

# Fellowship and *A Course in Miracles*



By Bill Diedrich

**A** *Course in Miracles* is a key spiritual teaching for members of the Fellowship spiritual community. This is not to say that we all study the Course, because we don't. Yet, you cannot be in this community and not be affected by it, especially through our music. The Course teaches that we are each responsible for our lives, a lesson reinforced every time we sing a rousing rendition of "I Am Responsible":

"I am responsible for what I see./  
I choose the feelings I experience./  
I decide upon the goal I would  
achieve,/ and everything that seems to  
happen to me./ I ask for and receive as I  
have asked./ I am responsible for what I  
see and ask for."

You can benefit from the *Course*, even if you don't accept all of it. The words of this song, sung to music composed by Max Raines, inspire us to be adults who take full responsibility for our own lives.

Most humans live in a state of arrested development, blaming others, holding on to past grievances, and generally refusing to grow. Thanks to *A Course in Miracles*, many of us have learned how to be "grown ups."

And then, there is forgiveness. Singing "Forgiveness Offers Everything" reminds us that holding on to grievances and old hurts offers nothing; they are valueless. Forgiveness, on the other hand, offers us everything. As the *Course* tells us, forgiveness is not pardoning; it is recognizing that no hurt took place. All hurts are manufactured by the ego. Nothing that has seemingly happened has actually changed what we are. And what are we?

"Spirit am I./ A holy child of God./ Free of all limits, safe and healed and whole./ Free to forgive, and free to save the world."

Max's beautiful melody makes this one easy to remember. Whenever we identify with the ego, when we identify with disease, poverty, or conflict in relationships, we can remember that those things are not

what we are. We are spirit.

Whether you study the *Course* or not, you probably know these lessons; the melodies are rooted in your mind, there for easy access when needed.

For the past several years, The Fellowship has hosted *Course* teacher Gary Renard, author of *The Disappearance of the Universe* (see "Happenings," Page 11). For many of us, Gary set us straight on what the *Course* is really saying. The *Course* is not an affirmative process (even though it contains plenty of affirmations). It is a course of negation. It is about unlearning all that we thought was true. It is about letting go of the valueless in life, which includes most everything the world sees as valuable. The *Course* tells us we need not seek love. Love already surrounds us and sustains us. We need only remove the barriers we have created to love.

Two other visiting teachers, authors Nouk Sanchez and Tomas Vieira (*Take Me to Truth, Undoing the Ego*), have helped us go still deeper into the *Course* by revealing their own awakening process and their ability to create a holy relationship (one in which the partners see each other only with love — no judgment). They've challenged us to let go and be guided by the Holy Spirit, rather than by the ego.

The *Course* takes you right to the gateway of awakening. It takes you to a place where you are truly an adult, where you are no longer controlled by your fears, by your ego. Once you have reached adulthood (I am Responsible), it advises: "Hold on to nothing. Do not bring with you one thought the past has taught, nor one belief you ever learned before from anything. Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God." (ACIM, W-pI.189.7)

Ultimately, this is it. It's letting go of the tiller and letting God steer. It is resisting life no more. "What could you not accept, if you but knew that everything that happens, all events, past, present and to

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come, are gently planned by One Whose only purpose is your good? Perhaps you have misunderstood His plan, for He would never offer pain to you. But your defenses did not let you see His loving blessing shine in every step you ever took. While you made plans for death, He led you gently to eternal life." (W-pI.135.18:1-4).

This quote is not describing predestination, but is saying that our mindset is the "programming" for our life. Certain things are going to happen, based on our perceptions of self and the world. Whenever we make a shift in perception, the programming changes.

Gary tells a story (in *Disappearance of the Universe*) of going to the theater and not being able to see a movie he had planned to see. He saw another instead, which let him out at a later time. His guides told him that, had he seen the movie he intended, and left when it was over, he would have been in a car accident. The lesson of the car accident was no longer a part of his "script" because of forgiveness work he had completed and the resulting shift in his perception.

"Everything you see is the result of your thoughts. There is no exception to this fact." says the *Course*. This is not to say that painful experiences are a result of negative thinking. That is too simplistic. As long as you have an ego, there will be painful experiences. The pain comes from our resistance to the experience and our judgment of it. Every experience, painful or joyful, is an opportunity to change our perception.

This is what the Fellowship Community is about. It's a place for people who want to shift their perception from ego-centered being to God-centered being, people who want to replace fear with love, judgment with acceptance, and guilt with freedom. Fellowship is a safe place where you are where you are.

Everyone has "stuff" they go through. We are not here to judge or fix each other, but to love and accept each other as we

appear to be — to see through the illusions of guilt, scarcity, and conflict. The goal is to see each other and know that there is nothing wrong. It is to empathize, to care, and to see the perfection in each other, yet not be drawn into each others' dramas.

We explore many paths at Fellowship. We may not all study the *Course*, but in many ways, we are all practicing it. Every time we look in the mirror and take responsibility; every time we forgive; every time we offer our fears and concerns to Spirit; every time we allow Spirit to take charge of our thinking; every time we catch ourselves in fear or anger and refuse to let it control us; and every time we find ourselves singing or humming "Spirit Am I," we are practicing the *Course*.

The Fellowship has no doctrine. There are no beliefs we must ascribe to. There are no rituals required. We are a community of people whose mantra, from my perspective is this: "I am here only to be truly helpful ... I will be healed as I let Him (Her, Love, Holy Spirit, God, Goddess, Higher Self, Other Names?) teach me to heal." (ACIM Text). I am grateful for the *Course* and for all of you at Fellowship with whom I have studied and practiced it. Thank you for being my teachers.

For a closer look at ACIM, the Fellowship offers three study groups: Wednesdays at 9:15 a.m. and 6 p.m., and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m.

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