

Going Home with ACOL (Beyond the Basics)

<https://acourseoflove.org/home-with-acol/>

Why A Course of Love?

According to both A Course in Miracles and A Course of Love, love cannot be taught. The explanation for “why” a new Course was needed is almost as simple as that.

This is the only reason for this continuation of the coursework provided in A Course in Miracles. While you continue to put effort into learning what cannot be learned, as you continue to see yourself as a student seeking to acquire what you do not yet have, you cannot recognize the unity in which you exist . . . (A.4)

Although we cannot “learn” what love is, we can, with willingness and attention to our deepest feelings, remember what love is. The memories of your heart are the strongest and purest that exist, and their remembrance will help to still your mind and reveal the rest. (C:9.12)

These words of love do not enter your body through your eyes and take up residence in your brain, there to be distilled into a language that you can understand. As you read, be aware of your heart, for this is where this learning enters and will stay. Your heart is now your eyes and ears. Your mind can remain within your concept of the brain, for we bypass it now and send it no information for it to process, no data for it to compute. The only change in thinking you are asked to make is to realize that you do not need it. (C:3.14)

While many readers of ACIM may have no interest in a “new” course, they often, without realizing why, are yearning to access the love and knowing of their hearts. Each person who brings this yearning to ACOL can experience a loving and loveable Self, and extend this love to a world much in need of it.

A Purposeful Continuum

The coming of A Course of Love is a purposeful continuum of the guidance given in A Course in Miracles.

A Course in Miracles and A Course of Love work hand-in-hand because the change of thinking taught within A Course in Miracles was a change of thinking about yourself. It attempted to dislodge the ego-mind that has provided you with an identity that you but think you are. A Course of Love then followed in order to reveal to you who you truly are. (T2:4.3)

The revelation of “who we truly are” is the goal we seek, often in the guise of something else (such as God or enlightenment). Even the mere idea of knowing who we truly are, knowing ourselves at last, can bring unexpected tears of hope and relief.

ACOL as a “Course”

In the decades that have passed since Helen Schucman heard the inner voice and scribed *A Course in Miracles*, many related works have been written. And yet no other inner voice heard as Jesus proclaimed that it was time for a “new” course in miracles. Mari Perron was asked to receive a new course in miracles. The first words she “heard”—the words that begin the Prelude—were, This is a course in miracles. It wasn’t until the end of the Prelude that Jesus named his Course:

This time we take a direct approach, an approach that seems at first to leave behind abstract learning and the complex mechanisms of the mind that so betray you. We take a step away from intellect, the pride of the ego, and approach this final learning through the realm of the heart. This is why, to end confusion, we call this course A Course of Love. (C:P.44)

Each course was received in a similar manner from a source that identified itself as Jesus. In both courses, Jesus does not cloak his identity. Sometimes he refers to himself explicitly, sometimes contextually; sometimes in the first person, sometimes in the third person.

According to both courses, the mind projects; the heart extends. It is a natural progression to bring the mind to stillness and then to find the depth at the center of ourselves—the depths of our hearts. One cannot happen without the other. Both are needed. Both courses are lovingly given and eminently capable of fulfilling their intent.

The Purpose of ACOL

Jesus is very clear about the role of *A Course in Miracles* compared to *A Course of Love*:

The world as a state of being, as a whole, has entered a time, brought on largely by A Course in Miracles, in which readiness for miracle-mindedness is upon it. A Course in Miracles opened a door by threatening the ego. All those who, with egos weakened, walked this world with the hope of leaving ego behind, with miracle-minded intent, have awakened human beings to a new identity. They have ushered in a time of ending our identity crisis. Not since Jesus walked the earth has such a time been upon humankind. (C:P.5)

He is also clear about the purpose of ACOL:

“. . . the stated purpose of A Course of Love: Establishing your identity. You needed to first know yourself as a being existing in union before you could know anything else with the certainty you seek, for union is the treasure that has been locked away from you.” (D:Day4:23) And again: Letting go of what your mind would tell you in favor of what your heart already knows is but the purpose of this Course. (C:16.11)

Beyond Confusion

A Course in Miracles is a course of mind training and right thinking. *A Course of Love* is “a course for the heart” and guides one to wholeheartedness. ACIM moves from the specific to the universal; ACOL from the universal to the specific.

The purpose of this Course is to establish your identity. . . . You become confused between the personal self and a true Self only because you have not as yet identified your true Self. Once you have identified your true Self all such confusion will end. (C:27.4, 5)

ACIM states that as a course it cannot take us beyond the ego. In the Introduction to the Clarification of Terms, paragraph 3, it says: *This course remains within the ego framework, where it is needed. It is not concerned with what is beyond all error because it is planned only to set the direction towards it.*

ACOL begins with by-passing the ego and later announces the ego’s demise. Speaking of the three “books” that comprise *A Course of Love*, Jesus says:

*Forget not that who you are is what you are here to make known and thus you must be a being who knows love without fear, joy without sorrow, and life everlasting. You must **be** this. A Course of Love gave you the understanding you needed in order to realize that you **are** this. The Treatises gave you a way to apply this understanding. This dialogue is meant to give you the means to carry what you have been given. (D:Day23.1)*

Few Exercises, Much Experience

A Course in Miracles provides daily exercises the purpose of which is to train the mind, to change our thinking about who we are.

The exercises of A Course in Miracles began with asking you to call into question . . . beliefs in known, observable, facts. You may have regarded these exercises as silly or you may have thought of the lessons of physics and felt as if you understood these

exercises on an intellectual level. But what these exercises have prepared you for is an acceptance of the ongoing change that is creation; an acceptance that something can be what it is, a known fact, an object with an identity, but also part of the ongoing nature of creation. (T2:6.7)

Whereas exercises may be invaluable in mind training,

Remember that you are tired of learning. You are tired here, after your climb. You simply want to rest and have whatever transformation is to come to you to come. If you could indeed give in to this desire fully, it would speed the transformation along quite nicely. So please, listen to your weariness and to your heart's desire to rest. Listen to the call to peace and let yourself recline in the embrace of love, feeling the warm earth beneath you and the heat of the sun above you. Let languor enfold you and apply no effort to what you read here. Just accept what is given. (D:Day5.20)

ACOL uses a different method. There are very few exercises presented. In fact, Jesus says that even the few exercises contained within the text are not required. ACOL contains only one exercise “for the mind” — Dedicate all thought to union. (C:5.20) ACOL is an experiential text. In the concluding portion Jesus provides a powerful experience in “The Forty Days and Forty Nights” on the mountain top: becoming equals, sharing in companionship and dialogue, embracing freedom and power, preparing to return to level ground as a new Self.

This is a living Course. . . . The access to what seems to lie beyond your ability lies in the Christ in you. You might think of the ego as the hand that swats away this knowing. The ego is the teacher you have relied upon when you have relied upon yourself as your own teacher. You forget constantly that the Christ in you is the learner here. (T2:10.1, 8-10)

Time of Holy Spirit, Time of Christ-Self

A Course in Miracles emphasizes the Holy Spirit. ACOL states:

*While the Holy Spirit was properly called upon to change your perception and show you the false from the true, your recognition of the Christ in you is proper in this time of identification of your undivided Self. (C:P.25) The Holy Spirit has brought what comfort you would accept to your troubled mind. Now turn to me to comfort your troubled heart. (T3:17.6) The “time” of the Holy Spirit has now ended because the time of illusion is now called to an end. . . . The return of Christ, or your ability and willingness to live as your true Self, to live in the House of Truth rather than the house of illusion, is what will end the time of illusion. . . . The **time** of the Holy Spirit,*

or the time in which communication was needed between the illusion and the truth, must end in order for the truth to become the one reality. (T3:17.8)

[T]he last generation born into the time of the Holy Spirit will live out their lives and soon all who remain on earth will be those born into the time of Christ. (T4:1.27) You have been told that the time of the Holy Spirit, the time of a need for an intermediary between yourself and God, is gone. You have been invited to know God directly, and to develop a relationship with God. (D:Day3.35)

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a central and distinctive part of *A Course in Miracles*—forgiveness of your brother for “what he did not do.” (T.II.6.2)

Similarly, ACOL states: *True forgiveness simply looks past illusion to the truth where there are no sins to be forgiven, no wrongs to be pardoned. (C:16.12)* Loving behavior follows automatically. ACOL has an identical understanding of forgiveness, but emphasizes the key role of the heart.

Only your heart can lead you to the forgiveness that must overcome judgment. A forgiven world is a world whose foundation has changed from fear to love. Only from this world can your special function be fulfilled and bring the light to those who still live in darkness. Child of God, see you how important it is that you listen to your heart! Your heart does not want to see with judgment or with fear. It calls to you to accept forgiveness that you may give it and henceforth look upon the forgiven world with love. (C:16.8-9)

The original error to be forgiven, ACOL says, is *the choice to believe that you are separate despite the fact that this is not so and cannot ever be. (C:6.6)*

Forgiveness Leading to Union

For ACOL, forgiveness is the first step toward the goal of union, or joining.

Joining rests on forgiveness. This you have heard before without understanding what it is you would forgive. You must forgive reality for being what it is. Reality, the truly real, is relationship. You must forgive God for creating a world in which you cannot be alone. You must forgive God for creating a shared reality before you can understand it is the only one you would want to have. You have to forgive this reality for being different than you have always imagined it to be. You have to forgive yourself for not being able to make it on your own, because you have realized the

impossibility of doing so. You have to forgive yourself for being what you are, a being who exists only in relationship. (C:6.1)

Role of Learning and Teaching

A Course in Miracles is a course in “mind training,” but as it points out, Any situation must be to you a chance to teach others what you are, and what they are to you. No more than that, but also never less. (M.Intro.1.10-11) Also in the Manual for Teachers it guides “teachers of God,” those who have made a deliberate choice in which he did not see his interests as apart from someone else’s. (M.1.1.2) However, ACIM’s focus on teaching and learning has created a tendency toward prolonged “study.”

ACOL advises no study at all and suggests only a short period of teaching and learning after which the “way of learning” ends as our true way of knowing develops.

This Course has led you through resigning as your own teacher, to becoming a true student, and to now leading you beyond the time of being a student to the realization of your accomplishment. You were once comfortable being your own teacher. You willingly gave up this role and became comfortable in the true role of learner. You are now asked to be willing to give up the role of learner and to believe that you will become comfortable and more in your new role as the accomplished. (4T:10.1)

Illusions and Reality

A Course in Miracles emphasizes the dream nature of the reality we perceive (sometime said to be “the world is an illusion”). ACIM points out the inaccuracy of belief in the body, leading many to consider it “unreal.”

In ACOL, Jesus makes clear that everything perceived by the ego—the separated thought system—is indeed illusory, but that which is seen through the thought system of unity (love) is real, even if it temporarily takes the aspect of form. His goal is to abolish the ego and restore our true identity. With the ego gone illusions ceases to exist; we see them for the illusions they are. ACOL says that seeing with the heart leads to true perception and reveals the real world:

When your heart can feel, you need no judgment to tell you the difference between one thing and another. You thus can begin to quit relying on your body’s eyes to distinguish the true from the false, the real from the unreal. (C:21.3) . . . Such is the world that God did create: A world so lovely and so peaceful that when you see it once again you will cry with joy and forget your sadness in an instant. (C:9.47)

ACOL teaches that form—being neutral in and of itself—is either a false representation (ego) or a true representation (Christ-consciousness). Either way, form is simply a representation of the meaning given it. *The false representation of the ego as the self is what has led to the world you see. A true representation of the Self...will lead to true vision and to a new world.* T3:1.3 The body is not what we are (“I am not a body”), but it can represent—reveal—the Christ on earth. This miracle will usher in a new state *in which only God’s laws of love exist even within the realm of physicality.* T3:12.7

The nature of a being of love is to bring form to the formless—to bring love into form. D:Day40.10

What would be a greater step in all of creation than a physical self able to choose to express the Self within the laws of love? T3:12.10

Feelings

The word “feelings” in its various forms is used 673 times in ACOL. The proper integration of feelings and emotions is a major part of ACOL, which promotes “being who you are” in a way that does not negate the personal self or the vulnerable humanity we each experience.

You do not yet believe nor understand that the urges that you feel are real, and neither good nor bad. Your feelings in truth come from love, your response to them is what is guided by fear. . . You are not bad, and you have no feelings that can be labeled so. Yet you are misguided concerning what your feelings mean and how they would bring love to you and you to love. (C:5.11)

This is a call to move now into my embrace and let yourself be comforted. Let the tears fall and the weight of your shoulders rest upon mine. Let me cradle your head against my breast as I stroke your hair and assure you that it will be all right. Realize that this is the whole world, the universe, the all of all in whose embrace you literally exist. Feel the gentleness and the love. Drink in the safety and the rest. Close your eyes and begin to see with an imagination that is beyond thought and words. (C:20.2)

Allow yourself, now, to experience your arrival, your return to your true home, your return to your Self. Laugh. Cry. Shout or wail. Dance and sing. Spin a new web. The web of freedom. (D:Day9.2)

Oneness, not Sameness

Many spiritual teachings, including both ACOL and *A Course in Miracles*, speak of ultimate union or merger with the divine. To some, if separation produces uniqueness then oneness results in sameness. In ACOL oneness does not negate distinction, but it emphasizes the apparent paradox of both union and “individuation.” Individuation—the apparent separation within union—allows for the possibility of relationship. ACOL speaks of union and relationship being equally important. Relationship can only happen through a “joining” of two or more apparent “others.”

*In union and relationship, God is all **and** God is differentiated.* (D:Day37.23)

Whether you know it is true or not, it is true: You would not be other than who you are. Herein lie your peace and your perfection. (C:20.42)

Gender

ACOL’s terminology is inclusive of the feminine—it speaks of sons and daughters, she’s and he’s. It is welcoming of any sexual orientation:

[T]his call to return to your Self is being sounded far and wide and . . . goes out to humble and ordinary people like yourself. There is no exclusivity to this call. It excludes no race nor religion nor ones of either sex or sexual preference. It but calls all to love and to live in the abundance of the truth. (T3:21.21)

ACOL also speaks of Mary, the mother of Jesus and a feminine “Way of Mary” that exists in symbiotic relationship to the “Way of Jesus” now ending:

Christ-consciousness was represented not only by Jesus, but by his mother, Mary. Mary, like Jesus, realized full Christ-consciousness and full expression of Christ-consciousness in form. Each did so in individual ways, ways that revealed the choices available to those who would follow after them. (D:Day17.9)

ACOL Is What It Is

Mari Perron says: “It frankly would have been much easier to present a book unrelated to *A Course in Miracles* than to meet the resistance of those who feel that there is only one ‘Course’ and it is ACIM. But that can’t be done. It is what it is.” Jesus himself stated what *A Course of Love* is and gave it its purpose. ACIM and ACOL are sequential. They are complimentary works, but they are different. Some “differences” are due to interpretations of ACIM that have become commonly held, if erroneous, beliefs over time. But most of the true differences are due to our evolution. When the ego has a stranglehold, what Jesus would say would not be the same as when the ego is weakened and we are clear enough to hear our hearts.”

As you read, be aware your heart, for this is where this learning enters and will stay. Your heart is now your eyes and ears. . . . The only change in thinking you are asked to make is to realize that you do not need it. What this will mean to you goes far beyond the learning of this Course. One such concept, given up and not replaced, will free you beyond your deepest imaginings and free your sisters and brothers as well. (C:3.14)

Your heart has a different scope, a different view. It is the view from within the embrace, the view from love's angle. It is the view of the dying who realize nothing matters but love. This realization is not one of sentiment, regrets, or wishful thinking. It is the view from the embrace, the return to one heartbeat, the return to what is known. This knowing you might call wisdom and think of as an attainable ideal of thought. Yet it is not about thought at all, but is beyond thought. It is not wisdom but the truth. The truth is that which exists. The false is illusion. Love is all that matters because love is all that is. (C:20.48)