

Questions & Answers

Application of A Course in Miracles in Daily Life

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When sudden traumatic events occur should I say, "It's not real"? -----	Page	3
I am frightened. I want to do something. -----	Page	3
How can I feel better about myself when I was never told I was good? -----	Page	4
I know I have power to choose what I believe but I'm still angry that they said it. -----	Page	5
I long to return to my childhood home. Is this escapism or part of waking up? -----	Page	6
When I am in fear I find myself frantically reading ACIM. Is this avoidance? -----	Page	7
I notice I am seeking God to get things in the world. -----	Page	8
This is a basket....or is it? -----	Page	8
I am wrestling with the ego to keep it from sabotaging my efforts. -----	Page	9
How do you reconcile church teachings on sin with the Course? -----	Page	10
What should I pray for? -----	Page	10
This place has bad energy. Should I move? -----	Page	11
How should I respond to someone who is needy? -----	Page	12
I am tired of being co-dependent. -----	Page	13
Who is responsible for my pain? -----	Page	13
I don't want these thoughts but I can't seem to let them go. -----	Page	15
How does the practice "I need do nothing" help? -----	Page	15
I am feeling fatigued and uninspired. -----	Page	16
I was robbed. Is this ego backlash because I'm on a spiritual journey? -----	Page	17
Am I using the practice of looking at beliefs just to improve the dream? -----	Page	18
Is Jesus asking to turn a blind eye to our fellow man? -----	Page	18
If I forgive does this mean I won't have any memory of the event? -----	Page	20
Is it ok to pray for help, have faith things will work out and talk to angels? -----	Page	20
What if God doesn't want what I want? -----	Page	21
When things come to me without effort is this a miracle? -----	Page	22
I cannot stop thinking about what they did and what must be done to make amends. ---	Page	22
If God did not invent sickness, what should I pray for? -----	Page	23
What does the Son of God create? -----	Page	24
What is your take on my injury? -----	Page	25
Do we need to visit past trauma for healing? -----	Page	26
How can I be free of the belief I must give in order to get what I need? -----	Page	27
I want to journal about my anger but isn't anger an illusion and writing indulging ego? -----	Page	28
I just can't forgive myself! -----	Page	29
What is the difference between inner-child work and A Course in Miracles? -----	Page	30
I'd like to understand more about the precise goals of the Course. -----	Page	30
Why, why, why is there suffering and death??? -----	Page	31
How do I extend grace and forgive the person who committed a heinous crime? -----	Page	32
Can you explain why "miracles do not matter" when the entire book is about miracles? -----	Page	33
"Most are given a slowly evolving training program." This has me frightened. -----	Page	34

When sudden traumatic events occur should I say, "It's not real"?

When the world suddenly "turns on us" with sudden traumatic events, we feel frightened and unsafe because we realize the rules and laws we set to create a sense of safety can be broken. Now nothing feels secure. When this happens, it is not enough to say, "It isn't real". This is an intellectual response that comes from our thinking mind. If you truly accepted the experience as illusory, then yes it would completely free you. Why? Because with that awareness you would also know for certain what IS real. You would know that you are perfectly safe and protected within the laws of God. Accepting what is real *is the only way to be at peace, no matter what is appearing in the world*. How do we do that? It begins with how we first react to the world we see.

We neither attack it nor cherish it. We notice it. We are aware of the judgments, but we stay centered in stillness awaiting Spirit's wisdom of what is going on. Now we are open to be lifted up into the Reality of God. Being in the Presence of Reality (truth), sets all things right.

T.30.IV.5 "Appearances deceive because they are appearances and not reality. Dwell not on them in any form. They but obscure reality and they bring fear because they hide the truth."

This passage suggests that we are in fear because we cannot see Reality. It is as if Heaven has disappeared and in its place darkness exists. Imagine the relief you would feel if you were suddenly aware of Heaven again. This is the Holy Spirit's function even when we are looking at traumatic events. Remember there is no difficulty in miracles. One is not harder than the other for the Holy Spirit. What is our part? Not to be afraid of this change of mind (healing).

Last night at the study group someone asked, "Why would we be afraid of healing?" Great question! No one is afraid of the *results* of healing: restored health, abundance, solutions to problems, etc., but the actual healing is the awareness that what we made is false and only truth is true. This can make us fearful if we misperceive this as a sacrifice.

When we are in a ton of fear over what we see, we know that we need a miracle. When we are afraid of the miracle, believing it is a sacrifice to give up what we see, we then hesitate to receive the Holy Spirit's Answer. Have faith. Do not listen to the idea of sacrifice. Remember your true desire to understand all things created as they really are and let the Holy Spirit give you the truth. As you can see this is a bit different than saying, "It isn't real".

I am frightened. I want to *do* something.

Thanks for sharing. It's a slippery slope when we try to solve the problem of fear and limiting beliefs by rearranging the symbols of the world. The symbols are nothing. The meaning comes from the mind; therefore the only change that needs to occur is *in* the mind. A change of mind

does result in a change of symbols (or a disappearing of the symbols). We must be careful if we are trying to do it the other way around; change the symbol *as a way* to change our mind.

The Holy Spirit's answer to every symbol of fear and limitation is to change our perception of what we see. Look right at the symbol and notice the errors in the mind without flinching. You need not fear it, attack it, reject it, worship it, or change it. To be free is to learn it is nothing; *see* that it is nothing (meaningless). To learn this, we must rest and do nothing with the symbol but allow it to be reinterpreted.

To the Holy Spirit, what we made is meaningless along with the ideas it represents. If we can rest from doing, changing etc. our mind is open to shift our perception of what we see. ("Seek not to change the world but change your mind about the world." T.21.in.1:7) Sharing this answer with you is a great reminder for me as well. It is a challenge to practice this 100% of the time, but whenever I have received a miracle, *this* has been my practice!

How can I feel better about myself when I was never told I was good?

I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to respond. Thank you for being open to expand and grow in your awareness of truth and how to recognize the truth.

We are really only ever experiencing our self through our own perception/beliefs and not our brother's. It may seem like our brother is defining who we are, but if we didn't agree with their version, then we would be hearing what Charlie Brown heard when listening to the teacher. Click on this link for a chuckle: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ss2hULhXf04>

Our brother never has the power to define us or tell us what we are. Their error was that they did not see the Christ when it appeared before them. This would not cause us suffering at all if we knew what we were because we would see right away that they were confused because of their own misperceptions. If we suffer when others give his/her point of view, it is because of our own mental dialog about our self. And what can this be but a misperception on our part when the Christ is what we are?

Here are some steps you can take to get you out of the muck when you forget that what you believe about yourself is not your brother's fault:

- I will remember if I am bothered in anyway by what my brother/sister says it is because of my own misperceptions (based on beliefs) about myself.
- If I am affected in any way by messages I hear from the outside world, I will remember that I can easily reject them.
- I will not accept my brother's interpretation or my own ego interpretation of what I am, for neither has the right to define what I am. I will hold in high regard the truth of what I am.

- I will only let the Holy Spirit speak on my behalf. I will ask, "Please tell/remind me what is true about me." Through guidance, I will define myself, accept my truth and see my light.

Trust the Holy Spirit's judgment about what you are instead of your brother's. You will then return to a miracle readiness mind-set which can be used for your benefit as well as your brother's. (Reference: T-6.V.C.1)

I know I have power to choose what I believe about myself but I'm still angry that they said it.

Thanks for sharing. Your writing is showing a deeper understanding of the power of our mind to determine our experience and to choose what to believe. When we are trying to be free of embedded beliefs about our self that sounded like it came from other's judgments, we are making great strides in our learning! To find freedom from hurt without needing to change their minds is a step away from victim and a step toward real strength.

We will not be completely free however, until we look at our brother and only see innocence. So although it is true that others do *not* determine our beliefs about ourselves, it is also true that how we see our brother will determine how we see our self. This is the reverse of how we normally think.

Before ACIM, we might believe that the world is the cause of my view of myself. I.E. "Others said ____ about me and I suffer from their view of me." Then we learn that the cause of how we see our self is what we choose to believe. In addition, ACIM also teaches that how we see our brother also determines the view we have of *ourselves*.

T-7.II.3 "Outside the Kingdom, the law that prevails inside is adapted to "What you project you believe." This is its teaching form, because outside the Kingdom learning is essential. This form implies that you will learn what you are from what you have projected onto others, and therefore believe they are. "

If you see your brother as a sinner, a guilty self who has lost their innocence and is apart and alone, then you will believe you are that as well. That is why Jesus gives us this advice:

T-8.III.4 "When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him you will see yourself. As you treat him you will treat yourself. As you think of him you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose yourself. Whenever two Sons of God meet, they are given another chance at salvation. Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself. For I am always there with you, in remembrance of *you*. "

Although it is true that you decide what is worthy of your belief about yourself, if you turn right around and judge them, you're right back to re-believing these false judgments. One way to stop this cycle is to keep in mind that other's interpretation of you is a result of their own projections. They are not really seeing you. Each time they misperceive you they are actually hurting themselves because they are learning what *they* are from what they believe *you* are.

Continue with your healing process and allow the correction of your beliefs about yourself. If you look at your brother and still find condemnation, ask the Holy Spirit to help you see them and the situation from a spiritual perspective. You do this because you want to stop hurting yourself. If you ask, the Spirit will help you see the situation in such a way where blame is gone and only the desire to heal and bless is there. (Reference: T-14.V.8, T.28.IV)

I long to return to my childhood home. Is this escapism or part of waking up?

Longing for your childhood home is a common experience. A few years into my study of ACIM, I had a dream about this same longing. First a little background information: I had a very typical childhood but as in most households, there was tension in my house. My grandparents lived three miles away and were retired. Their house became our "home away from home". My grandparents loved us without judgment and had lots of time on their hands to devote to all six kids. We went camping, fishing, had cook-outs, picnics, read the Sunday comics together, sang songs in the car, etc. Whenever I was there, I felt completely safe, and loved.

In the dream I am on the back roads of my hometown trying to get to my grandparents' house. I am stuck behind a truck transporting hay as it moves very slowly down the road. I am so frustrated because I want to get home. It is a long, slow journey but finally I come upon the street where my grandparents live. I am standing at the top of a hill looking down at their home. I am so excited to have finally arrived. I spot my grandfather waiting for me on the front porch. I am thrilled that in a moment I will be wrapped in his loving arms. feeling safe and loved.

Suddenly I remember that my grandfather had died. I look again at the house. It is different. It is painted a different color. The front porch has been remodeled. My grandfather is not standing on the porch waiting for me. It is the new owner. With these realizations I am overwhelmed with sadness, feeling the loss of his unconditional love and protection. Then I hear a voice. The Voice is gentle and loving but speaks with authority. The Voice says, *"This is not your home. The love that you felt in your childhood is nothing compared to the love that I have for you. Remember how your grandfather's love felt? Now imagine My Love to be a million times more. Your journey will lead you not to your childhood home but to your real home and you will find the Love that you seek."*

Upon waking I was led to read this passage in A Course in Miracles: [W-182.4](#) "Perhaps you think it is your childhood home that you would find again. The childhood of your body, and its

place of shelter are a memory now so distorted that you merely hold a picture of a past that never happened. Yet there is a Child in you Who seeks His Father's house, and knows that He is alien here. This childhood is eternal, with an innocence that will endure forever. Where this Child shall go is holy ground. It is His Holiness that lights up Heaven and brings to earth the pure reflection of the light above, wherein are earth and Heaven joined as one."

The dream brought to my awareness that I believed love and safety could only be found by returning to the past and receiving it from another person. I needed reminding that it can be found right now in the present, through joining with God. If you have a longing for your childhood home consider this longing to be your awakening to the deep desire within to be reunited with your Creator.

It's also important to remember that seeking within for love does not mean being without it in the world. It means that going within to feel the Love of God will fill you up to such heights that love can only but be in your experience. Never will you lose love, never will it forsake you and the evidence of Its Presence will be all around you.

When I am in fear I find myself frantically reading ACIM. Is this avoidance?

If we are scrambling trying to quickly find a way out of our current experience it is time to notice that actions (even reading ACIM) are an attempt to run from fear. We believe fear has all the power and the thing to do is outrun it by quickly reading ACIM to combat it, or use passages to push it down out of sight.

There are a few important things to remember when we are in fear. Fear is not present by itself. It is a response to a thought, idea or belief. Fear does not have to be feared. We are safe to feel our fear and because it is due to an underlying thought about ourselves, we don't have to run away, hit it with a hammer or sweep it under the rug. When fear arises realize, "This is fear. It is a reaction to something that has gone on in my mind; a fearful misunderstanding about me, the world, God or others. Because it is a response to thoughts believed, it is safe for me to notice the fear and listen to what I am choosing to believe. Because it is a response to thoughts believed, I can be still and give all fear thoughts to the Holy Spirit for correction."

Sometimes I make a list of fear thoughts and after each one I ask for a correction of the thought. I do this to make sure I'm not hiding anything. This reaction, instead of frantically reading, allows you to be present enough to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to a passage to read that would be helpful.

Remember you are safe because what you think is not the truth. A Course in Miracles is here to remind you of this. To use the teachings of ACIM to run and hide is to avoid healing. Reading it with the awareness that it will help correct all that you now believe, no matter how fearful, is the fastest way to a miracle. (Reference T-2.VII.1)

I notice I am seeking God to get things in the world.

Once you begin a spiritual journey you learn there are now two approaches to finding happiness. One way is to find it from the things of this world. Another is to find it by joining with God and remembering who you are. If you find you are trying to go both ways at the same time by seeking God for the purpose of getting things in the world, consider this; you DO want God but you are listening to the ego tell you that you will only be happy if you have something in the world. While you pursue two opposing ways, you will be conflicted and confused and your actions will be confusing.

The key to release from this is to remember two things: #1. Nothing in this world provides *lasting* happiness. #2. How can there be loss or sacrifice in having God as your goal, if finding God means finding the Source of all good that comes into your life? This is what Jesus taught over 2000 years ago when he said; "[Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness all will be given unto you.](#)" And again in A Course in Miracles:

T-13.VII.12 "Only the Holy Spirit knows what you need for He will give you all things that do not block the way to light. And what else could you need? In time, He gives you all the things that you need have, and will renew them as long as you have need of them. He will take nothing from you as long as you have any need of it. And yet He knows that everything you need is temporary, and will but last until you step aside from all your needs and realize that all of them have been fulfilled. Therefore He has no investment in the things that He supplies, except to make certain that you will not use them on behalf of lingering in time. He knows that you are not at home there, and He wills no delay to wait upon your joyous homecoming."

How can you be in the world and still only seek God? Each morning and evening commit your life to the purpose of reuniting with God and learning the truth of what you are. This will help you remain open to receive. Listen to God's Voice direct your actions, your thoughts, what to say and what to perceive. That way you are not the doer and you can trust whatever you are led to do, see, think or understand IS you seeking God.

That is a basket.....or is it?

If you judge it to be a basket, it will be to you. In Reality there is light where you see a basket. The appearance of a basket is a trick the mind plays to distort light and make it look like something else. I liken this to a magician making a woman appear to be cut in half. Is the woman really cut in half or is the appearance of her being cut in half a trick to get you to see something that isn't there? If you are driving down a desert road, is there water in the middle of the road or is it a mirage? Do you stop the car and try to find buckets to get rid of the water or do you focus on your destination and pass right through it knowing it is an optical illusion caused by the refraction of light from the sky through heated air?

Is that really a basket or is the appearance of a basket a trick to get you to see a basket instead of the light of the Divine? Maybe a better question that serves our awakening is, "How should I react to an appearance that looks like there could exist something other than God?" You have two options for an answer. Spend time trying to get rid of it or focus on your destination, pass right by it and see God?

I am wrestling with the ego to keep it from sabotaging my efforts.

The ego likes nothing better than for you to wrestle with it. Why? Because it means you believe it has power and what has power must exist. The answer is not to "put the ego down to the ground" but rather to listen with non-judgment with the intention of finding out just what the ego is saying about you so you can ask for the correction (or the Word of God) on the subject. This is quite a healing exercise and a way to take all the power from the ego. *The ego must be corrected not argued with or denied.*

Years ago I had an experience that taught me what to do when the ego darkness arises. In the middle of the night I awoke with a start. I had what appeared to be a black dark evil force on my bed trying to smother me. I began to struggle trying to fight my way to freedom. The more I fought against it, the stronger it seemed to become. Desperate, I searched my mind for ACIM passages to throw at it, hoping it would go away. I frantically began reciting anything I could think of; "God is the strength in which I trust", "I am surrounded by the Love of God", "God goes with me wherever I go". As I repeated these phrases, my fear increased and the force seemed to just get stronger. Suddenly a thought came from a deep part of my mind that was clear, concise, certain and peaceful. The thought was this, "See this as not real and it will disappear." This thought came with authority and snapped me into awareness. Of course! It was so obvious to me in that moment that what I was fighting wasn't even real. I stated with certainty and true understanding, "Hey, you're not real!" and in that split second, it disappeared.

What is important to learn about this experience is that the affirmations I threw at the dark force did not make it go away (nor did fighting against it.) I believed in its reality and in its power to hurt me. *That was the problem.* This is the same thing that happens to the dark ego thoughts. As they arise in consciousness we fight them, push them back under, try to overpower them or deny them. When we allow them to be there and join with the Holy Spirit, He will direct our understanding toward the realization that what we see and hear is not the truth. When we accept this fact, they disappear.

This doesn't have to be a long painful process. Sit with a cup of tea and place symbols of love around you. Then calmly give your willingness to see what the thoughts are. If it helps to focus, write them down and after each one write something like, "Is that so?" or just put a question mark next to it. This keeps your mind open to correction. The most important reminder about

receiving correction is this: correction is where the light meets the darkness and shines it away. This is not an intellectual process. Let it happen by itself. You have asked for correction.

Now simply open to receive.

Now that I am a Course student I am uncomfortable going to church. How do you reconcile church teachings on sin with the Course?

What a great question! You will not find the teaching of original sin or man's sinful nature anywhere in ACIM. In fact Jesus goes to great lengths to correct this false idea. So in essence there is no reconciliation. The two teachings are in opposition. You may find this a bit easier to accept if you consider that not all the teachings interpreted by man and passed down through the generations maintained the original message. Just like the telephone game when someone makes a statement and it gets whispered to the next person, by the end of the line the message is a combination of words that were actually said and words that were not. This too has happened with some of the teachings found in Christianity. If we are ready to change our minds about our sinful nature then we've come to the right place. ACIM is in our lives to purify the message, by teaching us what is false and what is true. If you want to hold on to the teaching of a sinful nature, then reading ACIM might be difficult for you.

Let's say you are ready to let it go. Because you have believed this teaching for a long time, the guilt *will be* exposed. This is a good thing. When you notice it accept that you have believed this in the past, but now you want freedom from the belief in sin. While you go through this you might notice that you are very sensitive to listening to any teachings of guilt. Therefore during times of undoing, it can be better to not have it reinforced. If it is best for you to refrain from listening to teachings on guilt, than you should follow your heart. Eventually when guilt is recognized as simply not true, one could hear it preached from the altar and be at peace and in love. When we can listen to anything in this world and not have it disturb our peace because we KNOW it's not true we are truly free.

Be careful not to hold a grievance against those who taught you through confusion. They were merely suggestions until you decided to make them your own "truths". At any time you can learn what the original message was merely by asking your Inner Wisdom to teach you.

What should I pray for?

The highest thing we can ask for is to see and know the truth - to see all as God Created It to be, not what we made it to be. This prayer does not ask for something to be healed. It recognizes that what appears as sick, broken, lacking, etc. is an expression of the belief that we are apart from God, and *that* cannot be true. In essence, the highest form of prayer is a request to

experience the truth beyond appearances and to really know (not intellectually but experientially) that God is All in all and that is all.

We learn about the highest form of prayer in W.181. In this lesson we are taught that what we currently "see" is a reflection of the *belief* in sin. We are then to make a decision, "It is not this that I would look upon." Then look straight at the present and seek to look upon what is really there. Trust and faith are a huge part of this practice because we don't yet see it, but we have faith it is there.

If "praying" means focusing on what we want and asking to experience what we want, we realize that we are really "praying" all the time. When we concentrate on the sense world (five senses) and put our thoughts on what is wrong and what is broken, we receive reinforcement that this is real. When we focus our desire and thoughts on God, love, peace, joy, etc. we receive reinforcement that this is real. The Song of Prayer teaches that *this* is the only thing we really want. If we are praying for something else, we are not in tune with the true desire of our heart.

As we grow and mature in our spiritual understanding we learn to pray for "higher" things. Each step up the ladder teaches us about what we really want. We eventually reach the highest form of prayer, to communicate with the Divine and experience the oneness, the Love, the holiness of all that God created. When we realize this form of prayer will result in miracles, we become more willing to skip a few steps!

This place has bad energy. Should I move?

Before the question, "Should I move?" I ask that you consider a deeper unconscious belief; I can be a victim to outside forces.

I do think people are sensitive to energy patterns. You notice how others are feeling even if the outside doesn't reveal it. Someone could be smiling on the outside but crying on the inside. If you notice this in others it is always a call for love. If you feel like a victim to it and are planning an escape strategy, then it is time to look deeper within yourself to see what is being triggered by this energy. To believe you have to "get away" from the dark energy, you affirm your weakness and have forgotten about the strength and power within you to heal, bless and light up the world. And to run from negative energy can be a subtle projection defense that is helpful to notice so the ego doesn't get away with it. The defense is to project the energy pattern outside of our mind and then claim we are a victim to it. The solution to this then becomes separation. This is the sign you are being led by the ego and not the Spirit.

What is the solution to bad energy? The best thing to do when we are in the dark is to turn on the light. When you are sitting in the depth of love you will know how to help others and what is best for your own spiritual unfoldment. Any action that comes from this will be gentle and

loving, not accusing and separating. This requires honesty about what is going on internally. "What am I struggling with? How am I feeling? What do I fear? What do I need?" All of these are helpful questions to journey to the depths of love. Once you are honoring your own feelings, thoughts and experiences, and can find the way to peace you can honor others. We always have the power to choose light over darkness. When you are in the light you will know what to do.

W-190.5. It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way. There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but yourself affects you. There is nothing in the world that has the power to make you ill or sad, or weak or frail. But it is you who have the power to dominate all things you see by merely recognizing what you are. As you perceive the harmlessness in them, they will accept your holy will as theirs. And what was seen as fearful now becomes a source of innocence and holiness.

How do I respond to someone who is needy?

It is so tempting to retreat from someone who is needy but consider why we would do that. We would only pull back if we believed we had a limited supply and will go without OR we are asked to give what we don't have. When thinking about your question a prayer from a book by Emilie Cady, "How I Used Truth" came to mind. She lived from 1848-1941. These principles are nothing new. Here is a portion from the book:

"There is but one hand in the universe. It is God's hand. Whenever you have felt that your hand was empty, it has been because you have believed yourself separate from God. Have you at times felt a great desire to give to others something they needed or wanted, yet have not been able to give? From where do you suppose, comes this desire to give? Is it from the mortal of you? No, it is the voice of the Giver of all good gifts crying out through you. It is God's desire to give through you. Cannot God afford to give whenever and where ever God will and not be made poorer, but richer thereby? Your hand is God's hand. Our Father reaches out through these, His only hands, to give His gifts. We have nothing to do with the supply. Our part is to pass out the good gift freely and without ceasing. God's giving is the spontaneous outflow of perfect love."

I love this reminder and it is especially helpful when we are in relationship with someone who is "needy" because they believe themselves separate from God. If then, they reach outside for their supply; they have forgotten the great Resource within. How can we be truly helpful when there is so much forgetfulness? Open up to the desire within you from the Source to give to all who ask. The supply is inexhaustible. Nothing can hinder the hand that is consciously recognized as God's hand doing the giving. Keep an open mind as to what is given through you. Only God knows what is needed and what will help remind you both of who you are and His great love for you.

I am tired of being co-dependent.

Co-dependence is depending on people, events, careers, material things, outcomes, etc. to provide safety, love, union, peace, and joy. Another reason for being co-dependent is to claim others are responsible for our pain therefore we get to make them the problem instead of our internal guilt, unworthiness and sense of separation. When we realize that dependency will never give us what we want we are finally willing to turn toward what WILL work. If you have grown tired of this you have come to a sacred moment in your spiritual growth and to see it as such *is* helpful.

I understand that hopelessness can be experienced when we realize that nothing in this world will fulfill our deepest desires and longings nor will it free us from the sense of loss and separation we feel. Jesus counsels us to *not* let this depression be the end of our hope. It is the beginning of finding all that is rightfully ours. Within, is the experience of God's Perfect Love and your Divine nature. Turn inward and look for this connection and then let the light shine in your world and see how dependency on God will fulfill your deepest longing and desire.

In Chapter 31 section IV "The Real Alternative", we learn that to remember God's Love and Presence is a choice we can make at any time. There is no reason to be sad at this time. You are being asked to let go of the world as the way to find happiness, but you are not left without a resource for all that you desire. The light is in you and surrounds you even in this moment when it feels that you will never find what you long for. Acknowledge that it is here now and it is what you want. Trust that it will be given as you have asked.

Who is responsible for my pain?

When we are in pain, we want to know who is to blame for what happened. Is it them or me, the world or God? "Who caused this?" is an important question to the ego. Someone has to be guilty. Only then do we know who deserves attack and punishment and what, other than our mind, needs to change to be happy. Jesus urges us to tread very carefully here for we are at a crucial part in our awakening.

T-11.IV.4-5 "Only you can deprive yourself of anything. Do not oppose this realization, for it is truly the beginning of the dawn of light. This is a crucial step in the reawakening. The beginning phases of this reversal are often quite painful, for *as blame is withdrawn from without, there is a strong tendency to harbor it within*. It is difficult at first to realize that this is exactly the same thing, for there is no distinction between within and without. If your brothers are part of you and you blame them for your deprivation, you are blaming yourself. *And you cannot blame yourself without blaming them*. That is why blame must be undone, not seen elsewhere."

When we are in pain Jesus tells us not to look for blame but instead look for healing. What is required for healing? First, we must be willing to give up the victim role because this keeps the *cause* of our experience outside of our mind. How you see yourself in the situation will determine which way you choose to be free of it. Consider these two versions of how we see ourselves:

Option A: T.27.VII.8 "Helpless he stands a victim to a dream conceived and cherished by a separate mind. Careless indeed of him/her this mind must be as thoughtless of his peace and happiness as is the weather or the time of day. It loves him not, but casts him as it will in any role that satisfies its dream. So little is his worth that he is but a dancing shadow, leaping up and down according to a senseless plot conceived within the idle dreaming of the world."

OR

Option B: T.27.VII.13-14 "You are the dreamer of the world of dreams. The Voice calls with love to waken him. He offers a gentler dream, in which his suffering was healed and where his brother was his friend. Accept the dream He gave instead of yours. It is not difficult to change a dream when once the dreamer has been recognized. Rest in the Holy Spirit and allow His gentle dreams to take the place of those you dreamed in terror and in fear of death. He brings forgiving dreams in which the choice is not who is the murderer and who shall be the victim. In the dreams He brings there is no murder and there is no death. The dream of guilt is fading from your sight, although your eyes are closed. A smile has come to lighten up your sleeping face. The sleep is peaceful now, for these are happy dreams."

Why do we struggle with choosing option b? Because it seems like we are to blame. It looks like a choice for guilt but actually it is a choice for innocence if seen correctly.

I was a student of the Course for about two years, when I had a dream that helped me learn how the Holy Spirit wanted to guide me to be free of suffering. In the dream I am standing on a dock looking out over the lake. Suddenly a huge, scary, shark-like monster comes leaping out of the water and opens up its large jaws to bite me. I start running down the dock as fast I can. It chases after me. I can't out run it! It catches up to me and opens up its huge mouth to take a bite out of my shoulder and arm. Suddenly a thought comes into my mind: *"If I remember this is a dream and that I am the dreamer this will not hurt a bit. But if I forget I am dreaming and think I am this dream figure, this is going to hurt like hell!"*

I'm also reminded of a story I once heard about a woman who kept having a reoccurring nightmare. In this nightmare, she was being chased by a monster. Each time she would awaken right before the monster reached her. One night the dream took a different turn. The monster caught up to her. In her terrified state, she screamed; "What are you going to do to me???" The monster replied; "I don't know lady, it's your dream."

These teachings are not meant to cast blame onto you. It is meant to awaken you to a new way of dealing with your problems. When things are happening that you don't like, you are actually more in touch with what you do want and your subconscious thought patterns that sabotage your efforts are right at the surface. Instead of casting blame, realize this is a sacred moment of

healing. You can finally see what has been blocking you and can be clearer about you would like to experience instead. When you are in pain, do not look for blame. Use this as your jumping off point to see what the underlying problem is and to choose something different. Ask the Holy Spirit for what you do want and let Him bring to you dreams of your innocence.

I don't want these thoughts but I can't seem to let them go.

It sounds like you are having a rough time but it is not as dire as you may think. You are aware that you need correction of the thoughts and that is great progress! You are also recognizing that your thoughts may not be right (another big step in changing your experience)! Now you are not sure how to facilitate a new experience.

The first thing to realize is that you can't think your way to a change. The more you think, the more your mind gets tangled in knots. All the thoughts that are running around in your mind are not helpful. Even the ones that are saying, "I need to love myself," or "Why can't I let these thoughts go?" The key to peace is a quiet mind where you can rest awhile and let Spirit speak to you. You want to be the *listener, not the thinker*.

How can this happen when you are not used to controlling or stopping your thinking? I have found that writing down thoughts really helps to slow down my thinking.

1. Write down your thoughts without censoring them. Write them down as they come to you- good and bad. This will rest your mind from frantic thinking and allow more space between the thoughts.
2. Open your mind by writing after each thought, "This thought is meaningless. Only listening to inner Wisdom will bring me peace."
3. Ask for correction, "Holy Spirit, I want a healing thought from You."
4. If you find your mind getting frantic, make a point to *slowly say*, "Holy Spirit, I want a healing thought from You." Try even spacing out the words to create a pause between each one.

Now you are the listener, not the thinker. Now correction can happen.

How does the practice "I need do nothing" help?

The practice "I need do nothing" as taught in T.18.VII protects us from making further errors and reinforcing the false perception. The reason it works is because what we see as the problem in the world is actually a problem in the mind. If we think the solution is to do something at the level of effects we are:

1. Stating that the physical world is the problem which keeps the mind unchanged.
2. Reinforcing the false concept of a separated self, living in a world apart from God and we must do something to correct this.
3. Believing that the solution is in the future (if I do something now, then in the future *this* will happen) places healing in the future and ignores the “now”.
4. Reinforcing guilt. Everything is an effect of thought (W.16). If we insist that the effects are something to be dealt with then we are stating that the thought is true.

“I need do nothing” is a statement that the problem is not in the world but in the mind. The body is not the means for release, the miracle is.

- “I need do nothing” eliminates the time belief of past and future. It is a statement that healing happens now.
- “I need do nothing” keeps you in the mind where the problem and the answer is.
- “I need do nothing” reinforces the true concept of your connection to the Holy Spirit and to God. You are stating that you are not alone and you have access to inner strength and power to help you.

“I need do nothing” is a tidy, quick way to keep the space clear for a miracle to occur.

I am feeling fatigued and uninspired.

Whatever you decide to change in the external world is fine. It is perfectly ok if you decide to change jobs. Nothing you do is harmful or wrong. I do want to address the underlying feeling you are having though. To return to inspiration and have energy again, it would be helpful to remember that to feel uninspired means the mind is listening to the ego thought system and not following directions from the Spirit.

“The result of genuine devotion is inspiration; a word which properly understood is the opposite of fatigue. To be fatigued is to be DIS-spirited, but to be inspired is to be IN the spirit. To be egocentric is to be dispirited. But to be self-centered in the RIGHT sense is to be inspired or in the Soul.” (Urtext. Chapter 4. Intro)

You are going through a deep healing of the mind's beliefs. As ideas are uprooted, we can interpret this as a loss. When we learn that nothing in the world is worth pursuing because nothing in the world can provide what we are seeking and nothing in the world saves us from pain, the wrong-mind interprets this as a loss of hope or finding any reason to do anything at all in this world. This leads to a feeling of fatigue and disinterest.

When reinterpreted by the Spirit this time can be seen as cause for celebration, for we are on the brink of finding everything that we have been searching for. A simple change of purpose for your life is all that is needed to find your inspiration again. Jobs, relationships, and events

become the backdrop to experiencing the love and peace of God. By giving everything a holy purpose, your passion is ignited because it gives you a reason for being here.

The Spirit reminds us that to feel inspired (or in-spirit) is to open up the mind to receive the Spirit's love and peace and joy and share this with the world through whatever way you are directed. Don't let the ego get you down. You have an important part to play in the universal plan of awakening. Keep connected to the Holy Spirit and you will be guided in what to do, what to say, to whom, and where. All will become holy ground and this will lead to true inspiration.

I was robbed. Is this ego backlash because I am on a spiritual journey? Should I send love to the one who robbed me?

Thank you so much for sharing and for the opportunity to clarify the purpose of all situations and encounters. I love your willingness and your vigilance for God and His Kingdom.

The mind wants to understand why it is happening. And that is ok. Be careful not to fall into the trap of believing that events and situations are caused by the ego attacking or dishing out retribution. The ego explanation always includes ideas of guilt, attack, blame and powerlessness. ACIM explanation always includes innocence, power, choice, and gentleness. Simply put, what you see happening is a moment in time when thoughts of guilt and separation are being perceived. Therefore it is a moment when you can choose a miracle. You can choose to see differently. This is the one choice in every situation.

I do appreciate the sentiment behind your choice to "send love" to the people who stole. Instead of judging you want to engage the mind in love. But this is a slippery slope. The ego idea of perceiving lack of love in our brother and to send what they lack reinforces what they already believe. They do not need love. They need awareness of the love that they already are.

This makes sense if you keep in mind that all behavior stems from the BELIEF in lack of love. To lack love is impossible, but we can believe we lack or are separated from love. And when we believe this unloving behavior follows. Our role is to remind them that what they believe is *not* the truth. To do this, we need to overlook the behavior and what *they* believe. See for them what IS there especially when they cannot see if for themselves.

Also consider the tendency to interpret the situation. Our interpretations are limited because we only understand things from the body point of view or from the past. The Holy Spirit is the one Interpreter. The only interpretation you are asked to make is, "This is a call for Help. **What can I do for him Your Holy Son?**" (SOP.2.III) Give it the purpose of true helpfulness and let the Holy Spirit interpret everything else. It's a win-win situation.

All events, situations and circumstances have only one purpose: to shift from the false to the true, from fear to love, from the unreal to the real, from separation to unity. Your willingness to not judge in order for this shift to happen is wonderful. Once you suspend judgment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you the truth, the miracle has begun. The Holy Spirit knows exactly the form in which to teach you about truth. You did your part, now let Him do His.

Am I using the practice of looking at beliefs just to improve the dream?

One of the most challenging teachings we are given in ACIM is that everything we see is a false perception. This is challenging because we believe in what our physical eyes see and our mind judges as "reality". We do need to learn over and over that thoughts make perceptions and that cause is only in the mind. Cause and effect put in proper sequence has the potential for many miracles. Only when we realize cause is within are we willing to go *within* for the Answer. Otherwise we stay out on the screen and try to change the world.

Reflecting on our judgments, beliefs, etc. is helpful in our journey but only for one reason. It is our false judgments and beliefs that are blocking truth (awareness of Love's Presence). Your willingness to be aware of false ideas is NOT because you want to manifest different things in the world. It is because you want to perceive God's Reality and these false ideas are getting in the way.

There is no sacrifice in having this one goal, because the truth does set us free from the only problem which is our guilt. The world will reflect this lesson and you will see the evidence of what you asked for. Your world will become a manifestation of God's love. These manifestations however, are secondary to experiencing connection with our Source.

I hope this helps. You are on the right track. It is only the goal of *why* you go within that needed tweaking.

Is Jesus asking us to turn a blind eye to our fellow man when he instructs us to ask for vision when we see someone who needs help?

Thanks for sharing your thoughts. What is missing in your understanding is that vision heals all pain and suffering. If you see someone who is in pain and you know that vision will heal that pain and suffering, than asking for vision *is* helping your fellow man. Maybe the question is: "How does vision heal pain and suffering?" To answer this we need to turn to the metaphysical part of ACIM. Let's see if I can explain.

Vision is another name for the miracle. It is healed perception or a way of seeing that shows you the truth as God created it to be. **"The miracle perceives everything AS IT IS. If nothing but the truth exists, Right-Minded seeing cannot see ANYTHING BUT perfection. We have said many**

times that ONLY what God creates, or what man creates with the same will, has any real existence. This then is all that the innocent can see. They do not suffer from the delusions of the Separated ones." (Urtext. T.3.D.4)

If we believe others are external to us and having separate experiences, that the problem is in the world of form then receiving vision makes no sense and doing something in the world would be the way to be helpful. It would seem as if the Holy Spirit is asking you to do something selfish and not be helpful to others who are in pain.

But what if that is not what is really going on? What if we are the dreamers and so are our brothers and together we are making up a dream world of pain and suffering because of our belief in sin? What if everything we perceive in the dream is from the belief in sin and that if we allowed the Holy Spirit to correct our belief, the playing out of sin would stop? The dream would change from a nightmare to a lovely dream where there is no attack, no murder, no illness and no suffering of any kind.

This is how the Holy Spirit understands the problem and why He knows that vision (perceiving innocence) is the answer. He knows the truth of what we are and what the world is. He also knows that we do not. That is why we need Him (and Jesus) to help us because we do not understand *why* the world is so vengeful and full of hate and suffering and *what* would relieve pain and suffering.

Because we are so confused, we are only asked to play a small role in having problems solved. We are asked to admit that we don't really know what is going on nor do we know how to release pain and suffering. Our function is to withdraw our faith from what we see and go within to seek the problem and the answer. In this practice we are putting our energy toward what is true and giving what we see to the Holy Spirit to receive His vision.

As I read your email, I see only one problem. You think you know what would relieve pain and suffering and you believe that you would be bad not to do it. If you begin to question what you believe will relieve pain and suffering, you can open to hearing another way. One thing that may help loosen the feeling of being "right", is to look at how you have been trying to solve the problem and ask, "Is this working? Is there less pain and suffering, more freedom from sickness and death, less attack?" For centuries, we have been using a way that doesn't work. If it worked, it would have worked by now.

There must be another way, for it is not God's Will that we suffer. The Holy Spirit was sent from God to free us from pain. His Answer is not the world's answer nor is it the ego's answer because He knows what the problem is and the ego and the world do not. That is why ACIM states: "Your present trust would solve all your problems now." You may want to read T.16.I "True Empathy". I think it will ease your mind.

If I forgive does this mean I won't have any memory of the event?

I can see where one could interpret the teaching that "it never happened" in this way. In my experience it is not quite like this. Let me see if I can put it into words.

From my experiences of forgiveness, it is not a forgetting as if it is wiped out from my memory, but rather a reinterpretation from what I think happened to what is really going on. This involved a vision of what I really am, what they really are, and that what happened was an experience like a dream. It was shown to me that it had absolutely no effect on Me or Them.

To forgive is to recognize you know nothing and are willing to sit quietly and let awareness come to you of what is true. ("Above all else I want to see things differently." W.28) Seems simple right? But here is where the notion of sacrifice and loss can creep in so the idea that we will not have a memory of it is appealing. However, if the memory is stored in your mind without reinterpretation, there are any number of things that can trigger it. *That is why a reinterpretation of the memory is important to complete freedom.*

If reinterpretation has occurred then you will never fear to be reminded of it. Reliving it through the Holy Spirit's vision will wipe out the memory of guilt and leave you only with love. **"Let His understanding be enough for you. There is no greater love than to accept this and be glad."** (URTEXT.164) This awareness has to come from the Holy Spirit because our wrong-mind is caught up in the "reality" of the nightmare and has lost awareness of what we really are so we can't understand how this can be so.

The only thing you are expected to understand or to know when trying to forgive is that you do not want the images or stories of guilt, separation, differences, attack, etc. You want to be aware of holiness, innocence, unity, and love. The highest level of thought we can achieve with the wrong-mind is that we want what is valuable and true and we are willing to let go of all we think we know in order to get what is valuable. This is why the rules for decision in Chapter 30 work so well. It may take a lot of learning to get to this point but that is ok. It is part of the healing process.

Is it ok to pray for help, have faith things will work out and talk to angels?

You can still ask for help, you can still talk to angels, you can still ask for freedom from fear, and have faith in Love's Presence in your life. ACIM doesn't aim to take from you what gives you comfort. It does aim however, to help you expand your willingness to receive the Help the Spirit wants to give you, to expand your understanding and experience of God, to sort out any ideas of love that are not congruent with Real Love and to remove the inner blocks to Love's Presence so you can have even more of it.

You will need to build up trust in its ways to bring this about so if it helps to pray for help, talk to angels and have faith that things will work out, then by all means keep doing that. Building a strong foundation of trust is important.

What if God doesn't want what I want?

At the heart of this question is the belief in sacrifice. What we are really asking is, "If I let go and let God, will I have to sacrifice my happiness?" The belief that God's Will requires sacrifice is the cornerstone of the ego thought system and when we believe it, the ego is reinforced.

I encountered this belief of sacrifice when I was asking for guidance on whether I should leave my marriage. I wasn't getting an answer or a clear direction so one night I asked to be shown why I couldn't hear. In my dream that night God appears to me and says that I could ask Him any question I want. I am so relieved that finally I am going to get an answer to the marriage question. I ask, "Should I leave the marriage?" And God replies, "No". I fell to the floor sobbing. With my arms outstretched to God I say, "OK God, I love you so much that I will do Your Will even if I have to sacrifice." I awoke with tears streaming down my face.

I was shocked that I believed this! On the surface, I believed God was a loving God and that the guidance would only lead to my happiness. The dream revealed to me a deeper unconscious belief. This was the reason why I couldn't hear guidance. The days following, every time I was aware of this idea, I would give it to the Holy Spirit to be healed. After awhile it dissipated. Only when it was released did events unfold that led to a peaceful resolution to my marriage.

Don't ask for witnesses to prove your belief is wrong. The outside is an effect of the inside. Remember that you need to let go of the belief *before* you see evidence that God wants you to be happy. Stay focused on the inside and the outside will follow. If you see sacrifice on the outside, remember your commitment to letting this idea go, and give the idea over to the Holy Spirit in trust. If you see the outside and it doesn't look like sacrifice, rejoice that this idea is leaving you.

It might be helpful here to remember the prodigal son parable. The son tired of living on his own and remembering that he had everything when he lived with his father, decides to return home. He fully expects to become a slave upon returning because he believes that punishment awaits him. Imagine his surprise when his father throws his arms around him and welcomes him with a feast fit for a king. God only wants you to feel loved and cared for. Isn't this what you want, too? If you ask God for only what He wills for you and then experience only happiness and peace, you will learn that your will and God's are exactly the same and the question you asked will not even be a question.

When things come to me without effort is this a miracle?

Situation: A person suddenly sees something that she needs on a friend's bookshelf. She has never seen it before even after being over at the house many times. Her friend offers her the books without cost. Without effort she receives exactly what she needs. She then asks me this question. "Is this a miracle?" Here is my answer.

If we remember that a miracle is a sudden shift in perception from one level of reality to another, we cannot say that receiving the books was the miracle, but something miraculous did happen. Let's find out what that was.

When Helen heard these words, "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes." she understood that she was writing *about* miracles. She then asked Jesus a question.

Helen Schucman Q. Would you regard this communication as a kind of miracle?"

Jesus A. There is nothing special or surprising about this at all. The ONE thing that happened was the Universal Miracle which was the experience of intense love you have felt.

The question Helen raised was whether communication is a miracle. Jesus answered by saying that communication is not a miracle. It is a natural thing the mind does. The miracle was when Helen had a sudden awareness of Divine Love. So communication is not a miracle, but experiencing Divine Love is.

Dictation/listening were not the miracle. This was a natural expression of Helen's experience of intense love and THIS was the miracle. Finding the books was not the miracle, BUT the books were a natural expression of what the mind did: opened to receive love. The *experience* of finding the books and having them come to you without effort was a sudden awareness of love's presence. *This love* is the miracle. And it is exciting because it indicates the veil that hides the real world is getting thinner. Love is peaking through.

If we believe receiving the books was the miracle we mistake form for content and will misplace value. The expression of this love is not what is important. The love that inspired it is. We can appreciate the symbol and feel so much gratitude for what it has taught us. Take this from the experience and you will be better able to spot the many miracles occurring in your life.

I cannot stop thinking about what they did and what must be done to make amends.

Jesus says, "Miraculous forgiveness is ONLY correction. It has no element of judgment at all. "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" in NO way EVALUATES what they do. It is strictly limited to an appeal to God to HEAL their minds. There is no reference to the outcome of their misthought. THIS does not matter." (Urtext)

Of course Jesus was in his Right Mind when he said that! This is how he was able to clearly see this as the only thing to pray for. When you are in your wrong mind, this seems like a ridiculous thing to pray for.

The question then becomes, "How can I get into my Right Mind?" To be in Right-Mindedness you must be willing to overlook the error and see what the truth is. Now we come to the strong temptation to focus on the error. The ego voice is very loud on **one** issue: Some things are mistakes and easily overlooked and some things are sins therefore they must have consequences. So when is it a mistake and when is it a sin? I'll take a stab at it, but you can fill in your own definitions:

A sin is when: a) Someone I love or I got hurt. b) There was loss and sacrifices c) They knew what they were doing

A mistake is when: a) No one got hurt. b) No real harm was done. c) They didn't know what they were doing.

If the ego mind is judging this as a sin, then it will be very hard for you to let go of judgment and of the need for consequences.

If you are willing to consider the mistake definition and see it as such, you are open to listening to the Holy Spirit. Can you allow that awareness to come to you?

The other issue at hand is the unconscious desire to see guilt outside rather than within. The ego advises that if we can manage to find guilt outside then we can be safe from guilt. Let's not buy this lie. Guilt is an all or nothing thing. If anyone is guilty then we all are. We just don't see this because of the clever trick of projection, which makes it look like we got rid of the guilt when looking at a "sinner".

Become aware of this trick so you can take a stand against this. Seeing someone else as a sinner is **not the way** for you to be innocent.

Here is the stand you must take if you want to be free: "My happiness lies in letting go of sin. My happiness lies in seeing holiness. My happiness lies in learning that consequences are the ego's way and healing is God's way. Help me to see this as a mistake that deserves love rather than a sin that deserves punishment."

If God did not invent sickness what should I pray for? If sickness does not exist is healing possible?

A Course in Miracles in no way teaches there is nothing to heal. Quite the contrary. It is saying that healing is the reason you are here and to heal is exactly what the Holy Spirit's function is. The question is; "What needs to be healed?" One of the challenges when it comes to "pain" is

to realize that the pain is actually in the mind not in the body. You are being asked to accept the *insignificance* of the body both regarding the problem and the healing otherwise you will be trying to heal what is not sick. The defense of projection (making the pain appear to be somewhere else) is to protect the hidden belief of guilt.

Even though this is a powerful witness (the pain appears to be in the body, not in the mind), give your willingness to have the real sickness healed. In this way, you are laying down the defense of projecting onto the body and are willing to not hide the error. (W. #101)

Here are two beautiful prayers that will be helpful when we are confused about what is sick and what to pray for:

Lesson #136: "Ask the truth to set you free. Introduce the invitation with a healing prayer, to help us rise above defensiveness and let truth be as it has always been: *"Sickness is a defense against the truth. I will accept the truth of what I am, and let my mind be wholly healed today."*

Lesson #140: *"Only salvation (holiness, innocence) can be said to cure. Speak to me Father that I may be healed."*

You might also want to read the entire lesson.

What does the Son of God create?

What the Son of God creates has nothing to do with this world, universe, stars, galaxies, etc. The creations of the Son of God are an activity of Heaven not earth. There is nothing here that can describe it and we can only understand it when we fully awaken.

T.24.VII.6 "In Heaven, means and end are one, and one with Him. This is the state of true creation, found not within time, but in eternity. To no one here is this (true creation) describable. Nor is there any way to learn what this condition means. Not till you go past learning to the Given; not till you make again a holy home for your creations is it understood."

When you refer to radiance, joy and love, I would say that these are reflections of our real creations, not the actual creation. Think of the sun and the reflection of sunlight. The sunlight is not the actual sun. Feeling sunlight on your face is not the same as being directly in the sun itself. Although it gives you an idea of the qualities of the sun it's still not the real deal.

So now that we understand that we can't understand what our creations really are until we are awakened, ACIM does give us some description to help with the indescribable.

Jesus describes our creations in this way: The Father Created the Son by extending His Own Being. We (the Son of the Father) extend our own being and create sons (eternal beings just like us). That's a pretty incredible idea, that our creations are actually our sons, that we create by extending our being and create more eternal beings and these eternal beings are our creations. (Kind of makes you realize why Jesus says this is not understandable till we awaken!)

To grasp the concept let us look at symbols here on earth. Example #1: Mothers and fathers have children (sons) and then their children (sons) create children. Example #2: We have thoughts and then our thoughts create experiences. You can think of the same concept when considering what the creations of the Son of God are. Be aware however that what we experience in the physical realm cannot hold a candle to our creations in the eternal.

Jesus continues with this: T-24.VII.8. "This course makes no attempt to teach what cannot easily be learned. Its scope does not exceed your own, except to say that what is yours will come to you when you are ready."

The goal of the Course is to learn how to receive a different vision than the perceived separated world. It is not trying to teach us about our true creations. ACIM mentions the Son of God's creations to foreshadow what awaits us when we fully awaken but the Course does not dwell on it. It dwells on what can easily be learned while we sleep.

So why spend any time on this at all? There must be some benefits otherwise Jesus wouldn't mention it at all. Here are a few ways the concept of the Son of God having creations might be helpful:

- To release attachment to this world.
- To give us a reason why we would want to awaken.
- To help us remember who we are and where our home really is by reminding us of the existence of our creations.
- To alleviate guilt by letting us know that we did nothing to change God's creation or our creations.

What is your take on my injury?

Sounds like you are recognizing that everything is a symbol of what is going on within the mind. Good for you! The Course does teach that at the core of all forms of dis-ease is the mind's belief in sin. The way we usually think about illness or injury is that the body is affected by outside causes. It is sick (effect) because of something outside the mind (cause). It can take a lot of practice just to turn this around and think along the lines of the Course's teaching on sickness and what heals! In my opinion there is no greater challenge to accepting this teaching than when sickness is experienced as in the body! That is why we must stay vigilant to remember

that even though the body appears to be sick, you are willing to turn inward to access the Holy Spirit's healing remedy.

This does not mean that you will refrain from using outside "healing" agents that seem to administer to you. It merely means that you are willing to look within for the problem and the answer because you know that God has given you His healing power because He does not will that you suffer.

The steps to receive this are simply to remember that the mind needs healing and to accept that the Holy Spirit's remedy *will* heal you. Then comes the hard part. Be still and listen to guidance. Being still means not having already decided anything at all about what you think will be said. You have given your willingness to rest in the Holy Spirit's tender love and seek His help, understanding and healing. This means that you realize you must be beloved of God, deserving of His Love and not guilty for anything.

I don't want to get any more complicated than this on the "why". Too much analysis takes you away from the remedy and it can lean you toward guilt (I.E. what have I done to cause this). Put your energy toward receiving the correction in the mind where the problem is. Remember everything is an opportunity to heal the Son of God, to perceive light where there was a shadow, to become aware of the constant presence of love, to become aware you've done nothing wrong. Be glad you have found another opportunity to receive these gifts .

What are the steps when we notice repeat behavior? Do we need to visit past trauma for healing?

Repeat behavior is from repeat thinking. Repeat thinking is the story we tell ourselves over and over about what happened. Repeating the story results in repeat behavior.

Where do these stories come from? They come from the past events that happened and the story we wove around the event. If one remembers the past trauma what they are actually doing is remembering their interpretation (story) about the event. This story (interpretation) gets carried forward and applied to other events that seem similar. This is the trigger response. An event seems similar and it triggers our mind to tell the story of the past. Therefore we can't expect to respond differently until we think differently.

The benefit to realizing that the behavior is repeating is that you recognize its origins can be found in the past. This helps pull us away from the current event and center our attention more on the story we tell ourselves.

Therefore, the steps are:

1. Turn your attention away from behavior and focus your attention on the story you are listening to inside your mind. It is a story of "you" and "them". You may have first told this story in the past but the important thing to remember is that you are currently repeating this story in the present.
2. Now that you have recognized the story, evaluate it on the basis of its value to you. Does it hurt to listen to this story? Is there a benefit to keeping this story such as protection, comfort, projecting guilt? Is it worth keeping or letting go?
3. When you realize that you do not want what the story gets you, bring it to the light to be released.
4. Allow a new story to be given you, one that restores true understanding and peace. Pray for this and your behavior will automatically change.

How can I be free of the belief that I must give in order to get what I need?

Reciprocity is the cycle of giving and getting. It is a tool we use to get needs met that we believe we have. We need money so we give something to get money. We need love so we give something to get love. We need appreciation so we give something to get appreciation. Actually the egoic mind would just like to take it without giving anything but we can't just take it without feeling guilty so to minimize guilt the ego sets up a give/get solution that we call reciprocity. If I give then I won't feel guilty for getting. Now we can see reciprocity not a belief but a problem-solving tool.

We are not asked to let go of the *belief* in reciprocity. We are asked to let go of using it as a tool to solve our belief in lack. How can we begin to do that when it seems the whole world uses this tool to get needs met and the perception of lack seems so true? First let's get to the root of the problem.

Here is what the egoic mind doesn't want us to realize:

We wouldn't need it unless we believed we lacked it in the first place. I lack money, therefore I need money; therefore I must give something in exchange for money. I lack love, therefore I need love; therefore I must give something in exchange for love. We can always trace a need back to a sense of lack. And we can always trace a sense of lack back to the belief that the separation *did* occur. I lack because I left my Source.

Consider this lineage of cause and effect: A sense of separation from God = perceiving yourself as lacking= needs= world gives me what I need= I give something to get it.

The egoic mind only wants us to concentrate on the last part of the equation- needs and getting needs met by giving first. When we misperceive lack and believe we are in need, we respond or behave by trying to fix the need. When we do this, we strengthen the original belief, "I am

separate from God therefore I am lacking.” (Notice the false self identity in this statement). Actually, ACIM teaches that we just keep repeating the tiny mad idea over and over, "I did separate from God. I lost who I am." Lack of finances, worth, love, ability, knowledge, etc. repeats this tiny mad idea.

Consider the logic here. We could never perceive ourselves as lacking unless we believe that we could be separate from the Kingdom of God.

Although it is true that we perceive the lack, we have merely denied ourselves access to the treasures freely given to us from our Source. It's as if we have built a huge wall in front of Niagara Falls to prevent water from flowing through and then look upon the dry canyon below and claim we are lacking.

So what can we do when the temptation to repeat the mad idea of separation is present? Each time the thought and perception arises we have a chance to break the cycle of re-believing the error and to learn that this is not true. Each time we hear the thought "I am lacking", each time we see the thought "I am lacking", each time we have a desire to get, each time we give to get, choose to disengage from using the ego tool of reciprocity and choose instead to stop re-believing the lie that you lack.

Another practice to let go of reciprocity is this: if you are freely offered something without earning it, practice receiving with gratitude. Do not allow yourself to feel guilty. Embrace the moment of experiencing God loving you through this gift being offered and accept that you are worthy to receive.

Does it seem like it would take a miracle to let go of using reciprocity to solve the perceived problem of lack? Remember that your willingness combined with the Holy Spirit's power *is* the recipe for miracles. Instead of engaging in "I'll give you this if you give me that", turn to God with the prayer, "God I ask for freedom from the misperception of lack and separation from You. I am willing to lift the barrier and let your love flow into my life."

When I think about this person it stirs up so much anger. I want to journal about this but isn't anger an illusion? Isn't writing about it indulging the ego story?

Anger is *not* an illusion; it is an emotion from an egoic idea. If there is anger, this means there is an opportunity for healing if looked at in a different way.

Anger is used to convince us that what fails to satisfy is outside ourselves and deserves attack because of what it failed to do. It is the attempt to claim innocence at the expense of another's guilt. It is the temptation to see yourself unfairly treated in an effort to not look within for the

cause of your pain. Anger says, "Attack what is outside, seek what is outside, find guilt outside and you will be free." This is a trick to keep you away from going within to heal.

Whenever anger arose for me, I would write out the story (gory details and all) with the intent to bring to conscious awareness just what I was listening to. This was the only way at first that I could be present to the anger without reinforcing the story that fueled it. With this intent I didn't feel guilty for listening to the dark thoughts because it was an opportunity to release them.

So write away without censor, but remember your intention. You write to be free and you can't be free until you know what you need freedom from. Also remember this: to see them as guilty for your pain and suffering imprisons you within the same guilt. To see them as responsible for your well-being makes you powerless to change. This is not what you want. The only way to truly be free is to expose the story. Once you write it all out, ask for help in seeing this differently. Invite the Holy Spirit to give you a new perception that will set you free.

Remember, we don't want to hide the ego, we want to transcend it. Not by repressing, denying or projecting, but by acknowledging, releasing and correcting.

I just can't forgive myself!

Thanks for sharing and reaching out. You are finding it hard to forgive yourself because you are trying to do what only God can do, which is help you to see your innocence when you are seeing guilt/sin/shame. Your part is to be willing to be released from the anguish of guilt and transformed to the joy of innocence. We can't imagine how this is done or even understand why, but lucky for us that is not necessary for relief.

When we feel the burden of guilt and point to the reason why, the egoic mind has all kinds of "solutions" and all kinds of judgments. So the first step in healing is to realize that this offers us zero peace or freedom. The second step is to accept that we do deserve to be at peace and to be free. Sometimes when we realize and accept that our Creator does want us to be free, we don't accept it, we don't believe we deserve to be free. One way to let yourself off the hook is to think of someone you love and ask yourself, "Would I want them to be released from guilt no matter what they had done or failed to do?" Why would you love yourself any less? The third step is to be open-minded on how the transformation will be accomplished. In other words, don't have any expectations on what needs to happen for you to be free of guilt. (IE: someone lets you off the hook, or the "crime" is undone, or you apologize, etc.).

Basically the prayer is, "God (Creator, Source, Universal Love), transform my mind and help me know of my innocence." We may have to ask 77 x 7 but that is only because we are trying to convince ourselves that we deserve release. As soon as we are ready to receive, our innocence is there.

What is the difference between inner-child work and A Course in Miracles?

My very *limited* understanding of inner child work is that it involves looking at the wounding from childhood by revisiting it as an adult where you can understand it in a different way, make different choices or reframe your experience. A Course in Miracles also deals with wounding but it does not attribute wounding to our childhood. Our wounding is from unconscious beliefs about our sinful nature, our unworthiness, etc. We live from our state of mind. The beliefs about who we are will be experienced wherever we are, in childhood, in teen years, in our adult years. Throughout all the happenings in our lives, the false ideas we hold about ourselves are part of our narrative. This is what we are here to heal. The undoing of these unconscious ideas is a process of uncovering, letting go, and receiving spiritual healing from the Holy Spirit.

It is possible that tracing wounding to our childhood (parents, caregivers, world), can help us get in touch with our unconscious beliefs, but also be aware that it can limit our healing. With all of our attention on the past we may fail to recognize that healing happens in the present moment. Working with ACIM is working with your life as it is right now, in the place you find yourself, with the people you find yourself with. It teaches that the past is influencing the present because you are bringing it forward and reliving it through your narratives.

To heal the wounds of the past is to recognize what they are, let go of the judgments and stories, let the Holy Spirit help you to see it differently. Applying this practice to your current day/life is, in essence, inner child work because it is healing the past in the present by noticing what is *here* and asking the Light of God to heal these painful beliefs.

The best way to begin this healing process is to become a student of the workbook. Each lesson leads us away from the “wounds” (ego self-concepts) and toward the Spirit’s vision of who you are. If the workbook seems too daunting right now, or you are not ready, consider doing inner child work with an ACIM affiliated program. This will weave together the traditional therapeutic approach with Course principles.

I’d like to understand more about the precise goals of the Course.

The goal of A Course in Miracles is to teach you who you really are by training your mind to listen to the Holy Spirit (the Voice for God). The Holy Spirit’s function is to remind you of the conditions of your reality and God’s Reality while you seem to exist here on the earth plane. Through this gentle path we keep two feet on the ground as we gain awareness of the unity and holiness of all that God Created.

In essence we are learning the difference between what is true and what is false, what will make us happy and what will bring pain and what we don’t want and what we do want. Our participation as a student means to let go of anything we think we know, be willing to release

guilt, let down our defenses of attack and projection and open to true perception. While we cling to any of these things we remain blind to the truth.

Clinging to these is exactly what the ego advises! Therefore we need a training program that will lower the ego volume, turn up the Spirit volume, and develop trust to listen, learn and do as we are guided. We need to take a course on what is true because all that we have learned is false. As we take baby steps on this path our spiritual eye opens and we see what has been right there all along. With awareness of what is true, we are free.

Why, why, why is there suffering and death?

When you see or experience suffering and death it can bring to the surface challenging questions along with a deep desire to find answers that make sense. The best advice I can give you is to let the questions rise to the surface and be noticed. Most often they remain unasked because we do not believe there is an answer that will bring peace. We ignore the questions or turn to "it's all a mystery" in order to placate these deep questions within our heart. When one experiences death, suffering and grief, they can rise up with such intensity. I encourage you to stay with the questions because it is through the questioning that you open to new insights and spiritual wisdom.

I can't help but think of Siddhartha's story of awakening. Having been exposed to suffering and death, he asked the questions you are asking. This was the first step he took that eventually led to his full awakening to truth and peace.

Try not to be afraid of the questions. When we don't know the answer it can feel uncomfortable. When we doubt what we have been taught or decide that the ideas we have lived by most of our lives are now unacceptable, it can feel unnerving. This is a time to have faith that there IS an answer. You have a right to true understanding and your asking brings it closer to you.

When the questions arise, do not ask the ego for the answer. Present the question to the Holy Spirit and be *willing* to receive the answer from Wisdom. See how gently you are led to your own answers, step by step. The answers may come in a reading, in a meditation, on a billboard, through a friend, or in a dream. Be open to how the Spirit answers you. Trust that there is an answer, even to the hardest questions of all!

How do I extend grace and forgive the person who committed a heinous crime?

Thanks for sharing. In the throes of such things it is easy to get the new teachings about grace and forgiveness from A Course in Miracles confused with what we have learned in the past. A little of the new and a little of the old get mixed together and now we are not quite sure what to do. I'd like to clarify a few things that may be helpful.

You don't extend grace to someone else. Grace is given *you*. Grace is the power and strength to lift you up or move you beyond what you see, feel, think and experience. You don't forgive the person who committed the crime; you give your willingness to see past the guilt to the truth of innocence. You first give your willingness to look past the behavior and the guilt to see what lies beyond. Once you are willing Grace steps in to do it for you.

So often in the forgiveness process we try to do too much. ACIM repeatedly says that just a little willingness to have it be done is all that is asked of you. It might be helpful to think of it in this way: when you see only dark clouds your one and only job is to decide you want to go past the clouds and see the sun. Then you wait for the wind to lift you up and take you there.

You mentioned heinous crimes in your question because this type of dark cloud seems impossible to pass through. This is an important time to remember the first principle of miracles: "There is no order of difficulty in miracles." Why did Jesus put this as the first principle? Because Jesus knows that we believe there *is* an order of difficulty. Some things that happen are easily passed by, and some things seem like cement blocks. That is why we need Grace. To the Spirit they are only clouds easily passed through.

When we are challenged by difficult experiences, we are only asked to give a little willingness to let Grace take us beyond this scene to another place within our mind that will set us free. Nothing is beyond God's reach and everything can be the gateway to a miracle.

During challenging times of my own I have adopted helpful phrase such as, "Even though I am in pain.....even though I believe I was hurt....even though I am angry.....even though I am scared....even though..... I give my willingness to see beyond this and know truth." These statements are your practice of forgiveness and a call for grace to do it for you.

You don't know how this will be accomplished. You don't understand how it all works. And you don't need to. All that is required from you is honesty about where you are at and what you are struggling with, a willingness to be free of all of it and a trust that Spirit has the answer. You make a decision to walk through the door. Grace will do the rest.

“Miracles as such do not matter” T.1.2:1 Can you explain this since the entire book is based on miracles?

To answer this question let's first look at the quotes before and after in order to get the gist of the teaching. Here is a copy from the Urtext writing:

“You will see miracles thru your hands thru me. You should begin each day with the prayer
“Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me today.”

1. The first thing to remember about miracles is that there is no order of difficulty among them. One is not harder or bigger than another. They are all the same.
2. Miracles do not matter. They are quite unimportant.
3. They occur naturally as an expression of love. The real miracle is the love that inspires them. In this sense, everything that comes from love is a miracle.
 - a. This explains the first point related to the lack of order. All expressions of love are maximal.
 - b. This is why the “thing in itself” does not matter. The only thing that matters is the Source, and this is far beyond human evaluation.”

Next we need to understand what Jesus means by a "miracle". To perform a miracle means to let your mind be used for any expression of love. This could be an actual healing (sickness disappears), a change in perception, change in attitude, change in mind, awareness of innocence, etc. The miracle is the verb or action part; the change.

Now to answer your question we can summarize that the change itself (miracle) doesn't matter. Its only purpose is to point to the Love that inspired it. Jesus might be making this point because in his day the miracle became the thing that everyone valued instead of what inspired it. Everyone wanted the change instead of valuing the Love that inspired the change. Jesus was not that impressed with the miracles themselves. He kept pointing to the Love of the Father saying, "This is what is important". Must be he doesn't want us to make that mistake again!

I remember distinctly having an experience of the teaching, "**Miracles do not matter. The real miracle is the love that inspires them.**" during the cancer experience. The disappearance of cancer and even the change of mind were not important. The blessing was the sudden awareness of the purest Love I could ever have imagined.

Think of it this way: all miracles lead to the awareness of our unity with Source. It is this remembrance of Divine Love that is the gold nugget. The means for becoming aware of this is the miracle. Each miracle we accept is one step on the ladder. Once we are at the top, who needs a ladder? Yet if we value the ladder we will keep going up and down forgetting that its only purpose is to take us to the top of the mountain.

Appreciate what gets you there but do not over value it. The awareness of Love's presence is the treasure.

What does it mean that “most are given a slowly evolving training program”?

M.9 This has me frightened.

I’m not sure if you are fearful because of what that would mean for you personally or what it would mean for all of humanity so I will answer both.

Basically the quote implies there are two ways to awaken to our true identity: instantly awaken or slowly awaken. To instantly awaken you let go of everything (guilt, separation, fear of love, defenses, etc.) all at once. The bottom drops out and suddenly you know who you really are. To slowly awaken means that when you are ready, you take one thing you are holding on to and let it go. When you do, you get a glimpse of your innocence, what real love is and how much you want to unite with others and with God. Each time this happens a miracle shines in your life and in the world.

I just want to be clear that having a “slowly evolving training program” doesn't mean bad things are going to keep happening in the world or in your life until you or the whole world awakens. It means that each time you are willing to forgive, to see it differently, to listen to the Holy Spirit tell you what is true - you shine a light into the world.

Jesus tells us that the goal of the moment is a miracle not awakening. A miracle will lead to awakening but your mission is to exchange the nightmare you are currently experiencing for a happy dream of love. T-13.VII.9. “You will first dream of peace, and then awaken to it. Your first exchange of what you made for what you want is the exchange of nightmares for the happy dreams of love.” Once this is done in all areas of your life, when you are willing to leave nothing out, you will awaken. But in the meantime you are asked to be a miracle worker. The world needs the light that you can bring each time you choose to forgive.

If the world seems cold and cruel, you feel weak and vulnerable, and awakening seems so far off, remember the teaching from W.#340 “I can be free of suffering today”.

“Be glad today! Be glad! There is no room for anything but joy and thanks today. Our Father has redeemed His Son this day. Not one of us but will be saved today. Not one who will remain in fear, and none the Father will not gather to Himself, awake in Heaven in the Heart of Love.”