

RELEASE FEAR. RESTORE PEACE.

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

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So how many people would agree that the incredible power of our minds is one of the greatest gifts that we have been given? How many people would agree with that? You know, our minds ... [Laughs] I almost got applause for our minds. I love that.

So, our minds are so powerful, they're so brilliant, they are so creative that they literally shape and influence every area of our lives: all that we achieve; all that we become; all that we experience, including peace and happiness and love and success.

And what I find even more amazing is: as great as our minds are, it is stunning how easily and frequently our minds are distracted. How many people ever had a hard time focusing your mind on what you wanted to focus on? How many people have ever had your mind wander while you were meditating? [Congregants laugh] How many people ever had your mind wander in the middle of a conversation you were having with someone? [Congregants laugh] That hopefully is not sitting next to you right now? [Congregants laugh]

In Buddhism, they have a term, and it's called "monkey mind." And it describes the human mind and how we behave like a monkey jumping from branch to branch. Sometimes our minds can be like that, just constantly distracted by one thing after the other.

That's why the Apostle Paul in the Book of Romans said, "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind." And he said that because our minds need renewing. They get distracted easily and often. They wander, and we tend to sometimes focus on negativity. So, we have to renew our minds to be able to have positive thoughts, prosperous thoughts, more loving thoughts.

So, how many people would agree that you could probably do a little better job in infusing more positive thoughts, more prosperous and loving and peaceful thoughts, into your mind on a regular basis?

Today we are in week three of our three-week series on "A Course in Miracles." And "A Course in Miracles," if you don't know, is a self-study of spiritual thought system. It's a spiritual thought system designed to help us shift our mindset from fear into the awareness of the full presence of love in us and in our lives.

You know, in "A Course in Miracles," they absolutely believe that every single moment of our lives that we are given the choice to choose either fear or choose love. And they say that the greatest miracle is for us to shift our consciousness from fear to love.

So, in Week #1 ... We looked at two lessons per week. The first one was to trust your inner guidance; that we have an impeccable wisdom within us. And the question is: are we trusting and tapping into it on a regular basis? And what we need to do is to trust, is to ask, and listen to the wisdom that our spirit is trying to guide us to.

The second one we did was to reduce our resistance. You know, because of our flight or flight response, we tend to play everything safe. But sometimes so safely, we aren't taking a chance and branching out to do greater things. We sometimes hold ourselves back. And so, what we need to do is acknowledge that this is going on, but set it aside so we can reach beyond to greater things, take greater chances, explore greater possibilities.

Last week, the first of the two we looked at, "*I will not hurt myself again today.*" One of the greatest ways that we hurt ourselves is blaming other people for our happiness; blaming other people for the things that don't go well in our lives. And the reason that it hurts us is because it gives our power away. And so,

what we need to do is accept full responsibility for our lives and take charge of the thoughts that we hold in our minds.

And then the second one last week was, *"Giving love away is how I keep it."* And sometimes we feel like we've run out of love or we don't have much love left in us, and that's not the truth. That love is the Law of Abundance. And that the more we give, the more we share, the more we express, the more it will increase and circulate in our lives. So, whenever we're feeling like we're running low on love -- we don't feel we don't have enough love in our lives -- the best thing to do is to give love, to share love, to express love. Because it will circulate and increase in our lives and in our relationships.

So, today we're going to look ... the two we're going to look at is: "Let peace replace all fear thoughts today." "Only my condemnation injures me." And the short title is "Release Fear. Restore Peace."

Okay, so let's start with **LET PEACE REPLACE ALL MY FEAR THOUGHTS TODAY.**

How many people would consider yourself a worrier? Anybody consider yourself a worrier? How many people seem to always have a lot of things on your mind? Anybody? And then how many people worry so much and when you don't have anything to worry about, you get worried? [Congregants laugh] Okay.

Gerald Jampolsky says that we collectively think a lot of things, and one of them is that most people do not experience peace of mind and think that inner peace is actually something we get by luck or by chance.

And then the second thing is that most people are attracted to drama or anxiety or pain or guilt in whatever form, to the point that when we don't have that in our lives, we think something's wrong. That we are so addicted and attracted to drama.

So, this lesson, which is Lesson #5, makes us aware how often fear influences our thinking, and that we need to make a conscious choice to choose peace instead of fear.

You know, our fear-based thoughts appear, as I've already mentioned, in worry, anxiety, resentment, anger, bitterness, control, criticism, and guilt. These things, as we practice them on a regular basis, literally drain our energy. They deplete us of our energy and our creativity, and they have us feel a sense of separation from our awareness of the presence of God.

You know, while fear plays such a big role in our lives, the truth is it is not the nature of who we are. In 2 Timothy 1, Verse 7, it says, *"God has not given you a spirit of fear. but a spirit of power, love, and self-discipline."* You know, fear rises up in us when we forget that we are spiritual beings; when we forget that we are one with God.

Peace is not something we have to create. Peace is already within us as an expression of the Christ presence. And our task is to remove the mental blocks that block our awareness of that truth.

So, Gerald Jampolsky said he grew up in a family that there was a lot of fear and anxiety in it. Like, every day they would think something not so good was going to happen in their lives. They didn't believe that peace was something that they could enjoy on a full-day basis at all. You know, they truly believed that the ego wants to get rid of peace. You know, and that the ego thinks that justified anger is actually more valuable than peace of mind.

How many people ever said these words or heard someone say it? *"I have the right to be angry!"* Anybody ever heard somebody say that? That we think having justified anger is more important and valuable to us than having inner peace.

And so, when our minds are in this place of attack and fear and guilt, we need to remind ourselves that we are fully responsible for what we experience in life. Peace doesn't happen by chance. It happens by choice. Peace comes from a decision of what we put into our minds. And sometimes we put fearful thoughts and judgmental thoughts; attacking thoughts rather than loving thoughts, joyful thoughts, peaceful thoughts, and grateful thoughts.

And so, Gerald shares a story about being on a board for the very first time. And he was at this board meeting, and they were reading the minutes of the last meeting, and he found himself being upset and kind of irritated because he thought some of the decisions they made were just ridiculous and just not very responsible. So, he started getting pretty irked and upset and being very judgmental towards everyone.

And he noticed how not at peace he was. And he went home and he was exhausted. He went home and he felt such fatigue. And he realized the thing that fatigued him was his own judgment, his own complaining, and his own attacking of himself, but especially others. You know, he realized that his decision to be judgmental is what created a lot of that conflict and frustration that he experienced.

So, he decided to spend more time in meditation and meditating on peace. He spent time releasing some of the toxic energies and judgments that he made. He centered his mind on a sense of peace and started being a “love finder,” a “good finder,” a “gratitude finder.”

And he tapped into what I think is a powerful spiritual principle that we usually don't use, and that is the power and principle of willingness: to be willing to let go; to be willing to learn; to be willing to change; to be willing to listen; to be willing to forgive. To be willing to have an open heart. To be willing to give up the need to be right.

And to show you how powerful willingness is, have you ever been unwilling? Unwilling to listen? Unwilling to change? Unwilling to like someone? Unwilling to forgive? Unwilling to accept what has happened that you didn't want to happen?

You know, willingness is about being open, about being trusting, about being willing to try and believe there is greater good above us. And the greatest willingness of him that he practiced was the willingness to do his inner work: the willingness to look within himself.

And so, he was all centered in peace, and he went back to his second board meeting. And he made a commitment to stay grounded and centered; to hold everyone in the light of love and peace. And then at the end of the board meeting, two board members came up to him and said, “*I love the comments that you made.*” And he didn't say anything to them, but he hadn't made any comments! [Congregants laugh] But he says, he credits it that his consciousness was so centered in peace that it radiated and had an impact on his presence at the meeting, but also his presence on the meeting.

And so, he realized that it was no accident he felt peace. He chose to be centered in peace, and that's what had that impact.

And so we all need to learn: How do we let go of fear? How do we let go of anger and frustration so that we can allow peace to replace all of our thoughts of fear?

Here are four simple ways. And I already mentioned the first one. And the first one is: **you've got to be willing**. You've got to be willing and own the resistance you have. You've got to be willing to listen with an open heart. You've got to be willing to let go. Got to be willing to change and transform.

And so my question for all of us is: How willing are you? On a scale of 1 to 10, how willing are you?

And so, the second one was : **you've got to meditate and quiet your mind**. I mean, was it Leonardo da Vinci and Albert Einstein? They said if you want to make the best of the power of your mind, learn to consistently quiet your mind. To quiet your mind, to be still, to listen to the still small voice will actually help us get the greatest things out of our minds and out of our spirits, out of our depth of creativity.

The third one is to **remind yourself that peace is a choice**. That we always have a choice and peace is a choice.

“I have the power to choose what I put in my mind.”

Together: [with congregants] *“I have the power to choose what I put in my mind.”* Take a deep breath.

"Today I choose to experience only peace."

Together: [with congregants] *"Today I choose to experience only peace."*

We have the power in whatever situations to choose peace.

And then the last one is a way to stop some of that pattern. And that is that -- when you get triggered initially and you want to attack or you want to start condemning -- what we need to do is to **stop, take a deep breath, and send love from your heart to somebody that you love**, your partner, your child, your grandchild, your best friend, your dog. And your cat. [Congregants laugh] Just didn't want to leave them out.

And the thing is: what's so good about that is it stops that avalanche of emotion that can get us triggered and shifts it to something that we know well. We love these people already. And so, switching our minds to just sending love to those individuals is a powerful way to choose peace and a powerful way to replace fear and anger in our lives.

Okay, so let's go to the second one now. And this is: **ONLY MY CONDEMNATION INJURES ME.**

The greatest source of our suffering is not what other people do or say to us, or even the mistakes that we make, but the condemnation that's the worst is what we hold against ourselves ... and what we keep holding well after the event.

You know, when we condemn ourselves, this is what happens. It increases and reinforces the experience of guilt and shame and unworthiness in us. So, when we condemn ourselves, it really has an impact on us. When we condemn other people, what it does: it strengthens the illusion that we're separate.

And both forms of condemnation have one thing in common, and that is they limit our experience of peace. You know, we think that it's other people that are doing it to us and it's their fault that we're in this situation or not. But the truth is: peace comes by not changing other people, but by changing our own perception.

Jesus in the book of Luke, Chapter 6, Verse 37 says, *"Judge not and you will not be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven."* And what it is saying -- judge not -- it's like, don't put that judging energy out there, because that energy will come back to us. Don't put condemnation energy out there, because that will come back to us. But put forgiveness energy, which is freeing and liberating, and that will come back to us.

You know, we have the power to transform our relationships, to heal our wounds and to free ourselves from any unnecessary suffering. And the way to do it is to stop condemning ourselves.

So, Gerald Jampolsky was running in a really beautiful area with a golf course. And he was running, and he was doing his affirmations, and he was feeling good. He felt a sense of oneness. He was on such a high of deep joy of just being alive, and he was so happy and excited to be able to be running in this beautiful area.

And then he looked over, and he saw a beer can on the well-manicured grass, and he thought how ugly that was. And he got really annoyed and bothered about it instantly because he judged. And he judged the person who would do something so inconsiderate and thoughtless, affecting the beauty ... like we're all here to keep the place beautiful.

And so, he noticed he'd lost his peace. And he triggered back that, there was a time in his life he would throw litter out of the window while he was driving. And he felt really bad about that. And it kind of triggered a sense of guilt that he felt for himself. So, he started praying in that moment of what to do and how to release this peace and what guidance to do. And his inner guidance said, *"Go back and pick up that can."* And he was like, *"Well, you know, I don't know if that's necessary."* But he ended up going back and picking up the can.

And he found it amazing that, when he bent over and he picked up the can, that there was a sense of release and peace. And there was a sense of even pride and joy that he was doing some good to preserve the beauty of his area.

And he also began to notice some of the other ways in his life that he condemns himself. Like, he condemns himself because he's short. He condemns himself because he's clumsy; because he's shy; because he's hyperactive. He condemned himself a little bit because he wasn't a great student. He condemned himself because he can't sing in tune. He condemned himself labeling himself a slob. He condemned himself because he wasn't charismatic enough and not liked by as many people. That he wasn't as successful. That he wasn't as wealthy or good-looking, or his hair wasn't as thick. Or he was not as smart as he wanted to be. Or he was not good at remembering people's names or not having a relationship.

And I read you that whole long list and added a few, because I think we do some of this stuff. I think at some level, we condemn ourselves for not living up to some standard we think that we should be at to be successful, to be good-looking, or to be wealthy, or whatever it is we think we need to be. And we carry the weight of those things with us all the time, with those little kind of remarks of what we think about ourselves for not being enough in that area.

And so my question is: What do you condemn yourself for not being? What way do you judge yourself? In what ways do you reject yourself? And what are the negative things that you say about yourself?

Two monks were traveling together, and they came upon a woman who couldn't cross this muddy road. One monk picked her up and carried her across, put her down, and then they kept walking. After like an hour or so, the other monk said, *"Why did you touch that woman? We're not allowed to touch that woman. We're going to get in trouble. We broke one of our vows!"*

And the first monk looked at him and said, "Look, I set her down hours ago. Why are you still carrying her?"

And these things sound super silly, but I'll bet we're doing stuff like that. I'll bet there are things that every one of us is carrying still that happened a long time ago, and we're actually holding some resentment towards ourselves or towards someone else.

And so, what we need to do is to learn how to get that weight off our shoulders, especially as it's weight that we've added on ourselves. And here are three things we need to do to reduce the condemnation of ourselves and others.

And the first one is **COMPASSION**. Like, we're all trying our best. We all mess up. We all make mistakes. And when you get to it, we are all children of God. We are all God's beloved children. And, yes, we make mistakes and mess up. And so, we need to have some compassion for others and also have some compassion for ourselves that we are doing our best. And to look at ourselves and others with care, with kindness, and with a desire for our well-being.

And the truth is: we're all here to learn. So we know that that isn't the person's best, and we haven't put out our best, but we can learn, and we can grow, and we can be better. So, having compassion for ourselves is an important thing.

So, where in your life could you use a little self-compassion? Where in your life can you take it a little bit more easy on you? To be more gentle and caring and encouraging than you have been to yourself lately?

The other thing about handling our condemnation is to use the power of **FORGIVENESS**. Forgiveness is a powerful and important thing that removes the toxic energies and thoughts and bitterness that we sometimes hold on again to ourselves or others. And one of the things that I mentioned already, the willingness. That you don't need to know how to forgive. You just need to be willing.

Are you willing to let go of the pain of the past? Are you willing to free yourself from your attachment to that other person? I mean, God will do the forgiving. The question is: Are you doing the willing? Are you willing?

You know, there's a beautiful line in Psalm 51, Verse 10. I like to use it a lot, because it's a nice way to cleanse. Because sometimes we try to forgive and we don't know how. And this is a great way to help us. And it says, *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew within me the right spirit."*

Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit.

Let's say that together. *"Create ..."* oh, I'm sorry. Did I?

Okay, let's start again.

[With congregants:] *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit."*

One more time: [with congregants] *"Create in me a clean heart, O Lord, and renew within me a right spirit."*

And that's such an important thing -- to cleanse and purify our heart. We don't want a heavy heart carrying these things and having them weigh us down; weigh down our joy and limit our ability to feel peace and to live as full a life as we want.

Compassion, forgiveness, and **ACCEPTANCE**.

Sometimes we don't make peace with everything that's happened in our lives. Sometimes there are things that we're trying to force or think it shouldn't have happened. We hate that it happened. And the fact is: it happened. And we need just to find a place of acceptance and make peace with how things are.

We can improve things, but we need to be at peace realizing that this is how it is right now. And to not fight against it, not hate it, but look at it, be present to it, and then begin to choose how we want to handle it and the next steps that we want to take.

Compassion, forgiveness and acceptance. It's a powerful way to not let condemnation injure us anymore.

A man goes to the doctor and says, *"Doc, you've got to help me. You know, I've been having this reoccurring dream. And one night I'm a teepee, and then the next night I'm a wigwam. And then I'm a teepee and a wigwam and a teepee and a wigwam. What is wrong with me?"*

And the doctor sighs and says, *"Relax; it's simple. It means you're 'two tents.'"* [tense] [Congregants laugh]

I will not condemn myself. I will choose to not ...

You know, this "Course in Miracles" is really, really a powerful thing. It is a spiritual thought system that blends psychology and spirituality. And its whole premise is to train our minds to let go of fear, to let go of guilt, and to let go of the belief that we are separate from God. And our work is to put good thoughts in our minds, remove the blocks of the things that are holding us back. and to realize that we are always living in the presence of divine Love, because we are divine love. Lessons to learn: Release fear. Restore peace. Choose love.

God bless you all.