned in the Introduction that at the heart of the world's insanity was the wrong answer to the questions "What am I and what are you to me?" The answer the world gives is this: "I am a separate, needy creature and you exist to fill my needs." We can boil this down a bit further: "I gain from your loss." Isn't this the madness that has been tearing this world apart from the very beginning?

The way that we answer the Call is the exact reversal of this. To say that your interests are the same as mine is to say that we gain or lose together. I lose from your loss and I gain from your gain. Every beautiful moment that has ever occurred between two people has had at its base this single, simple idea: I gain from your gain. In this perfect, ego-transcending choice lies the seeds of a new world.

That is why this choice is the answer to the Call, and that is why it changes everything for the one who makes it. On that choice pivots his entire journey. "One decision has ensured the direction he will take from then on" (1:4). He may well be an atheist, but he has signed a contract with God. And nothing will ever be the same again.

Why does this choice qualify you to be a teacher of God? Because now you are ready to treat the interests of those you teach as your own. The Text (in "The Devoted Teacher"—T-4.11) tells us that a teacher must above all be devoted to his students rather than his image. Having made that pivotal choice, you are finally in a position to be devoted to your students.

Now that you're ready to be a teacher, you need something to teach. The Holy Spirit therefore gives you "a course" (3:1), a special form of the universal course. It turns out there are "many thousands" of forms (4:2), and they are taught in a dizzying variety of ways. Some are taught mainly through actions, others are taught purely through thoughts (3:6), while others are taught in a more typical combination of words, actions, *and* thoughts. Yet whatever course you are given and however you are asked to teach it, the specifics will all be geared to your particular needs and strengths. It will fit you like the perfect glove.

Despite the great variety among different forms of the universal course, there is a single central theme in all of them: "God's Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation" (3:5). What does this mean? It means that whatever you have done, whoever you have shown up as, you haven't tarnished the perfect purity God gave you in your creation. You are still God's holy Son in whom He is well pleased, which means that all of your guilt exists only in your imagination. This is the message at the heart of what you will convey to your pupils, how you will see your pupils, and how you will encourage them to see themselves and others.

This is the message that liberates the world. We have all been duking it out for eons, believing in the ego's central theme: "I am a separate, needy creature and you exist to fill my needs." And while we've been tearing chunks out of each other, convinced that another's loss is our gain, we have felt increasingly tarnished and increasingly certain that others are just as rotten as we are.

The message that “God’s Son is guiltless” is the divine absolution that we all deeply need, that we need to give and need to receive.

Now you go forth into the world holding light in each hand. In one hand is this liberating message. In the other hand is your conviction that your pupils’ gain is your gain. And in your heart is the Call, which blazes out through your hands. You have become a new transmitting station through which the Call broadcasts to a weary world.

Because of the light that shines through you, the global climate slowly changes. The clouds of madness begin to thin. The world gradually accelerates in its development. Its feet more consistently turn in the direction of the goal God assigned to it, and it begins to get there faster. For time is in your hands (4:8). Such is the incredible power you have been given (4:9). In the end, the world will reach its glorious goal “a thousand years” (2:13) earlier than it would have if you had never lived. Reflect on that. Try not to push it away because it seems too big. Think about it in this way: Your unique and personal contribution can shave centuries off the world’s collective journey home. Could there be any greater honor than this? Is there any legacy you could possibly prefer to this?

Now that we have sketched the overall picture in this section, there is one final piece we need to add: Jesus applies this entire scenario to teachers of *A Course in Miracles*. He says, “This is a manual for a special curriculum, intended for teachers of a special form of the universal course” (4:1). This means that there are certain teachers who will be given *this* course as the path they are called to teach. *A Course in Miracles* will be the “special form of the universal course” they are tasked with passing on to their pupils, through their words, through their actions, through their thoughts. Doing *that* is how they will shave a thousand years off the world’s journey.

And this manual was written for them.

Quiz question

To make a choice in which we see our own interests as not apart from someone else’s (1:2) may seem commonplace, like something virtually everyone has done. Is that Jesus’ attitude? Does he think that everyone has currently made this choice, that most have made it, or that proportionately few have made it? There is a sentence in paragraph 2 that tells us exactly what he thinks. Please search paragraph 2, looking at each sentence in turn, and see if you can find it.

This commentary was written by Robert Perry, editor of the Complete and Annotated Edition of A Course in Miracles, for the Course Companions online learning program. Course Companions is offered by the Circle of Atonement and can be found online at coursecompanions.com.