

## STOP HURTING. START LOVING.

Week #2 of a 3-Week Series, "Lessons from A Course in Miracles"

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So, how many people ever woke up happy and said, "*Good morning, God!*"? Anybody ever? And how many people ever woke up and said, "*Good God, it's morning*"? [Laughs with congregants]

So, Gerald Jampolsky -- in his book, "Goodbye to Guilt" -- says one of the basics of the ego's thought system is the belief that the external world is the cause of all of our pain. That other people, the economic and political situations, and other life circumstances are the cause of our pain.

And he thinks this mindset believes that life happens to us and it is so deeply ingrained that we do have people waking up with a heaviness in their hearts thinking, "*What awful thing is going to happen to me today?*" You know, this victim consciousness makes us feel powerless and sometimes hopeless, and takes us further away from the level of peace and joy and happiness that we want to experience.

You know, looking at life this way keeps us kind of stuck in negativity and constantly being fault finders. Judges and complainers. And we have to come to the realization that, if we want to change our life, we need to change how we see ourselves, how we see others, and how we see the world.

This is Week #2 of our three-week series on "A Course in Miracles." And if you don't know, "A Course in Miracles" is a book of spiritual transformation work that was published in 1976 by the Foundation for Inner Peace. And the person that scribed it was a New York psychologist, Helen Schucman, who claimed that the contents, word for word, she took from dictation from the inner voice that she identified and believed was Jesus Christ, conveying through her the formless love of God.

And, you know, the underlying premise of the entire book is that the greatest miracle is the act of coming into the full realization and oneness of the presence of God in us and all around us. And that realization and reawakening comes by training our minds to let go of fear, to let go of guilt, and to let go of the belief that we're separate from God.

Last week, the talk was entitled "Get Back on Course," and we looked at how to trust and listen to our inner guidance. And we talked about reducing our resistance to open our minds. to greater possibilities.

So today we're going to look at two more lessons. The first one is: I will not hurt myself again today. And the second one is: Giving away love is how I keep it. And we shortened it, because that was too long. So, it's called, "Stop Hurting and Start Loving."

Okay, so the first one: **I will not hurt myself again today.**

Why would we want to hurt ourselves? I mean, nobody wants to hurt themselves. Nobody wants to make their lives worse. Yet, we hurt ourselves a lot in a variety of different ways. Some obvious ones like smoking or not exercising; eating a poor diet; drinking too much alcohol; not getting enough sleep.

But what hurts us even more than that are the thoughts that we hold in our minds: guilt and shame and regret. And I would say the thing that hurts us the most is our negative self-talk. Consider some of the things that we say to ourselves, like, "*I am such an idiot; such a knucklehead.*" You know, "*I'm just not enough.*" "*Who am I kidding? I'll never get that promotion.*"

I mean, we say these kind of things to ourselves, like you're such a loser. You know, you'll never change. You don't deserve happiness. You'll never succeed.

I bet there are things that we all say to ourselves that we would never say to another human being. I mean, imagine if somebody followed you every day and could actually speak out loud the inner negative talk, self-talk. What would that sound like? Would that talk sound like a supportive friend? Would it

sound like a harsh critic? Or would it sound like a saboteur trying to undermine our success and happiness?

Gerald Jampolsky says, everything we see is determined by the thoughts we put in our minds. That what we say and what we think literally creates, attracts and shapes not only our mindset, but our experiences and all aspects of our lives.

You know, quality thoughts create a quality life. Thoughts of lack create a life of lack. James Allen says, *"As a man thinketh, so is he."* And that is to say how powerful our thoughts are in shaping our lives. Saying things like, *"Life is unfair."* *"Things never work out for me."* *"I always get taken advantage of."* These things attract and create those experiences in our lives.

Psalm 19, Verse 14 says, *"Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Thy sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer."*

And what this is saying: that we need to be careful with the words we speak and the thoughts we think. And make sure that they are in alignment with God; that they are in alignment with the life that we as spiritual beings are here to live and the things that we want to create and experience. To choose consciously words that are loving, that are positive, that are abundant, that are kind, that are generous. You know, so that when we are fully centered in God, we are fully centered in love.

And so that, in that awareness that we become love finders, good finders and gratitude finders and not fault finders. You know, when we live in love, we respond in love and we treat ourselves with love and others with love, as well.

And the thing is, when we forget our connection and our oneness with God, you know, we tend to make judgments. We tend to lose our sense of peace. We become miserable, and we tend to be defensive and attack others. And the truth is that, when we attack others, it is a sign of something in us that we feel attacked about.

So, Gerald describes his divorce and all the stuff that went through him during that period. And so he -- when the divorce happened and she left him -- he felt wounded. He felt rejected. He felt unloved. He felt like he couldn't trust women. And his mindset was way more centered in the ego mind than in a love mind or God mind.

And after a year and a half, he felt like he was ready to love again. He met somebody, started dating, thought they were perfect. The attraction was great and all that stuff. And then he heard that his wife had somebody new. And it triggered him. And he went back to all the anger and all the bitterness and hate and jealousy. And then he found out they might have started before their marriage. And then he got even more angry, betrayed. You know, he was absolutely devastated by this.

And so, he felt that they were causing his unhappiness. They were the source of his anger, his pain, his jealousy. And so, it took him some time. And the one thing he felt good about: he felt justified in being angry. He felt justified in his hate.

So, there he is feeling good about his justification of his hate and his anger. But then after a while realizing, *"Man, this is not helping me. This is not working to support my peace and my joy and my happiness."* And so, he realized he was thinking like a victim thinking all these things, and he came to the awareness that it was not them that was causing his pain. It was him. It was the kind of thoughts that he was holding; the thoughts that he was thinking.

And so, he began to take a sense of ownership and be aware of what he was actually saying. Letting the words of his mouth and the meditation of his heart be more aligned with the kind of person he wanted to be and the kind of life he wanted to have. And eventually, he was able to heal himself by transforming his thoughts. And it actually healed the relationship with her and even brought peace in his heart towards the other guy.

You know, it's interesting that sometimes we try to make people responsible for our happiness. That they should act in a certain way, do certain things; then we'll love them and we'll be happy and life will be good. But when they don't do the things that we want in a variety of different ways, that we get angry. We don't like them or we just get unhappy with our own lives. And our happiness and our joy tends to go up and down based on what other people are doing.

And it truly is: we give our power away, thinking, *"Someone has to behave in a certain way or I'll be upset or I'll be sad or I'll be frustrated. I won't be happy."* And so, we really need to kind of take that back and flip the script on that to give ourselves back the power to bring us peace and to bring us a sense of happiness.

Let's look at three things that we can do to not hurt ourselves so we can live fuller and happier lives.

So, the first one is to be responsible: **ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY.**

And a part of that means **take back your power**: to not let what anyone else says or does affect your peace and your happiness. That we need to take responsibility for our lives, our happiness, our choices, our success, our healing, our relationships -- including our relationship with ourselves. And we have to take responsibility for stop hurting ourselves.

You know, they've done research on guilt, shame, and self-criticism. And they have found that people who have a high score in shame and guilt and self-criticism actually test high on anxiety and depression and perfectionism and procrastination. That those things absolutely hurt us. Holding on to shame and guilt and being harsh on ourselves literally hurts us in our health and our physiology.

And cultivating self-compassion and self-love actually ties into and connects us to greater emotional resilience, healthier relationships, and it increases our emotion to make positive changes. You know, shame hurts us, and love helps us live happier lives.

So, my question for you is: In what ways are you hurting yourself by what you're saying about yourself and thinking about yourself? And what are the areas in your life where you're not taking full responsibility and that it would be a good idea for us to accept full responsibility in that area?

You know, the message is: If you want a better life, that we need to think better thoughts.

*"I am responsible for my thoughts, healing, and happiness."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am responsible for my thoughts, healing, and happiness."*

*"I am responsible for all areas of my life."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I am happy for all areas of my life."*

And so that's the first thing to not hurt ourselves -- is to be fully responsible for our lives. Take our power back and not let our happiness depend on anyone.

And then the second way to not hurt ourselves is to **COMMIT TO JOY.**

Jampolsky says this. He says, *"More and more, I recognize the crucial importance of committing each day to joy, not to suffering, not to blaming, and not to complaining."*

Again, they have done studies on the impact of complaining and judging in marriage and relationships. And they found giving up judging and giving up complaining about your partner automatically elevates the joy and the positive energy in the relationship. Because complaining drains us.

Kind of reminds me of this guy. He wanted to become a monk. So, he went and talked to the head monk, and there was a vow he had to make, and that was a vow of silence. But every five years, he would get the opportunity to say two words. So, the first five years goes well, and the guy says, *"Well, now you can have two words. What do you have to say?"*

He said, *"Food cold."* [Congregants laugh]

And then five more years goes by, and he gets two more words. And he said, *"So what are your two words?"*

And he said, *"Bed hard."* [Congregants laugh]

And then five more years go by, and the head monk says to him, *"What's your two words?"*

He said, *"I quit."* [Congregants laugh]

And then the head monk said, *"Well, you know, I'm not surprised. All you've done here since you came is complain, complain, complain."* [Congregants laugh]

And so, it's important for us to not choose complaining. Not choose blaming and judging, but to choose to not hurt ourselves by choosing and committing to joy every day. By choosing and committing to love every day is a way to not hurt ourselves.

And then the last one is to **PUT GOD FIRST** in all of our relationships.

Interestingly, in this book I'm reading, he says that this is the hardest one. That we resist more than we realize to have a deeper, more personal, and closer relationship with God, not realizing it is our foundational relationship. It is our foundational core part of building a better, happier life.

And think about this: Like any other relationship, it requires time and attention and care and listening and being open-hearted and trusting.

And the question is: Are we willing to invest those same things of a very good relationship in our relationship with God? Starting every day by focusing our hearts and minds on our oneness with the Spirit within and all around us. And bringing God into every area of our lives -- of our health, of our family, of our finances, of our careers. That -- in any everything -- that God is a partner in that relationship. And taking the time to be still and to listen and to turn to God in all things: our goals, our dreams, as well as our little frustrations and little decisions that we have to make through the course of the day to make it a holy and sacred relationship.

And then allow all the other relationships in our lives to be so.

I know one of the things -- couples praying together, I think is an important thing. But I wouldn't put a lot of stress; it could be just be reading "The Daily Word" together. It could just be sitting in silence for two minutes. It doesn't have to be elaborate, but that intention of joining and unifying ourselves -- hearts and minds -- in the presence and power of God is an important, important thing. It is the greatest thing we could do for ourselves -- is to have a deeper relationship and holy partnership with God's presence.

*"I will not hurt myself again today."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I will not hurt myself again today."*

*"I choose only thoughts of peace, joy, love, and abundance."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose only thoughts of peace, joy, love, and abundance."*

*"I choose to not let anyone block my awareness of God."*

Together: [with congregants] *"I choose to not let anyone block my awareness of God."*

*"I will not hurt myself again today."*

Together: *"I will not hurt myself again today."*

You know, once we realize the power and the importance of our relationship with God, all the other relationships begin to fall into place. And that's how we make sure we don't hurt ourselves, but we help ourselves.

And then the next one is: **Giving love away is how I keep it.**

You know, at first glance, this kind of seems kind of contradictory. Everything we're taught in our world teaches us that, when you give something away, it means you got less. When you give some of your possessions away, you have less. You know, give away money, it means you've got less.

You know, our spiritual life runs a different way of mathematic principles. Because love operates according to divine law, not human law. Love increases when we share it. Compassion grows when we express it. Forgiveness deepens when we extend it. And peace expands when it's offered to another.

Have you ever felt like you didn't have enough love in your life? In your relationship? And the truth is: that's not true. The solution -- the answer -- is to give love, share love, express love, feel divine love within yourself. Because you will never, ever run out of love! We think so, but that is just not the truth.

You know, love is of the Law of Abundance: that the more we give, the more we will experience; the more we will attract; the more we will express in our lives.

Psychologists have found that acts of kindness not only benefit the recipient, but it's a blessing in a variety of ways to the well-being of the giver ... and even to the one observing an act of kindness. It elevates them, as well.

Studies show that people who regularly practice generosity often report of greater life satisfaction, social connections, and lower levels of stress.

You know, before researchers did all this studying on these things, Jesus said, *"Give and it will be given to you."* And he is saying that giving opens channels of love. It opens channels of goodness. It opens channels of abundance.

And so, when we give love in any of its various forms -- from a compliment to a card, to a flower, to buying someone a cup of coffee, to a donut, or whatever is: a good wish or a little message on a Post-it note that I love you. All those are various ways that we can express love. And the fact is we can increase the flow of love in our own lives and in our community and in our world by just expressing love every day.

You know, we have been created in the image and likeness of God, which means we are created in the image and likeness of love. When Jesus said, *"It's the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom,"* the nature of love is to give. The nature of love is to give!

And so here are four areas I think we should give more love. Number one, to the people we already like and love a lot anyway, give some more! We're not going to run out of anything!

And then the second one is to people we don't like. To people we don't like, find a way to express your love. That it could be a note or an offer to give a hand. It could be smiling. It could be whatever it is.

And then the third one is people we don't know. Sending love and blessings to someone at the grocery store, your job, or on the highway ... wherever it is. Expressing our love to others is an important thing.

And the fourth one is a really important one, and that's ourselves. To express love for ourselves. Sometimes we think it's selfish, but no, it's the first and foremost priority to love ourselves. To know that we are the temple of the living God. That we are a channel of light and love, and the more we love and care and support for ourselves, have compassion for ourselves, the more of a vehicle of light and love that we can be.

Love: it's a powerful, important thing. It's a thing we all live for. The reason that we are all here.

Here's a letter: *"Dear John. I have been unable to sleep since I broke off her engagement. Won't you forgive me and forget? Your absence is breaking my heart. I was a fool. Nobody can take your place. I love you. All of my love, Belinda. P.S. Congratulations on winning the lottery this week."* [Congregants laugh] All right.

Love: it's all about love. Anyway ...

So, if we want a better life, two important things we need to do. And number one is to stop hurting ourselves and bringing ourselves down with negative thoughts and untruths about who we think we are. And instead, not to hold thoughts of lack or fear, unworthiness or negativity, but of love, of joy, of abundance, of peace, of harmony.

And then the second one is to give love. That giving love is the way to increase the flow of love. And let's give to people we love, people we don't like, people we don't know, and especially to ourselves. And that's how we stop hurting and start loving. God bless you all.

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