

PREPARING FOR PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION

Week #1 of a 5-Week Series, "A Course in Miracles – Love is Letting Go of Fear"

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A song came on, and the first line of the song was, "*I believe in miracles.*" I felt so uplifted, I thought to myself, "*It's going to be a good day!*" [Congregants laugh] And then the second line followed, and it was even better. It said, "*Where you from, you sexy thing?*" [Congregants laugh] And I thought, "*It's going to be a really good day!*" [Congregants laugh]

So how many people believe in miracles? How many people have either heard of or have studied "A Course in Miracles?" All right; that's great. We, as many Unity churches, have a "Course in Miracles" group, because it just so aligned and resonates with the Unity teachings.

Today we're starting a five-week series on the book by Gerald Jampolsky called *Love is Letting Go of Fear* that is inspired by the book, "A Course in Miracles" ... which, if you don't know, was written in 1976 by Helen Shuckman. And she said she received every single word of it through inner dictation from Jesus Christ.

And in the book, the miracles – "A Course in Miracles" -- the greatest miracle, it states, is gaining a full awareness of the presence of love in our lives. Gaining an awareness of the presence of love, which is the greatest power in the universe.

You know, love is our nature and our essence. Love is the Truth in whose image and likeness that we have all been created. Love is the greatest commandment. And love is the reason that we're here. Love is the purpose that we are here to be.

In "A Course in Miracles," it states that there are only two emotions: love and fear. How many people agree with that? There's only love or fear? And she says that, every single day, every single moment of our lives, we have a choice to choose love or to choose fear.

And the fact is: love is the thing that we desire more than anything else. How many people have at least one area in your life or one relationship in your life that you would like to experience, receive, express more love? Anybody would like more love in their life?

Gerald Jampolsky said that, when he wrote *Love is Letting Go of Fear*, he wrote it for those who are ready to experience personal transformation by removing the blocks to the things that keep us away from our awareness and experience of love. And the fact is: love is powerful; love is healing; love is transforming; love is uplifting. Love changes our lives.

So, today we're going to start by looking at the keys to prepare ourselves for personal transformation. You know, transformation just doesn't happen; it is made to happen. And I absolutely believe that preparation is one of the most important things; it is the foundation of the possibility of greatness and success.

You know, preparation is needed for a great music performance; it requires preparation. For us to be successful in a project, it requires preparation. I've got a painting friend who says, "*The key to painting well is the preparation.*" Jesus prepared himself for his ministry by praying and fasting for 40 days. Preparation is the key to transformation.

And we'll work over the next four weeks of the principles and the lessons and practices for preparation. But today we are going to look at the five things we need to prepare ourselves for personal transformation -- to have a greater realization of the presence and power of love in our lives.

SO THE FIRST ONE – FIRST STEP IN PREPARATION – IS TO BE AWARE THAT WE ARE OUR BELIEFS. That our lives are a reflection of the belief systems that we have.

And so, my question for you is: What do you believe for yourself? Do you have any beliefs that are limiting or are negative towards yourself? You know, what do you believe is possible for you in terms of your happiness? In terms of your relationships? In terms of your prosperity? In terms of your level of success?

And what do you believe is not possible? What do you believe about the people in your life? And what do you believe about life, itself? Because we are what we believe.

Our belief systems are projected into the world, and we attract back the content of our own beliefs; the content of our mindset and our thoughts. Project out lack; we attract more lack. Project out more unfairness; we attract more unfairness. Project out more positivity; we attract more positivity.

Our belief systems are really based on accumulation of all the things we've learned and accepted; all the things we've been conditioned; all the results that we have seen. And studies show that 90% of the things we think today, we thought yesterday. So, we tend to keep thinking some of the same things, so it solidifies these belief systems and becomes an even stronger magnet to attract those things. So, if we keep thinking the same thoughts, we tend to keep getting the same results.

Like, anybody ever date the same person? Anybody ever find yourself in the same financial situation? Do you ever have the same arguments over and over again? Ever make the same mistakes? Life is a reflection of our belief system, and sometimes it can feel like the “same old, same old” ... because if we're always thinking the same things, we tend to keep attracting the same situations.

How many people have ever repeated an unhealthy habit? Even though you knew it was not right for you, but you kept doing it anyway? And that is a reflection of our belief system. You know,

Gerald Jampolsky says we cannot change our lives if we do not change our thoughts. Otherwise, life becomes a repetition of the past. That everything in the present really is not looking at the present; it's actually colored and shaped by the past that we keep holding onto: those old “tapes”; those old mindsets that we just keep living over and over again.

In 1975, Gerald Jampolsky founded the Center for Attitudinal Healing in Marin County, Florida. And it's based on the principle that it is not other people, and it is not the situations in our life, that cause us upset, frustration and unhappiness. Rather, it is our own thoughts and our own attitudes about those things. That is what is responsible for our distress: our own thoughts and our own attitudes.

So, our work in any situation where there's frustration or upset or disappointment is working on our own attitudes and our own thoughts.

You know, when we feel anxious or jealous or disappointed or angry it means it's a reflection of our belief system and it requires us to do some self-healing. Life is a reflection of our beliefs, so we need to look at our beliefs: the ones that are positive, and especially the ones that are negative. The ones that are helpful, but especially the ones that are harmful. Otherwise, we will continue to repeat those patterns in our lives and never really be able to transform or elevate our conditions or situations.

THE SECOND KEY IS TO IDENTIFY THE BLOCKS. So let me ask you: What is blocking you from experiencing peace in your life right now? What is blocking you from experiencing greater levels of love? What is blocking you from experiencing deeper levels of joy?

I'm going to share with you five things that I believe are the blocks to peace and love in our lives. It's really one, but I'm going to break it up into five. And so here they are: fear; judging; control; being defensive or attacking; and holding on to the past.

You know, sometimes we have fears of all kinds: fear of rejection, fear of abandonment, fear of failure. You know, we are fearful and anxious to even try things. We allow fear to dominate our lives.

Judging: you know, we compare; we can criticize; we condemn. It is amazing how much we can judge others and judge ourselves. It is amazing! We judge what other people wear, how they look, what they eat. How they sip their tea. [Congregants laugh] It is stunning! The capacity for judgment is incredible. And fear blocks peace and love. Judging blocks peace and love.

Another one is control. We love to be in control. We love when things go our way all the time. You ever heard people ask that question, *"Would you rather be right or would you rather be happy?"* I know some people who would rather be right ... [Congregants laugh] Because we like control! Again, control does not bring peace, and it blocks love.

Another one is attacking and being defensive. Ever been in an argument and someone said something to you or accused you of something? Then you turn back and accuse them of something? And we keep ... you know, if someone does something, we want to attack them back. Even if it's just a thought, you know, or a word, it's amazing how we just get defensive and just want to attack. Again, attack and defensiveness doesn't bring peace, and it blocks love.

And the last one is holding on. We hold on to grudges; hold on to bitterness or resentments. And again, holding on to these things blocks peace, and it blocks love.

Gerald Jampolsky says, *"While we all want love, many of us seem to be unable to experience it. Our guilty fears from the past block our ability to receive and give love in the present moment. Fear and love can never be experienced at the same time. It is always our choice to which of these emotions we want. By choosing love more consistently than fear, we can change our nature and the quality of our relationships."*

"I am training my mind to shift from what I don't want – fear -- to what I do want: love."

"I am training my mind to shift from what I don't want to what I do want."

Let's say that together: [with congregation] *"I am training my mind to shift what I don't want to what I do want."*

"I choose love instead of fear."

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose love instead of fear."*

Making the decision to stop judging, stop living in fear, stop controlling, stop attacking and stop holding on to the past is really saying to ourselves, *"I choose to no longer punish myself by reliving and re-inflicting those negative experiences of my life; those negative experiences of the past. I choose to stop blocking my own peace and stop blocking my own experience of love."*

Again, Jampolsky says, *"We cannot be free unless we discipline and retrain our minds."* And to be able to remove these blocks, at first we need to identify them.

THE THIRD PRINCIPLE TO PREPARE OURSELVES IS TO MAKE INNER PEACE OUR GOAL. Our main goal in life should be inner peace, is what he says. He says, *"Peace of mind is an internal matter. It must begin with our thoughts and then extend outward. When inner peace is our goal, everything changes."*

And so, what he's saying here, really, is that peace is a prerequisite for healing and transformation. That peace is a prerequisite and a precondition to open ourselves to greater levels of love and to a greater and deeper connection with Spirit.

You know, while fear and judging others and controlling robs us of peace, the way we find peace and regain our peace is to connect with the truth -- which is love. To connect with God -- the Source -- which is love; the Intelligence of the universe. And the more we are connected to that Source, and the more we're connected to love, we are centered in peace.

And what begins to happen is we begin -- when we are centered in peace -- we tend to radiate a belief system and an energy that's more positive, that is more prosperous, that is more loving. It is a higher vibration. But first we establish inner peace. And the key to that is we absolutely have to look inward.

You know, Chris Martin -- everybody know from Coldplay, the lead singer? He's said some really cool things, which are similar to some things that Jim Carrey said. And that is that all the success and all the fame and power and money ... You know, Jim Carrey said he wished everybody could have it, because the truth that we find out is: that's not where pure joy comes from. That doesn't solve your problems. That doesn't remove your sadness. That that doesn't take away the emptiness in our lives.

You know, that the real deal is that we need to make sure we go deeper inward and to connect with Spirit. Mother Teresa calls that -- pursuing all the money and wealth in the world, but still feeling empty - she calls it "spiritual deprivation." She says we might have a lot of stuff, but if we're starving spiritually, that emptiness can never be filled by anything other than Spirit ... other than turning inward ... other than seeking that inner peace and that connection of knowing our oneness with God. So, we need to begin to feed our souls instead of feeding all the outer attractions and activities.

Jampolsky says this: *"As we look inward, we will find peace. And if we look deeper, we will become aware of an intuitive inner voice that provides reliable guidance. When the physical senses are hushed --and we listen to the inner voice and surrender to it -- those become moments of true healing and growth. As we go deeper to explore our inner space, we find peace; we find love; and we find the wisdom and guidance that we have always been seeking."*

In Unity, we affirm the truth that we are co-creators with God; that when we hold something in consciousness, that it will become our experience; that we will attract it. And the fact is: if we hold an intention of peace, we will attract it. If we hold an intention of peace, it means that we must be willing to be still. We must be willing to quiet the mind. We must be willing to experience the silence. Because that is where the wisdom and the fullness of God exists.

In the Book of Isaiah, Chapter 26, Verse 3, it says, *"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee."* So, the preparation, he says here, that is necessary to move towards information is to seek and make inner peace our goal by turning inward and to connecting with God, with love, with the Source.

THE FOURTH ACT OF PREPARATION IS TO PRACTICE LETTING GO. We have a propensity to hold on, but we have a greater fear of letting go. Letting go seems to scare us, but it is an important thing. If we want to experience true freedom and inner peace and greater joy, we need to learn to let go of the unhealthy and limiting false beliefs that we hold on to. We need to let go of the past and our preoccupation with the future. Because that's the only way we can feel peace and presence and the power of the present.

Letting go requires us to be willing: willing to see the world in ourselves and others in a different way; willing to see the value of letting go of our control issues, our grievances, and our judgments; and willing to make, he says, *"forgiveness as important as breathing."*

And why would he say that? *"Make forgiveness as important as breathing."* Let me give you a Scriptural reference that might clarify that. You remember when Peter asked Jesus, *"How many times should I forgive? As many as seven?"* And Jesus said, *"As many as 70 times seven."* Peter's looking for a number, but Jesus is looking to talk about a consciousness of forgiveness.

The number seven in the Bible means completion. So, when he is saying seven, he's saying, *"No; 70 times seven."* He's saying that forgiveness needs to be an ongoing consciousness of us making up our minds to practice letting go of any of those resentments, or any of the bitterness or blame or anger or guilt that we might feel in the course of the day.

In the same way we take a shower to get rid of our daily dirt, I believe we should have a practice of forgiveness and a practice of letting go to get rid of the spiritual dirt that we kind of accumulate in the course of our day.

Letting go is the hardest spiritual practice. And there's several versions, but I'll tell you the three hardest: **forgiveness**. That's about letting go of the toxic emotional energies that we hold on to.

Second, **acceptance**. You ever had a hard time accepting something? Thinking, *"This is wrong. This should have never happened."* We're still angry when we think about it. Acceptance is about letting go of the resistance.

And then the third one is **surrender**. Surrender is letting go of our need for control and letting go of our human will to give way fully to allow God to flow in and through our lives. Transformation is not about striving. It's not about struggling, it's about surrender. It is about practicing letting go on a consistent and regular basis.

So let me ask you: What is the time in your life for you to let go of that you've been holding on to? Who in your life do you need to forgive? What is the time for you to finally accept and make peace with? And in what way is Spirit calling you to surrender and just let go?

Letting go is a powerful and important and should be a daily spiritual practice for all of us: to let go. You know the greatest way we can prepare is to allow letting go to be a regular consistent practice, a consistent consciousness of release. And refusing to allow those things that weigh us down and distract us to build up in our lives.

AND THE FINAL ONE I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS EXTENDING LOVE OR SPREADING LOVE. You know, all of our relationships are literally classrooms of the soul to help us learn about love and unconditional love. You know, every single interaction is an opportunity for us to extend love or to respond to a call for love.

Mother Teresa says, *"Our work is not to do great things, but to do simple things with great love."* She said that we need to extend and spread love, even with a warm greeting, *"Hello"*; even with a warm smile; even with a simple hug. Even by giving someone a compliment. By helping someone with a hand -- lift something. Or sending them a card or a little note to say, *"I really appreciate you,"* or to say, *"How can I support you?"* And just listen to them. Or getting them a cup of coffee.

Sometimes we think we've got to do all these great things to succeed in life. But sometimes it's the simplest things we need to do.

So, who in your life -- in your own family -- could you extend a little bit more love to? Who in your work? You know, who are the people in your life that you already love that you could extend that love a little bit more?

Another aspect is not just for the people we love, which is important, but also for the people where we may not be getting along. Let's say someone gets in your face and gets angry about something. One of the things that Jampolsky says is that every act of fear -- let's say getting jealous or angry or whatever it is -- is a call for love. Can you imagine seeing anybody that gets upset in your life -- seeing them as a beautiful child of God? But right now they're hurting and they want love, but they don't know how to call for it.

He says that, in that way, we tend not to be attacking or defensive. We tend to not engage. But we tend to be willing to have compassion and understanding for that person. And to treat them with greater care -- to treat them with greater kindness -- so that we can help them feel a sense of love.

Every single act -- every single person you can think in your life, whoever acts up in any way, that is not loving -- is actually calling for love. They're calling to be cared for. They're calling to be seen. They just don't know how to do it. And that can really help us have some compassion for them, you know, to help them to feel more loved, more seen, more heard.

A husband comes home and his wife is packed. And she's upset and says, *"I'm leaving you. I am going somewhere where I will be appreciated."*

The husband says, *"Is there another man?"*

And the wife says, *"Oh, there just has to be."* [Congregants laugh]

Any levels of hurt or frustration -- it's a call for love. She wanted to be loved. She wanted to be appreciated. She wanted to be seen. And can you imagine if -- for all the people who act up in our lives -- that we're able to switch to that and realize: they're acting from fear, but what they really want is love. And for us to have the compassion and understanding to respond to that instead of reacting and attacking.

Jesus said in Matthew 25, Verse 40: *"Whatever you did to one of the least of my brothers and sisters you have done unto me."* The fact is we are all the Christ. We are all the Christ beings. We are all expressions of God. We are all children of God. And we are all worthy of being treated and treating everyone else with greater levels of love ... whether they're strangers; whether the people who get upset; whether they're members of our family. We are here to spread love and extend love in any way we can.

"I am a channel of love and light."

Together: [with congregants] *"I am a channel of love and light."*

"I choose to see love."

[Congregants:] *"I choose to see love."*

"I choose to be love."

[Congregants:] *"I choose to be love."*

"I choose to give love."

[Congregants:] *"I choose to give love."*

"I am a channel of love and light."

[Congregants:] *"I am a channel of love and light."*

Gerald Jampolsky said this thing that really captured him in "The Course in Miracles": that it helped him realize that he has a choice -- in every day and every moment -- to experience peace or conflict. That every day and every moment we have the choice to choose love or to choose fear. His goal for himself --

and for every one of us -- is to experience inner peace and to feel a deeper connection with God by removing the blocks to our awareness and experience the pure love of Divine Love.

In 1 John, Chapter 4, it says, *"There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear. Fear cannot exist where love is fully present."*

And that's our work here: is to take a stand for love. And to prepare us for that, we need to be aware that we are our beliefs. And to look at the beliefs that are limiting, that are holding us back, and getting results that are not in alignment with who we are and what we want. We need to identify those blocks: to know that the control, the judging, the fear, the holding onto the past is not helping us. We need to set our intention -- our goal -- for inner peace and to turn within to connect with that. We need to practice letting go -- forgiveness, acceptance, and surrender -- and extending and spreading our love wherever we go.

These are the five steps of preparation for us to experience personal transformation.

God bless you all.

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