

STUDY GUIDE
FOR
A COURSE IN MIRACLES

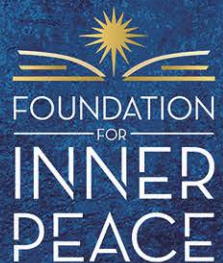


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STUDY GUIDE FOR A COURSE IN MIRACLES

A Course in Miracles (ACIM) consists of three distinct volumes, each with its own focus. The Text presents the theory of the Course, laying out its central ideas in a holistic, symphonic-like progression. The Workbook for Students provides daily lessons that focus on integrating the Course's ideas into your life. The Manual for Teachers (which is for everyone, because we are all students and teachers) is written in question-and-answer form to address many of the most important and practical Course topics. Also included in the Foundation for Inner Peace Combined edition are two valuable Supplements to the Course: "Psychotherapy: Purpose, Process and Practice" and the beautiful and inspiring "Song of Prayer." Faced with three books and two supplements, it's not surprising that new students can find themselves confused and wondering where to begin.

It is always wise at the start of any new learning experience to determine the most helpful and advantageous method of study.

How much more so for learning a spiritual teaching with the potential to totally transform your life? Fortunately, the “how to” for studying *A Course in Miracles* is not complicated. We are delighted to have this opportunity to help you begin your journey through the Course with this simple guidebook, which we hope will give you confidence that you are proceeding in the right direction.

WHAT DOES THE COURSE SAY ABOUT HOW TO STUDY?

ACIM does not give a detailed set of instructions for how to study. We always remind students that there are no set “rules” other than not to do more than one Workbook lesson in any given day. Some students like to start with the Workbook and circle back to read the Text at a later point; some begin with the Text to get an understanding of the theoretical basis of the Course; others choose to read the Text and do the Workbook lessons simultaneously. Any of these approaches will serve the student well. It should also be noted that the Manual for Teachers, in spite of its name, is an excellent starting point for new students, as it explains many of the concepts a student will encounter while reading ACIM.

The Course does give us some general guidelines for study. Right from the start in chapter 1 we are told, *“This is a course in mind training. All learning involves attention and study at some level. Some of the later parts of the course rest too heavily on these earlier sections not to require their careful study.”* (Text, Chapter 1, Section VII, paragraph 4:1-3)

The Introduction to the Workbook for Students tells us,

“A theoretical foundation such as the text provides is necessary as a framework to make the exercises in this workbook meaningful. Yet it is doing the exercises that will make the goal of the course possible. An untrained mind can accomplish nothing. It is the purpose of this workbook to train your mind to think along the lines the text sets forth.” (Workbook for Students, Introduction, paragraph 1:1-4)

While this would seem to be a recommendation to do the Workbook and Text together, many students have been quite successful completing the Workbook first. The main message that we take from this passage is that your Course training will be incomplete without studying both the Text and the Workbook at some point, whatever the order in which they are studied. The Manual for Teachers makes the case for personal choice in the matter: *“In some cases, it may be helpful for the pupil to read the manual first. Others might do better to begin with the workbook. Still others may need to start at the more abstract level of the text.”* (Manual for Teachers, Section 29, paragraph 1:5-7)

Please note that it’s important not to skip the introductions to the different sections of the Course, as they contain valuable instructions. This includes the Preface at the beginning of the book. Its first two sections were written by Course scribe Helen Schucman to help introduce the material to students. The third and final section, titled *“What It Says,”* was dictated to Helen in the same manner as the rest of ACIM. It is a beautiful and succinct summation of all the main principles found in *A Course in Miracles*.

“THE COURSE SAYS... WHAT?”

A Course in Miracles is a radical teaching that aims at completely changing how we view the world, ourselves, and God. It revises many of the core “truths” we have been taught about the nature of the world and the purpose of our lives within that world. It also reinterprets some of the teachings of traditional Christianity. You may find ideas in the Course that seem strange, confusing, unbelievable, or even absurd at first. Rest assured, many others have felt the same way. But don’t let this deter you. Only by implementing the ideas and putting them into practice will you recognize their validity and the profound impact they can have on your life.

The Workbook’s Introduction gives us this very important instruction, which applies not only to the study of the Workbook, but to the entire Course.

“Remember only this: you need not believe the ideas, you need not accept them, and you need not even welcome them. Some of them you may actively resist. None of this will matter, or decrease their efficacy... and whatever your reactions to the ideas may be, use them. Nothing more than that is required.” (Workbook for Students, Introduction, paragraph 9:1-5)

In other words, if you read something that seems incomprehensible or that you simply can’t believe, just set it aside in your mind for the time being. What seems unbelievable to you now may make more sense at a later time; what is unclear now may be explained to your satisfaction further on. If a concept

causes you to feel uneasy, understand that this is a natural response to learning about a completely new way of thinking. Just keep going.

A Course in Miracles is actually quite simple—but not necessarily *easy*. The ideas that make up its foundation are repeated throughout in many different variations. Most of us find that over time the concepts become clearer and more familiar. In the context of later teachings they come to make more sense.

Like anything worth studying, the Course requires commitment, repetition and practice. It's a bit like learning a new language. Indeed, in a way, it *is* a new language: somewhat incomprehensible at first, but over time, with continued use, its message of love and peace become our natural way of “speaking” in the world.

Take your time. Don't rush. You won't understand the Course *better* if you try to do it *faster*. Most of us have found that even after we've finished reading the entire Text and completed the Workbook lessons, the Course has more for us to learn, and indeed we discover that subsequent readings open up into deeper levels of understanding. We feel drawn to ongoing reading and study, not only to learn more, but because it brings a sense of peace and comfort, like visiting with a dear friend, and a conviction that “yes, this is the truth.” For many the study of *A Course in Miracles* becomes a lifelong path, with ever-new vistas opening up among the happily familiar resting places.

“WHAT IS THE GOAL OF STUDYING THE COURSE?”

A student might reasonably ask, “What will I get out of this course if I decide to stick with it? It seems like a big commitment.” The Course offers some answers to this question. *“Knowledge is not the motivation for learning this course. Peace is.”* (Text, Chapter 8, Section I, paragraph 1:1-2) *“Forget not that the motivation for this course is the attainment and the keeping of the state of peace. Given this state the mind is quiet, and the condition in which God is remembered is attained.”* (Text, Chapter 24, Introduction, paragraph 1:1-2) So one of the gifts of the Course is a mind that is less prone to fear and increasingly calm and peaceful, no matter what else may be going on in your life. Who would not welcome a mind that is at peace?

Note the last sentence of the above quote: *“the mind is quiet, and the condition in which God is remembered is attained.”* The primary goal of the Course is to help us remove from our minds all the *“blocks to the awareness of love’s presence”* (Text, Introduction, paragraph 1:7)— blocks that keep us from knowing our oneness with God, Who is Love. We still remain one with God, because that’s how we were created, but we have forgotten and lost our way in a world of our own making, where we *seem* to be separate from each other and apart from God. We will not find true happiness until we have remembered our shared Home in God.

It is in remembering our oneness with God that we reclaim our true Identity. All our searching in this ever-changing world is due to a sense that *something is missing* and we want desperately

to reclaim it. What we really seek are not the goals the world sets forth, but our true Self, what the Course calls the Son of God or the Christ. *A Course in Miracles* is a guidebook for finding our way back to the remembrance of God and our true, eternal Self, which is forever one with God.

“The decision whether or not to listen to this course and follow it is but the choice between truth and illusion.” (Text, Chapter 16, Section V, paragraph 16:1)

“[T]his course will teach you how to remember what you are, restoring to you your Identity.” (Text, Chapter 14, Section X, paragraph 12:4)

“Now is our Source [God] remembered, and Therein we find our true Identity at last.” (Workbook for Students, Lesson 260, paragraph 2:1)

“[T]he course states, and repeatedly, that its purpose is the escape from fear.” (Text, Chapter 9, Section II, paragraph 1:4)

“This course was sent to open up the path of light to us, and teach us, step by step, how to return to the eternal Self we thought we lost.” (Workbook for Students, Review V, Introduction, paragraph 5:4)

“DO I NEED A TEACHER TO LEARN THE COURSE?”

Many students ask whether they need to study with a teacher. The answer to that is yes... but not in the way you might think.

It is *not* necessary to find a “Course teacher.” There are many individuals who conduct workshops and write books about the

Course and many students have benefited from their teaching, especially at the beginning of their study when there is so much new to be learned. However, the Course is essentially self-study. There is no “official” teacher training for ACIM. No person or organization can lay claim to that role. The Course states that anyone who has completed the Workbook can be called a “teacher.” But it also says we are *all* both teachers and students. We are equals as brothers and sisters.

Another thing to keep in mind is that while there are many who know the Course and its words well and consider themselves teachers, there is no guarantee that they understand or practice it consistently. Some may claim authority—that only their understanding of the Course is the correct one and that others are wrong. Some commingle the Course’s message with other spiritual teachings, which risks muddying the waters. This can be especially confusing for new students. Therefore, if you’re drawn to a particular teacher, by all means learn all you can from them. But remember that when it comes to *A Course in Miracles* there are no experts, gurus or saints. We are all both student and teacher—we teach and learn from everything we do or say—and the Course itself holds all the answers we need.

“[Y]ou are studying a unified thought system in which nothing is lacking that is needed, and nothing is included that is contradictory or irrelevant.” (Workbook for Students, Lesson 42, paragraph 7:2)

Study groups can also be quite valuable to the new student and much can be gained from the experience of other students.

Longtime students share their wisdom while newer students can ask questions that spark helpful discussion. But groups can also stifle learning when dominated by a leader who insists that they and they alone understand the Course. In all things, we are wise to use discernment and trust our inner guidance in determining whether or not a particular study group or teacher will be helpful.

The Course itself says nothing about learning from an outside teacher. It *does*, however, have a great deal to say about learning from our *Inner* Teacher. One of the cornerstones of ACIM is the idea that we each have within us an Inner Teacher, which the Course calls the Holy Spirit, Who is *the Voice for God*. (Please note that it is the *Voice for God*, not the *Voice of God*.) The Holy Spirit is the communication link between our mind and God's Mind, as long as we believe that we are separate from God. If invited, the Holy Spirit can become our source of guidance *in all things*, once we have learned how to listen to and trust His Voice. The Course instructs us that, "*The curriculum is highly individualized, and all aspects are under the Holy Spirit's particular care and guidance. Ask and He will answer.*" (Manual for Teachers, Section 29, paragraph 2:6-7) This means that the Holy Spirit knows exactly what you uniquely require in order to shed your mistaken beliefs about yourself and the world and return to your true Self in God. We learn to turn to Him and trust His answers over our own.

Of course, trust in the Holy Spirit can only be developed over time with practice. We must be willing to ask for guidance, then listen and then put that guidance into practice, if we want to experience its results. We cannot see spirit with our physical eyes.

It is invisible. But we can experience its effects and through them become certain of its reality.

This is different from prayer as it's commonly practiced because we are not asking for the things of this world or for any particular outcome to our problems. We need only to release everything to the Holy Spirit in the understanding that we are incapable of knowing what will truly help us. As Workbook lessons 24 and 25 state: *"I do not perceive my own best interests"* and *"I do not know what anything is for."* Given this, we ask for help in seeing our problems differently, correctly—from the Holy Spirit's perspective. It is this changed perception that brings with it release from conflict and opens the door to miracles.

"The Holy Spirit is the perfect Teacher." (Text, Chapter 5, Section III, paragraph 10:1)

"One Teacher is in all minds and He teaches the same lesson to all.... the inestimable worth of every Son of God ..." (Text, Chapter 7, Section VII, paragraph 7:2-3)

"Why would you struggle so frantically to anticipate all you cannot know, when all knowledge lies behind every decision the Holy Spirit makes for you?" (Text, Chapter 14, Section III, paragraph 16:3)

"[T]he Holy Spirit is the Answer to all problems you have made." (Manual for Teachers, Section 11, paragraph 3:1)

“WHY DOES ACIM USE MALE-GENDER PRONOUNS?”

Helen Schucman, the Course’s scribe, began taking it down in 1965 when, unlike today, there was only limited awareness of gender-inclusivity. Therefore, the Course’s language is a reflection of the time when the material was transcribed, and it utilizes the rules of grammar that pertained at that time, such as male-gendered pronouns.

There is another explanation as well, however. The Course was intended as a “correction” or reinterpretation of traditional Christian thought and terminology. As such, it gives new and different meanings to many well-known Christian terms (see the Glossary section of this Study Guide). It also offers different interpretations for many Bible passages. Therefore, to be consistent it was necessary to use the same language that was used historically in the Judeo-Christian tradition, including male pronouns (“He,” “His,” “Him”) for God and the Holy Spirit, and “brother” instead of the more inclusive “brothers and sisters.” While this language can be a stumbling block for some, most students have been able to set aside their difficulties in order to reap the benefits of a teaching that is at heart completely inclusive. Students are of course welcome to mentally change the pronouns for themselves as they read if this helps them to enter more freely into the material. However, as in all things, we encourage checking in with your Inner Teacher, the Holy Spirit, for insight and guidance about any strong feelings you have on this or any other topic.

GLOSSARY OF COMMONLY USED ACIM TERMS

As noted, the language of *A Course in Miracles* is anchored in the Judeo-Christian tradition. In addition to use of male-gendered pronouns, it uses terms such as Christ, the Holy Spirit, Heaven, sin, salvation, and Atonement. However, it gives these terms entirely new meanings in keeping with what its Author, Jesus, originally intended to convey. For the new student this can be confusing at best and off-putting at worst. Some have given up on the Course entirely because they were so triggered by its Christian terminology.

Therefore, to help you enter the Course's lexicon more rapidly and with greater understanding, we have compiled a short glossary of some of the more commonly used and misunderstood words. This glossary is not intended to be comprehensive or definitive. We offer it to help you get a leg up, so to speak, and avoid some of the difficulties that students have faced when they first encounter ACIM. We also recommend reading the Clarification of Terms section at the end of the Manual for Teachers.

GOD

God has been portrayed in some religious traditions as an angry, demanding and punitive deity. According to these traditions, God is omnipotent and omniscient: all-powerful and all-knowing. He created the world and everything in it, including human beings. Nothing happens without His say-so, and yet He judges each of us for our thoughts and deeds—judgments that can lift us to heaven when we die or condemn us to eternal suffering in hell.

The Author of ACIM paints an entirely different portrait of God. The God of the Course is *pure Love*—and nothing else. Each of us is loved by God unconditionally and forever. We, as God’s creation, are in fact one with God; therefore our true nature and Identity are Love as well.

Nothing exists outside God and Love. Therefore, anything that is *not* love cannot really be said to exist. This would include the world in which we live. This world is a dream that we are dreaming, while in reality our true Self remains at Home with God. (Rest assured, this is a difficult teaching for many. With time and study most students come to understand its truth and its power to set us free.)

“God is All in all in a very literal sense. All being is in Him Who is all Being. You are therefore in Him since your being is His.” (Text, Chapter 7, Section IV, paragraph 7:4-6)

“You are at home in God, dreaming of exile but perfectly capable of awakening to reality.” (Text, Chapter 10, Section I, paragraph 2:1)

“The statement ‘God created man in His own image and likeness’ needs reinterpretation. ‘Image’ can be understood as ‘thought,’ and ‘likeness’ as ‘of a like quality.’ God did create spirit in His Own Thought and of a quality like to His Own. There is nothing else.” (Text, Chapter 3, Section V, paragraph 7:1-4)

THE SEPARATION

As noted above, ACIM teaches that God is All That Is and that we are part of the oneness that is God. Collectively, we are “the Sonship”: the one Son of God. The Course says that the Son of God had a tiny, mad idea that he could be somehow separate from God. Such is the power of the mind of God’s Son that this “separate” self became a reality—but only in his mind. The Son cannot alter what his Father created him to be, but he can *believe* that he has done so. This seeming separation from God gave rise to a false individual self which the Course calls “the ego” (see below). The ego clothes itself in a physical body in order to further “prove” it is unique and separate from all others and certainly not a part of God.

Through a process of projection, the separation gave rise to an entire world, the world we see all around us. It is a world in which we perceive separation everywhere: separate objects, separate people, and separate events that occur at different times and places. In such a world, conflict and contrast are inevitable. It is also a world of opposites: good and bad, darkness and light, pleasure and pain; a world in which fear, anger, attack, and guilt become all too real. This is the ego’s world of duality. God did not create it because how could absolute Love give rise to anything that is not absolute Love?

In truth, there is only the oneness of God, and separation from God is not possible. The instant that the idea of separateness arose, however, God’s plan of Atonement came into being to

ensure that the Son of God would find his way out of his delusion of separation, back to his home in God.

“The separation is merely another term for a split mind. The ego is the symbol of separation...” (Text, Chapter 5, Section III, paragraph 9:3-4)

“Separation is only the decision not to know yourself.” (Text, Chapter 16, Section 5, paragraph 15:3)

“You dwell not here, but in eternity. You travel but in dreams, while safe at home.” (Text, Chapter 13, Section VII, paragraph 17:6-7)

THE EGO

The term “ego,” as ACIM uses it, is different from the common Freudian understanding of “ego.” In the Course, the ego is that part of the mind that believes itself separate from God and all others. It is the ego that projects our guilt outward, onto our brothers, judging and blaming them. At the same time, the ego tells us that we are flawed, unworthy, and deserving of punishment and death. The Course counters this message, promising us that we are purely innocent and beloved by God, who does not condemn.

The Course teaches that *“the ego vacillates between suspiciousness and viciousness”* and that *“When the ego experiences threat, its only decision is whether to attack now or to withdraw to attack later.”* (Text, Chapter 9, Section VIII, paragraph 2:7; paragraph 3:4) The ego may seem at times to be a formidable adversary, but the Course teaches that the ego does not really exist, except as a symbolic part of the mind. The Holy Spirit is also in our minds.

He is the bridge between our separated false ego-self and our true Self as God created It. It is in choosing to listen to the Voice of the Holy Spirit instead of the attack thoughts of the ego that we begin to experience the peace and healing that ACIM promises.

“The ego is the part of your mind that believes your existence is defined by separation.” (Text, Chapter 4, Section VII, paragraph 1:5)

“The ego is the mind’s belief that it is completely on its own.” (Text, Chapter 4, Section II, paragraph 8:4)

“All that the ego is, is an idea that things could happen to the Son of God without his will, and thus without the Will of His Creator, Whose Will cannot be separate from his own.” (Text, Chapter 21, Section II, paragraph 6:4)

“In the presence of those who hear the Holy Spirit’s Call to be as one, the ego fades away and is undone.” (Text, Chapter 5, Section IV, paragraph 1:11)

SIN

Sin is a difficult and destructive idea, one that has brought about great conflict and suffering in the world. Some forms of Christianity have placed a heavy weight on “sin,” telling believers that they are sinful from birth and undeserving of God’s mercy and love unless they behave in certain ways and perform certain good deeds. They also promote the idea that Jesus “died for our sins,” implying that God had to sacrifice His own Son as penance to save the rest of us from sin, which of course leads us to feel guilty. ACIM reverses these teachings. It tells us that what ego

calls sin is simply error and an error does not call for penance or punishment, but for correction. Correction occurs at the level of the mind, not through good deeds which take place in the dream-world of separation and necessarily involve actions taken by a physical body. In the eyes of God and the Holy Spirit, we are wholly innocent, exactly as we were created.

ACIM says that sin is “insanity.” It is wrong-mindedness: the belief that we could ever be separate from the oneness that is God and His Son. As such, it is unreal.

“[S]in is the idea you are alone and separated off from what is whole.” (Text, Chapter 30, Section III, paragraph 3:7)

“Sin is belief that attack can be projected outside the mind where the belief arose.” (Text, Chapter 26, Section VII, paragraph 12:2)

“Sin is but error in a special form the ego venerates. It would preserve all errors and make them sins.” (Text, Chapter 22, Section III, paragraph 4:5-6)

“Mistakes are for correction, and they call for nothing else. What calls for punishment must call for nothing. Every mistake must be a call for love. What then, is sin? What could it be but a mistake you would keep hidden; a call for help that you would keep unheard and thus unanswered?” (Text, Chapter 19, Section III, paragraph 4:5-9)

“Sin has no place in Heaven, where its results are alien.... And therein lies your need to see your brother sinless. In him is Heaven. See sin in him instead, and Heaven is lost to you. But see him as he is, and what is yours shines from him to you.” (Text, Chapter 20, Section IV, paragraph 2:1-5)

FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is one of the central ideas taught by ACIM. However, as with so many Course terms, its meaning is different from our usual understanding in which we deign to pardon or overlook a wrong that was inflicted on us. If we keep in mind the Course's teaching that the physical world is an illusion, a dream of separation, then it becomes easier to understand that what we thought others did to us (and what we in turn have done to them) never really happened. The past is not only over, it never existed in the first place. The present moment is all there is. The ego weaves past and future into an illusion of linear time that supplants the present. Forgiveness recognizes this truth. It is the choice to release the past and all its judgments.

To forgive does not mean that we *condone* the hurtful actions of others. Rather, we are choosing to see them as we would want to be seen, as the holy Son of God, in order to also recognize that same holiness within ourselves. The gift of forgiveness is freedom from the past and an ongoing sense of peace.

The ego will try to convince us that the wrongs done to us are very real. It is important to note that ACIM does *not* ask us to deny what we feel. Especially regarding traumatic events from our past, we may need to explore the hurt and anger more deeply, perhaps with a trained therapist, to lessen the emotional charge of our memories. Ask the Holy Spirit for help and guidance in facing emotional pain. In this way we become ready to let go of our hurts and grievances, freeing ourselves from the thoughts that steal our inner peace.

Many of us have had the experience of “forgiving” someone only to have our negative feelings return at a later time. This may be because we were not yet ready or willing to let go fully. There may be more inner work to do. Remember, the ego thrives on judgment and conflict. It will remind us eagerly and often how others have failed or injured us. The Course teaches that our judgment of others is the ego’s way of projecting our own guilt onto them. But there is no justification for guilt because *God does not judge*. We remain eternally as He created us.

At the conclusion of its powerful introduction, the Course states that *“Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.”* (Text, Introduction, paragraph 2:2-4) What this means is that the hurts and grievances we’ve endured, or that others have experienced as a result of our words and actions, do not exist in God’s reality. The separation and all it gave rise to never happened, because God’s reality is only love, peace and wholeness without interruption or end. He sees no sin and no blame; He looks upon us only with love. Therefore, God does not need to forgive. But here in the world of separation, forgiveness becomes our primary task, the *only* thing we need do, for ourselves and our sisters and brothers.

“Forgiveness recognizes what you thought your brother did to you has not occurred. It does not pardon sins and make them real. It sees there was no sin. And in that view are all your sins forgiven.”
(Workbook for Students, Part II, Section 1, paragraph 1:1-4)

“For what can be forgiven but the past, and if it is forgiven it is gone.” (Workbook for Students, Lesson 289, paragraph 1:6)

"[Forgiveness] is the reflection of God's love on earth." (Workbook for Students, Lesson 60, paragraph 1:5)

"Forgiveness is the only thing that stands for truth in the illusions of the world. It sees their nothingness, and looks straight through the thousand forms in which they may appear." (Workbook for Students, Lesson 134, paragraph 7:1-2)

THE MIRACLE

Miracles occur when a block to the awareness of love is lifted, allowing love to naturally extend and express itself in whatever form is most needed here in the world. Miracles shift the temporal order of things in ways that defy rational, cause-and-effect explanation. Both time and space can be transcended. Changes can occur instantly in people and situations that might otherwise have required years to play out. Miracles are not under our conscious control, however. They arise from our true Self, the Christ in us, and they are mediated by the Holy Spirit and Jesus (who are both part of that Self). Therefore, we may or may not even be aware of the miracles that we bring about.

"A miracle is a correction.... It merely looks on devastation, and reminds the mind that what it sees is false. It undoes error, but does not attempt to go beyond perception, nor exceed the function of forgiveness." (Workbook for Students, Part II, Section 13, paragraph 1:1, 3-4)

"Miracles are natural. When they do not occur something has gone wrong." (Text, Chapter 1, Section I, paragraph 6:1-2)

“The miracle is a learning device that lessens the need for time. It establishes an out-of-pattern time interval not under the usual laws of time. In this sense it is timeless.” (Text, Chapter 1, Section I, paragraph 47:1-3)

“[M]iracles violate every law of reality as this world judges it. Every law of time and space, of magnitude and mass is transcended, for what the Holy Spirit enables you to do is clearly beyond all of them.”
(Text, Chapter 12, Section VII, paragraph 3:2-3)

“Miracles are a kind of exchange. Like all expressions of love, which are always miraculous in the true sense, the exchange reverses the physical laws. They bring more love to the giver and the receiver.”
(Text, Chapter 1, Section I, paragraph 9:1-3)

ATONEMENT – SALVATION

ACIM frequently refers to what it calls “the Atonement.” To understand the meaning of the word within ACIM’s framework, we need first to understand what it does *not* mean. Atonement is not expiation for sin, because in God’s reality sin does not exist. The word does not imply penance or punishment, only a need for correction. Nor does Atonement require sacrifice of any kind from anyone.

The Atonement is the grand plan or movement by which the Son of God awakens to His wholeness and His true nature, which is only love. The Atonement’s completion is inevitable, because it has already occurred. It stands outside of time, even though it unfolds within the world of linear time.

The Course tells us that *“the sole responsibility of the miracle worker is to accept the Atonement for himself.”* (Text, Chapter 2, Section V, paragraph 5:1). This is so important that the entire sentence is italicized for emphasis—one of the rare instances in the Text where this occurs (other than in prayers). We are not asked to do anything special or change anything outside of us. We need only to accept in our minds the truth that the separation is illusory and that we remain as God created us. We already contain the knowledge of our true Self. We simply need to remember.

As we awaken to this Self and its love through forgiveness, we learn from the Holy Spirit what we have to do to play our individual part in the Atonement. This can take many different forms and appears to be unique to each person. But the form doesn’t matter. We each make the journey back to God, understanding that we do so not only for ourselves, but for all the separated Sons of God.

Atonement is equivalent to salvation in that it is our “salvation” from the dream of separation and the ego’s tyranny. *“Salvation is a promise, made by God, that you would find your way to Him at last. It cannot but be kept. It guarantees that time will have an end, and all the thoughts that have been born in time will have an end as well.”* (Workbook Part II, Section 2, paragraph 1:1-3). That is the promise, the covenant, of the Atonement. It lives in each of us as the remembrance of God.

“Atonement means correction, or the undoing of errors.” (Manual for Teachers, Section 18, paragraph 4:6)

“The means of the Atonement is forgiveness.” (Clarification of Terms, Introduction, paragraph 1:3)

“Healing and Atonement are not related; they are identical.”(Manual for Teachers, Section 22, paragraph 1:1)

“We are all joined in the Atonement here, and nothing else can unite us in the world. So will the world of separation slip away, and full communication be restored between the Father and the Son.” (Text, Chapter 14, Section V, paragraph 5:1-2)

“The full awareness of the Atonement, then, is the recognition that the separation never occurred. The ego cannot prevail against this because it is an explicit statement that the ego never occurred.” (Text, Chapter 6, Section II, paragraph 10:7-8)

“You have a part to play in the Atonement, but the plan of the Atonement is beyond you.” (Text, Chapter 9, Section IV, paragraph 2:1)

CHRIST AND JESUS

“Christ” or the “Christ mind,” is the term that the Course uses to identify the Son of God, united with God in perfect oneness. Christ is our true Identity, our true Self. He is spirit, in contrast to our separated, individual self that appears to be in a body.

Jesus was a man who walked the earth as we do. He was simply one aspect of the Christ, no different in that sense from any of the rest of us. However, he awoke to his true Identity and remembered his oneness with God. He recognized the presence of the Christ in all his sisters and brothers. (ACIM calls this “Christ’s vision”: seeing the light of holiness in all things and the face of

Christ in all others.) As a result, Jesus was placed in charge of miracles and the Atonement.

“In his complete identification with the Christ—the perfect Son of God, His one creation and His happiness, forever like Himself and one with Him—Jesus became what all of you must be. He led the way for you to follow him. He leads you back to God because he saw the road before him, and he followed it. He made a clear distinction, still obscure to you, between the false and the true. He offered you a final demonstration that it is impossible to kill God’s Son; nor can his life in any way be changed by sin and evil, malice, fear or death.”

(Clarification of Terms, Section 5, paragraph 3:1-5)

“Is [Jesus] the Christ? O yes, along with you.... He will remain with you to lead you from the hell you made to God. And when you join your will with his, your sight will be his vision, for the eyes of Christ are shared. Walking with him is just as natural as walking with a brother whom you knew since you were born, for such indeed he is.” (Clarification of Terms, Section 5, paragraph 5:1-2, 4-6)

“Is he God’s only Helper? No, indeed. For Christ takes many forms with different names until their oneness can be recognized. But Jesus is for you the bearer of Christ’s single message of the Love of God. You need no other. It is possible to read his words and benefit from them without accepting him into your life. Yet he would help you yet a little more if you will share your pains and joys with him, and leave then both to find the peace of God.” (Clarification of Terms, Section 5, paragraph 6:1-7)

There are many other terms that ACIM uses in ways that differ from the common usage. However, these should be sufficient to help you begin your study of the Course with greater understanding and clarity, and less room for confusion.



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If you have more questions—and the likelihood is that you will—there are many resources available in the ACIM community. Here at the Foundation for Inner Peace we are always happy to answer your questions. Just email them to info@acim.org and write “Course Question” in the subject line.

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We thank you for joining with us on this “*journey without distance, to a goal that has never changed.*” (Text, Chapter 8, Section VI, paragraph 9:7)