

## GET BACK ON COURSE

Week #1 of a 3-Week Series, "Lessons from A Course in Miracles"

Rev. Richard Maraj

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So, how many people have studied "A Course in Miracles?" How many people have not studied, but have heard of "A Course in Miracles?" Okay; cool. "A Course in Miracles" is a comprehensive self-study curriculum that trains us how to let go of fear, guilt and our belief in our separation from God. It teaches us that the greatest miracle is simply shifting our perception from fear to love.

Alan Cohen wrote a book on "A Course in Miracles" called "A Course in Miracles Made Easy," and he starts it with a story about his friend Cliff, who was watching TV in his apartment in Brooklyn when he heard a noise coming from the bedroom. And he rose to investigate and found a burglar creeping in from the fire escape. And the intruder, when he saw Cliff, he turned and began to run out of the apartment. And Cliff yelled, "Wait! You don't have to run. I can help you if I can." And stunned, the burglar stopped and slowly went back into the room.

Cliff asked him what has happened in his life that he would choose to steal as a way to provide for himself. And he shared that he'd been fired from his job and he lost his girlfriend. And he was really feeling powerless. He felt angry and he didn't know how he was going to pay his rent.

Cliff invited him to sit down and offer him a cup of coffee, and they chatted. And he gave the young man some words of encouragement, and he handed him some cash. And he said, "You can come back and talk to me anytime." And the young man thanked him and departed.

You know, the Course tells us that every moment of our lives, we are given a choice to choose fear or choose love. When Cliff entered that, could you imagine how different it would have been had he handled it from a place of fear? A place of anger? And it was amazing. I saw in just reading this thing how powerful it is – and the difference we make -- in shaping experiences by how we show up, whether in fear or in love.

Can you think of a relationship conflict or a disagreement or a situation at work or home where you showed up in fear? And you know it would have been much better had you showed up in love.

Today, we begin a three-week series on "A Course in Miracles," on the principle of miracles and shifting from fear to love. And the talk is entitled "Getting Back on Course."

And so, the first thing we need to do is it's about trust: to **BUILD OUR TRUST**. Trust God; trust divine guidance; and trust that all things will work out. "A Course in Miracles" assures us that we have what he calls "our impeccable guide" -- you know, our flawless guide, our all-knowing guide that can lead us through any and every situation in our lives if we trust it. "A Course in Miracles" calls this impeccable guide the Holy Spirit.

You know, one of the principles of the miracles is to know and trust that the voice of God -- the Holy Spirit -- will always tell us what we need to do, and always has us connected -- our minds to the mind of God. Even in moments where we believe we're separate, we are actually always connected to the fullness, the goodness, and the Allness and the abundance of our Source.

No matter what we're going through or worrying or preoccupied about, the Course says that the number one best thing we could ever do for any difficulty in our lives is turn it over to the Holy Spirit's care. That the best thing -- no matter what we're struggling with: a legal issue, a financial issue, a relationship, family issue -- the number one thing we can do is to let it go and turn it over to our Higher Source. To give it to God. To release it to the Universe. To surrender it to Spirit. To let go and let God.

Emmett Fox echoes the same thing in "The Golden Key," where he says, "Whatever you've got going on in your life, stop thinking about it and just think about God." That is the best answer and solution that we could ever have.

The question is: Do we trust the Universe enough to let it go? Do we trust that God loves us and wants the best for us? Do we trust that all things are working for our highest good? And so, the question for all of us to ask is: Do you trust that God loves you and wants the best for you? And do you trust enough to let it go and surrender and release it, knowing that that is for the highest and best?

And so, Alan was telling a story about how he wanted to buy some property. And he went to this property, he was checking it out. And he was feeling good about it, and went for a second time to check it out. But then he started getting this feeling that maybe there's something not quite right here. And so, as they were leaving on the second visit, two men with huge dogs came and approached them in an aggressive way and said, "*Hey, you can't buy this house. There's a conflict between me and the owner, and we don't want any other owners here.*"

And so, Alan had asked for some guidance on if to purchase this or not. And that, he felt, was great guidance and an answer, thinking they didn't want angry neighbors. They didn't want this. And he followed his gut feeling and then called and asked Spirit to give some guidance and clarity; give a sign of what it would be. They did not buy that, and ended up opening a place that was even better than what they had actually thought from that place.

"A Course in Miracles" says the most powerful prayer we can speak is, "*Please show me.*" Because it's not only a trust, but it's a direction of saying you want to tap into that higher knowledge. You want to touch and connect into it.

And sometimes, you know, we say that we trust. But some evidence that shows that we don't always trust. Like, do you ever pray, and then as soon as you say "Amen," you go back to worrying what you're worried about? For me, it's like when I was a kid, the phrase I didn't like is, "*Thy will be done.*" Because I'd always be like, "Thy will be done, God, but don't make it too hard, please." [Congregants laugh] And another one is: Do you ever pray for the highest and best, but you already have your version of what the highest and best looks like? I mean, we trust, but we don't quite trust as much ...

And this is why we need to work on building our trust. We need to increase our trust. Because true trust is to truly believe that you will be supported by Spirit. That you can let go. That you can relax. That you can stop worrying about it. Stop telling the story about it and just lean in to know that you're loved and supported, and things will work out.

An important thing to do is to not wait till things are messy or problematic. Turn to Spirit daily for every little thing: for your goal and your dreams, as well as your little frustrations. To keep turning there and surrender it. Keep surrendering it. Keep surrendering it and turning it over to God. You know, prayer and turning to Spirit is the first cause, but we treat it like a last resort. It's like we wait until things are ...

I remember the story about the lady; she was flying on the plane, and there was a little kerfuffle in the cabin area. And she said to one of the flight attendants, "*Is everything okay?*"

He said, "*Yeah, but I think you should pray.*"

She said, "*Oh my God! It's so bad we need to pray?*" [Laughs with congregants]

That's how we kind of treat prayer sometimes. It's like a Hail Mary. And the truth is: it is a foundation we need to build up by spending more time in prayer. You can't force trust. You can't pretend trust, and make trust happen. It's something that's got to be built. It's already within us. And it's about spending our time, immersing our mind in the Mind of God, and our oneness and awareness and trust just begins to increase naturally.

William Colgate grew up a very poor kid. And before he left to make his fame and fortune, a friend of his said, *"Trust God. Take God as a partner in your life, and give God the first 10%, and everything will go great in your life. Things will not grow. You will prosper."*

And so, he did that. And he started making so much money, this poor kid, that he was not just tithing 10%. He went to 20%, 30%, and finally 50%. He kept in this flow of trusting that, if he follows the Law, that the increase will happen. He had enough money. He built Colgate University. I mean, he contributed and built a lot of, I think, libraries. I mean, he really contributed. But he trusted, and he absolutely practiced and listened to that guidance.

You know, all 12-step programs attribute the healing, success and recovery to surrendering your life to your Higher Power and taking your Higher Power as your partner in life.

So, trust is a powerful and important thing. You trust the answers. The guidance is already there, and trust it enough to let it go and release it -- to truly turn it over to Spirit. Because we spend so much time having turmoil and worry and frustration, just releasing it alone makes us feel peaceful. And it actually gives it a better chance to unfold in the best way.

One of the aspects of trust, besides letting go is asking and listening. *"Listen to the still, small voice ..."* You know, Spirit speaks in silence often, and sometimes we're too loud and too busy to listen and connect and hear the messages that are there and available for us.

And we also have to get better at how we listen, how we tune in to the choice of love or fear. Because the energy of love brings peace, the energy of love brings calmness and joy, where the energy of fear is heavy and it's anxious. And so, we need to pay attention to the vibes; to pay attention to the energies and the feelings that we have when listening and trusting Spirit.

Here's what Alan Cohen says. He says, *"Your body and feelings are always telling you whether or not any particular decision is aligned with your well-being. Your body and feelings speak louder than our thinking mind, where all of our problems usually live."*

And so, what it is saying here is that our body and our feelings are always tuned in, whether we're aware of it or not. Our mind can run a little wild, but our body and our feelings are in. And it's important for us to tune into it. And so, when it's saying that it's stronger than our thinking, it means sometimes we have to ... Intuition has to get beyond the intellect. It has to go a little bit deeper.

Like, have you ever had a decision to make? And it was really logically clear -- the facts were clear that you should do that -- but something in your gut said, *"Nope, that's not the right move for me."* And I would say it tends to be the right move when we listen and tune in. And it's not about always the facts. It's about how is it feeling?

You know, a friend of mine -- we have a little thing. We call it a little check-in. Because you need to practice listening. You need to practice tuning in to the Higher Power. So, we always do the thing where we'll say, *"Okay, on a scale of 1 to 10 -- 10 being the highest -- is this the best decision for Richard?"* And we'll both -- because we know each other that well -- we'll tune in and say whatever it is. We think this is a 7. We think this is a 1. Or whatever it might be.

And the point I'm making: like any other skill, tuning into your intuition and listening to your intuition and your guidance takes practice. And we need to do it consistently. That's why we sometimes can't tell the difference between Spirit's voice and our ego's voice. It's because we don't do it enough. We need to actually practice it on a consistent basis. So, how do we know the difference between the small, still voice and our ego's voice? It's practice, practice, practice.

Imagine Susan is your best friend. And someone who is not Susan calls you and says, *"Something important has come up, and can you meet me at Starbucks in an hour?"* How many people would go? How many people would not go? Okay.

Next one: Imagine that Susan calls, and doesn't say who she is, but says something important has come up and to meet me at Starbucks in an hour. How many people would go? Okay.

I mean, and that's the thing. It's like hearing your best friend's voice. Like, over time, Spirit will guide us and connect with us in a way that works for us.

For me, it's my gut. I can feel it in my gut when something is right and when something is wrong. But there are often times I'll try to use my head and not trust it ... even though I know it's the best thing -- the most trustworthy thing -- to turn within.

Sometimes we get caught up in our own power or ease or, *"Hey, my life's going great."* And we need to continually trust and listen and tune in. For some people, it's to their gut. For some people, it's an image or an idea. For some people, it'll be some sound that you hear. But we need to tune in and practice and hone the skills so we can get clearer with our guidance and more consistent.

It's like trying to discern: there are two radio stations playing, and which one are you listening to? And you've got to be able to discern by practicing; by listening, and connecting to your feelings to see which is the best.

There's a whole unlimited resource of good. The question is: Do we trust it? Are we willing to let go and surrender to it and to also ask and listen?

A friend of mine said, *"Trust is a must or your game is a bust."* And one of the things we really need to do is to learn to build our trust.

The second thing is to **REDUCE OUR RESISTANCE**. Again, this book by Alan Cohen, it's called "A Course in Miracles Made Easy." And the first thing he says is: it's not easy. And the reason it's not easy, he says, is our biological mechanism of resistance. It's what's implanted in us.

In the same way I was talking about the amygdala, and how it's built into us to protect us from certain threats, the ego also does that, as well. And so, this natural resistance that's in us is resistant to change; ; resistance to risk; resistance to the unknown; and uncertainty or even trying new things. Anything that makes us uncomfortable, there is a level of resistance.

And resistance also, unfortunately, prevents learning and growth and creativity.

He says, rather than resisting our resistance, that we should actually address it: face it head on, and be able to move beyond it so we can unfold and improve and be the very best we can be for ourselves, but also in our relationships and all areas of life.

You know, we have to get over our resistance, and one of the best ways is to learn how to calm and soothe it. And the first way is just to acknowledge it. To acknowledge that this fear thing that we might be going through is like, *"Okay, that's my body and ego trying to help me be safe."*

And then the other one is to just appreciate it: to appreciate that we have that built-in mechanism and how good it is for us. And to not fight against it, but to work with it. And one of the best ways we can do that is to teach it: *"Yeah, you're doing a good job, but right now I've got to set you aside and do something else."*

And that sounds silly, but we do it in meditation all the time. Everybody take a deep breath. And now whatever worries you've got, just set it aside for a moment. Take another deep breath: setting it aside; releasing it completely; and just focusing on your breath.

You see in that little technique how we consciously can say, *"Hey, I'm going to set that aside and say, 'I'm going to stay right here in this moment. and just be more mindful, focus on my breath.'"* Or choose to direct your energies in any way.

So instead of fighting the resistance, we say, *"Hey, cool; you're doing a good job. Really appreciate you. We just need to set this aside for a little bit."* And then open yourself to the wisdom and goodness that is available to us.

And so, the other one ... And that helps us rise above the ego and resistance to move forward to better things.

Another important thing about managing our resistance is to recognize when we are in a resistant mode. So, something comes in our life and it's good, but we freak out and get scared. Like, how does it show up? And here are some of the ways. Some of us get a little bit more controlling. I know nobody in here does ... [Congregants laugh] But I've heard there are people who can sometimes be a little controlling and get worse when situations come.

Another one is comfort eating or mindless eating. Like you ever have like nuts or chocolates by the TV and you're just watching and shoveling. You're not even hungry, and you're eating. And then also not being as fully present and engaged in our relationship. Or sometimes beating ourselves up for not doing as great a job. Or procrastination. Or having an issue with some drama that we tend to have a pattern for. Or just numbing out.

And so, sometimes we have to use some different techniques to move beyond these triggers and these resistant behaviors.

So, let's say you're trying to quit smoking, which is not an easy thing. There's a lot of resistance, and it's not an easy thing. And he says that sometimes we kind of don't have to try too hard. Don't try too hard on it, but kind of switch the focus. Like, start another habit or a practice like yoga or volunteering or meditation or playing pickleball -- something that brings up your joy level. And as your joy level on this new thing comes up, it'll actually get a little easier, and there'll be less resistance on the trying to quit smoking. We take our own pressure off of it, but then focus to create more good energy in our life, and it actually will help us improve in that way.

But my question for you is: What distracts you in your life and is currently distracting you? Or what in your life are you resisting? And what is your pattern of resistance?

You know, resistance is not something that happens to us. Resistance is actually a choice. Even though it is a built-in mechanism in us, it is still a choice. And so, the reason we do it is that we think, like ... let's say: not trying something, because it's less risky. We think it's less risky, and it'll keep us safe, but the truth is: It means that we're also limiting our capacity by not trying things; not going after our dreams; not discovering new abilities in ourselves by holding ourselves back. Thinking we're doing it, but we have to break through that resistance to know that, beyond it, there's greater possibilities. Beyond it, there's greater prosperity and success in all ways.

One night, the neighbor of the Sufi sage, Nazarene, came to find that Nazarene was under the street lamp searching for something in the grass. *"What are you looking for?"* the neighbor said.

*"Well, I dropped my house key,"* Nazarene said.

And the neighbor says, *"Okay, I'll help you."*

And he went down on his knees and he starts searching with Nazarene, as well. And after 30 minutes of no success whatsoever, he said, *"Do you remember where you dropped it?"*

He said, *"Yeah,"* and he points over to a dark spot 20 yards away from where they were.

And he said, *"Well, then why are you looking over here?"*

And Nazarene says, *"Because there's more light over here."* [Congregants laugh]

And the thing is: I think we often look for happiness and peace and joy in all the wrong places. We look for the answer in the easiest, most convenient spot. And that really throws us off course.

Did you know that airplanes for 90% of their trip are off course? But you know why they land where they want to land? Because they keep coming back. They keep coming back. They keep coming back and correcting the source.

Human beings! That's why Paul said, "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" ... Because our minds get distracted a lot.

You know, life is calling for us to express more love and to experience the miracles that love can provide for us. And so, the question is: Are we willing to build trust? Are we willing to reduce our resistance? And are we willing to continue to choose love and choose love and choose love?

When we do, we will truly get back on course. God bless you all.

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