

## I CAN CHANGE ALL THOUGHTS THAT HURT

Final Week of the 5-Week Series, "A Course in Miracles – Love is Letting Go of Fear"

Rev. Richard Maraj

Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025

So, we are in the fifth and final week in our series on Gerald Jampolsky's book, "Love is Letting Go of Fear." And, in it, I think he did a really fabulous job of distilling ancient truths from "A Course in Miracles" into 12 practical, soul-affirming lessons. And these lessons really are designed to help us have a sense of inner peace by removing the blocks to our awareness and our experience of love.

"A Course in Miracles" says a couple of things that are absolutely powerful. And that is: number one is love is the only reality. And there are only two emotions: love and fear. That, at any time, we are either living in love or we're living in fear. Living in illusion or living in truth. Living from our small self -- or ego -- or living from our higher self and our divine nature.

You know, this series really has captured a spiritual foundation in the first Book of John, Chapter 4, Verse 18 that says, "*There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear.*" You know, everything that we experience in our lives is a reflection of our belief system and our mindset. And if we are not experiencing things that are enjoyable, or things keep just showing up in a way that's frustrating and difficult, it isn't a matter of shifting things on the outer world to make it better. It's about making an *inner* shift: a shift in our consciousness; a change in our perceptions.

The Scripture that supports this is from the Book of Romans. It says, "*Do not conform to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*" You see, our lives are renewed when we shift our inner perspective ... and how we see ourselves and how we see others and how we see life.

So, I just want to review quickly the previous nine lessons, which are really designed to shift our perspective. And so the first was: 1) All I give, I give to myself. Then: 2) Forgiveness is the key to happiness. 3) I am never upset for the reason I think. 4) I am determined to see things differently. 5) I can escape the world I see by giving up attack thoughts. 6) I am not a victim of the world I see. Last week we did: 7) I will judge nothing that occurs. 8) This instant is the only time there is. 10) The past is over; it can touch me not.

And so, today, we're going to look at the last three lessons, really which, in some ways, re-emphasize and reaffirm some of the previous lessons. You know, speaking of mindsets as a gateway to freedom and from some of the fear-based perceptions that we have in our limiting beliefs to allow us to get to a place of peace and a place of living the truth of love.

So the tenth and the first lesson for today is: **I COULD SEE PEACE INSTEAD OF THIS.** I can see peace instead of this.

Let's say that together: [with congregation] "*I can see peace instead of this.*" And I love that, because when it says "*I could see,*" it means that I have the choice and the ability to choose what I see. Every one of us, at every moment in our lives, has a choice in what we see and how we perceive the things that are going on in our lives.

And if that's true, let me ask you: What are you currently seeing in your life? Are you seeing things that are making you feel good or making you feel sad? Are you seeing things that you like, or things that you dislike? Are you seeing things that are working, or things that are not working? I mean, what situations, what conflicts keep showing up in your life that are creating a level of distress?

You know, whatever we are seeing in the world, at some level, it is a choice in how we are perceiving that. How many people believe that? That what we see in our life is what we choose to see and why we perceive?

You know, as a part of better understanding people's views and perspectives, a researcher placed two children -- a pessimist and an optimist -- alone in separate rooms. The pessimist was in a room that was colorful and bright, with really imaginative toys. And the optimist was put in a room filled with horse manure. [Congregants laugh]

The first child played in the room for a while, but soon went back to the door and knocked and asked to leave, looking really disappointed. He said that he was really bored, and some of the toys broke easily, so he wanted to leave. And then the young optimist came to the door, but instead of asking to leave, she -- in her enthusiastic and energetic way -- asked if she could have a shovel. [Congregants laugh] And, of course, the researcher asked the child, "*Why do you want a shovel?*"

And she said, "*With all this manure around, I'm sure there's got to be a pony in here somewhere!*" [Congregants laugh]

So, whatever situations that aren't looking as great or as perfect as you would like -- you know, situations where we trigger things of saying to ourselves, "*This is horrible; this is bad; this is getting worse; this is hopeless*" -- that we actually can choose to see things differently. To see things from a higher spiritual perspective with a spiritual eye. That we could look on the exact same situations and say to ourselves, "*I choose to see peace instead of this.*" I choose to see peace instead of this.

You know, there are times in our lives where -- like the young optimist -- we will be able to choose to see things in a more positive perspective. But sometimes it will take us some work. It will take us some effort and energy and intention.

And so, let's do it now. Think of something in your life to kind of triggers some upset or frustration; you know, some stress or tension or some conflict that's going on in your life. And now think about that. Now just take a deep breath and say to yourself, "*I can see peace instead of this.*"

Together: [with congregants] "*I can see peace instead of this.*"

Keep thinking about that thing. Take a deep breath. And now say it half voice, but with even more commitment: [with congregants] "*I can see peace instead of this.*"

Take a deep breath. Again, see that situation that's triggering you, and one more time, even softer, say it again: [with congregants] "*I can see peace instead of this.*"

We have the power to shift our perspective, regardless of the situation. Gerald Jampolsky tells of a woman who shared that she used this exact practice while she was moving through her divorce. That she would often get triggered and be angry, or she would be defensive or want to shut down or lash out. And every time any of those situations came, she would pause take a deep breath and say, "*I can see peace instead of this.*" Over and over, "*I can see peace instead of this.*" Every time she got triggered: "*I can see peace instead of this.*"

And she said, over time, the relationship softened, the communication improved, and healing actually began. And they were able to move through the process in a far more harmonious way than they thought. And it wasn't because outer things changed; it's because she changed. That she chose peace; she embodied peace; she radiated peace. And it really helped the energy in that relationship as they moved through a very difficult process.

*"I can see peace instead of this"* is an important mindset; an important practice for all of us. because there are times in our lives that where we just get stuck; where we feel overwhelmed; where we feel upset; where we feel like things are just never going to work out.

And so for this to happen, we really need a process. and in the book of Philippians Chapter 4, Verse 6 and 7, I think it shares a process about how we get to this place of peace. And reading from Verses 6 and 7, it says, *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything turn to God and make your requests known to God with thanksgiving. And the peace of God that surpasses all human understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."*

It's saying that, whatever you're seeing, you can choose to see peace instead by not being anxious about it; by turning it over to God; by giving thanks. And the peace of God that surpasses human understanding will guard our hearts and minds. It is a powerful, important spiritual practice. Because life is not easy. There are difficulties, challenges, frustrations, and particularly conflicts in our relationships.

In the book of Isaiah, it says a similar process. It says, *"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed upon Thee."* And this is saying, again: focus your mind and your intention on Spirit. Focus it within. Focus it on God; on your divine nature. And that peace of God will begin to radiate itself within and beyond you.

You know, the thing is: peace is an inside job. You know, peace begins with our own thoughts, our own minds, our own perspective. You know, when it says in Luke 17:21, *"The kingdom of God is within you,"* It means the kingdom of peace is within you; the kingdom of love is within you; the kingdom of joy is within you. The question is: Are we taking the time to connect to it? To focus on and to go within for it?

You know, Gerald Jampolsky, at the beginning of this book, said the most important goal for us to have in our lives is to have the goal of inner peace. Because he absolutely believes that inner peace is the it to healing, to transformation, and to living in an awareness of the presence of love.

*"I choose what I see."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose what I see."*

*"I choose to see peace."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose to see peace."*

*"I can see peace instead of this."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I can choose peace instead of this."*

The second lesson is **I CAN ELECT TO CHANGE ALL THOUGHTS THAT HURT**. I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt. You know, freedom and inner peace can only occur through an inner process of releasing thoughts that bind us, that hurt us and limit us. There could be no change, there could be no transformation, there can be no improvement in our lives unless we are willing to let go of whatever it is that we might be holding on to.

Michael Beckwith said 100% of spiritual growth is letting go. And Gerald Jampolsky reminds us that all of our thoughts that hurt – that include shame, guilt, jealousy, blame, anger, and resentment -- are optional. Because they are not the truth of who we are! They are not who we are. They are not true.

And so, it's vital for us to let go of these things that are not only not true, but they are actually harmful to our own peace and happiness. But it is incredible -- the human propensity to hold on to things that we don't need or that are not good for us. So, as we hold on to things that are not helpful to us -- like it's some precious gem that we don't want to lose ...

How many people in here have ever held on to something that was not healthier good for you, but you kept holding on? Anybody? And so, it is always an active process of making that decision to let go of fear and to hold on to love. To give up the fear -- to give up the harmful thoughts -- and embrace thoughts of love and joy and peace and positivity.

You know, constantly choosing love instead of fear -- constantly choosing peace instead of conflict -- is our daily spiritual work. And a process he says that we should all engage in is to make a list of reoccurring thoughts that hurt or harm us in some way. Like saying, *"I'm such a dummy."* *"I'm such a knucklehead."* We think these things don't matter, but they actually make a difference, particularly when they are recurring ... which many of them often are.

Thinking thoughts like, *"I'm not good enough"* or, *"I always get hurt."* *"I always end up being taken advantage of"* or, *"I'm just never going to get over this; I'll never get over this."* Things like, *"I am such a loser"* or, *"Life is so unfair."* You know, *"I always mess things up"* or, *"I hate myself. I hate my body."* You know, *"I hate my nose. I hate my eyes. I hate my butt. I hate my thighs."* We have a whole list of the possibilities [congregants laugh] that can fit in that category! But I think we all do it in some ways.

So, once you get our list, and we're a little aware of some of the thoughts that we think that hurt us ... even things like, *"I'll never get that promotion."* *"This will never work out for me."* All these things we need to be aware of. Then we need to begin to replace. Release and replace, release and replace. And to say to ourselves, *"Now I elect to change this thought."*

Now I elect to change this thought. When we say something like, *"I'm not enough"* or, *"I'm a loser,"* we can catch it and say, *"Now I elect to change this thought: I am lovable"* or, *"I am positive."* *"I'm a beloved child of God."* I mean, anything positive! *"I am always learning and growing."* *"Things are always working out for my highest good."* And I mean, whatever it is: replace that thing -- that harmful thought - - with something positive.

You know, a spiritual transformation isn't about pretending; it's actually about releasing and replacing. That it is conscious work. You see it in the Bible a lot. *"Look, all things have passed"; "Look, all things have become new."* It is a replacement process. But it requires conscious work on all of our parts to catch the things that are not healthy and good for us, and to actually choose to consciously replace it with something good; with something more positive.

*"I let go of thoughts that hurt, harm or limit me."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I let go of thoughts that hurt, harm or limit me."*

*"I choose only thoughts that bless, uplift and restore me."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose only thoughts that bless, uplift and restore me."*

The truth is: I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt. Any thoughts that we catch that are not for our highest good -- or not reflective of the kind of life we want to live and the person want to be -- we can choose to change them. We can choose to let them go and replace them.

And so, the last one is -- the last lesson -- is: **I AM RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT I SEE.** I'll bet every one of us has been brought up in some way, and have some belief system, that our happiness or our unhappiness is largely due to events that happen to us or what other people that say or do or think things about us. I think sometimes we really put a lot of blame on other people for our lack of happiness or success, or the things that we want.

But the interesting trick about it is: sometimes we don't want to accept responsibility for our own lives. Sometimes we want to push the responsibility for our own happiness and success on someone else. We seem to think, like, it's some burden or something horrible. And it just isn't!

You know, so who is responsible for our lives? We want to pass the buck as much as we can. I found this little writing called "Who is Responsible?" And here's what it says. It says:

A story is told about four people, one named Everybody; one named Somebody; one named Anybody; and someone named Nobody. And there was an important job to do, and they did not know who was responsible. So, everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. [Congregants laugh]

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. And Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. [Congregants laugh] In the end, Everybody blamed Somebody, and then Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

And so, the question is: Who is responsible? Who is responsible? And who's willing to take responsibility? And the thing about it is: we think it's this burden, but really it's a powerful thing, responsibility. It means you have the ability to respond. You have the resources and the talents in your life to change your life; to change yourself; to uplift, to transform in so many ways.

Think of all the gifts and abilities God has given us: the power of the spoken word; the power of our thoughts; our intentions; our attitudes; our vision; the ability to let go ... I mean, the ability to hold on; the drive and the determination. We have all kinds of resources!

So, what we need to do -- instead of run away from responsibility -- we need to fully embrace responsibility for every aspect of our lives. Which means that we have the most influence on our peace and happiness than anyone or anything in this world. We should be rejoicing and celebrating and fully accepting that we are fully responsible for our lives.

And it extends to everywhere, including our relationships. Here's what Gerald Jampolsky writes. He said, *"When my mother was 88 years old, I was a 54-year-old man who frequently found himself wanting to please her and to change the many situations that made her unhappy. When I found my efforts unsuccessful, I felt uneasy and was tempted to perceive my mother as demanding and rejecting, when she was simply asking for help. I found that I needed to remember that I am responsible for my emotions and all the things that I experienced, and that my mother did not cause my lack of peace. I did."*

And so here, in this situation -- in a relationship that was not easy -- it was only when he realized he was responsible for his emotions -- he was responsible for how he showed up; he was responsible for his own peace -- that he was able to see her and shift his perspective and to accept her. And to not demand that she change. You know, by shifting his perspective and being fully responsible for himself, he actually realized the love in that relationship, the challenges in that relationship ... and realize that his mom was the most significant spiritual teacher he had in his life. And that she is a great reminder to him that he is fully responsible for his life, for his peace, and his happiness.

How many people have someone in your life that really presses your buttons and stretches you to the extreme of compassion, love and acceptance? Does anybody have anybody like that? [Congregants laugh] And, in it, I would say to every one of us: you are fully responsible for your emotions. You are fully responsible for how you show up. You're fully responsible for your own peace and happiness in that and in all situations and areas of your life ... whether it's your spouse, your parent, your child. That is the truth. I am fully responsible for all areas of my life, including all of my relationships.

You know, accepting full responsibility for our lives is a bit scary for us as humans. We don't want all of that stuff. And one of the things I think we don't think about accepting full responsibility for is accepting full responsibility for our own *healing*. Because sometimes -- as successful and wonderful as our lives are -- sometimes there's a part of us that is still hurt or wounded. A part of us that we've never looked at or healed or processed.

In the book of Matthew, Chapter 18, there's a parable called "The Parable of the Lost Sheep." It's about a shepherd who has a hundred sheep and one gets lost. And he leaves the 99 to go find that one lost sheep, and then brings it back and celebrates.

And so, the 99 really kind of represents all the good stuff in our lives ... and there's a lot of good stuff in our lives! And we keep enjoying all that good stuff ... but that one lost sheep represents a part of us that's still hurting. It represents something in us we might have covered over and never admitted to ourselves that we were as hurt as we were. Or just didn't want to face the pain and do that inner work of healing.

But it's important for us to go after that, and to do that work to heal; to really face and process those things. Because, coincidentally, the number 100 in the Bible means wholeness: being whole and complete. And we will not feel as whole and complete. No matter how much of that 99 of good things and wealth and success is there, there will always be a part that feels a little empty because we did not address and heal that. And that is a part of our spiritual life -- is the spiritual path of healing. And accepting full responsibility for healing ourselves in those areas.

*"I am responsible for what I see."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am responsible for what I see."*

*"I am responsible for how I respond."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am responsible for how I respond."*

*"I am responsible for my healing."*

[Congregants:] *"I am responsible for my healing."*

*"I am responsible for my wholeness."*

[Congregants:] *"I am responsible for my wholeness."*

*"I am responsible for my happiness."*

[Congregants:] *"I am responsible for my happiness."*

*"I am responsible."*

Together: *"I am responsible."*

Scary, but powerful. [Congregant repeats: *"Scary but powerful."*] I didn't mean for you to affirm it, but I'm glad you're enthusiastic about it ... [congregants laugh] because it's the truth!

You know, the fact is: every one of us are amazing, amazing spiritual beings. But sometimes we just forget; you know, we forget that truth. And we sometimes let fear take over, and the appearances drag us in and lose center. And that's why the work is to keep coming back and remove those blocks; keep coming back and remove those blocks to get us back to the truth of who we really are.

So, this week, our practices are -- anytime you feel lost or overwhelmed, remember you have the freedom to choose ... and the freedom especially to choose peace. Because peace is the foundation of healing and transformation and living in love.

*"I can see peace instead of this."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I can see peace instead of this."*

And the next thing is to remember: you can release and let go things that are hurtful or harming you. And we repeat a lot of things that are unhealthy, and we need to change and let those go. Release them, but also replace them with something positive.

*"I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt."*

Together: *"I can elect to change all thoughts that hurt."*

And the final one is embrace your responsibility. Embrace the power that you have to change and transform your life ... And, especially, the responsibility to do your healing work so that you can reconnect with the truth of who you are and know that you are whole, complete and lacking in nothing.

This all comes back to love. Love is our only reality. Love is what we're all seeking. Love is why we're here. And the best way to connect with that is to remember: love is letting go of fear.

God bless you all!

*Copyright 2025 Unity of Phoenix Spiritual Center/Rev. Richard Maraj*