

A COURSE IN MIRACLES

STUDY GROUP

WITH RAJ

October 14th 2006

THIS IS A ROUGH TRANSCRIPT.
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Good evening. And welcome to everyone who's joining us on the Internet.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the efforts and the expertise that Paul's son Chris brings to every single one of these Gatherings so that it's available to be heard live on the Internet and seen as well, and for the capabilities of being able to make the audio available twenty-four hours a day, thank you Chris.

We're in a section entitled, *FINDING THE PRESENT*. Now, this is not like an Easter-egg hunt or a treasure hunt where I'm going to send all of you out to find the present, it is perhaps, one of the most significant portions of the Course. Because the present is the crux of awakening. It's also the simplicity of the awakening process.

Now, many of you, during the past week or two, may have spent some time during your day trying to be present with the now, using your eyes and your ears to let everything around you, all of your sensory experience register with you. As though, perhaps, the now is to be found in the things—the experiences of the things.

But where is the now? Well, the now is in the gap between the past--memory, and the future—imagination. Since the past isn't present to be experienced, and the future isn't present to be experienced, how do you come about eliciting what you call the experience of memory and the experience of imagination? Through a use of your mind. And the use of your mind is

thinking. You must think the past. You must think about events in the past. You must think about potentials of the future.

So, where is the now? It's in the little gap between thinking and thinking.

Gets simpler and simpler doesn't it. And what's in the little gap? The absence of thinking—the silence. That's where the now, that's where the present is to be found. Where is it? Somewhere in the infinite Mind of God still thinking spatially infinitely outward—the infinite Mind of God as something that extends infinitely beyond your awareness?

No. You have to be careful, because all of your thinking is done in terms of space-time coordinates. And so you're going to be tempted out of habit, to imagine that getting into the silence and experiencing the now, in which all of Creation becomes available to you as an undistorted conscious experience, is still going to have space-time coordinates attached to it. And this isn't true. And I'm telling this so that when you are choosing to become still, you will not be attentive in a fashion that you're familiar with. Don't try to bring forward with you the memory of space and time to apply to, what will be, an infinite and indivisible experience.

This means that you must dare [sighs deeply] to let go completely. To really dare to be silent. To really dare to let the peace of Being register with you because you're not filling it with any jabbering. So you say, "How in the world can I do that in the middle of the grocery store or in the middle of the work-place?"

Well, you can. If it's not easy, then I once again suggest to all of you that you begin to take time at least twice a day for twenty minutes, to meditate. And if you have time to do it three times a day, do it three times a day so that you can become familiar with the experience of silence.

When the experience of silence is still fresh in your mind because you experienced it four hours ago, then if you are in the work place or the market, or dealing with the school or with your children, the memory, and here I would suggest to you that you value the memory—the experience of peace and of the silence that you experienced four hours ago, will be available to you to overlay, if I may put it this way, on the moment you're in. And in the moment of overlay and the valuing of the peace that you want to overlay the moment with, you will find it much easier to slip back into the actual experience of centered peace from which you can dare to look at the experience of the moment with fresh eyes.

This is one way you bring devotion to glorifying God into your moment by moment experiences in your day and begin to make a shift from just rolling

willy-nilly off the top of your head with random thinking into a state of peaceful order through which it's your desire to look at what's going on, so that you might be able to recognize the order that is pertinent to the moment and illuminate it and improve the moment.

It's very simple. If you're going to wake up, you're going to stop acting like orphans. And you're going to stop reaping the benefits of orphanhood, like fear and frustration, and worry and tension, and sickness and disease and death. I know . . . you're so much more familiar with that than you are with peace and harmony, and wholeness and joy, on an ongoing and all-consuming basis during your day. And I know you are afraid that you will not know how to be in this new way. But why opt for suffering just because you don't know what the experience of harmony is going to look like, feel like, and what you will behave like? What is the great value of suffering?

Well, one of the great values of suffering is that it doesn't require you to change. It doesn't require you to grow, it doesn't require you to let yourself be made new and have to cope with unexpected. Well, if there are a million ways to experience joy, and if there a million ways to express joy, and if there are ten millions of ways to experience and express harmony, how great is that? How hard would that be to take?

You see, you don't want to be like sheep just trudging along in the tracks that your ancestors set out before you. What if the new territory isn't full of brambles and pitfalls? What if it's full of beauty and ease and abundance and wholeness? Isn't it funny that I have to encourage you to try and do something different.

Oh yes, uh-huh. You're familiar with the phrase, "There is another way to look at this." Oh, you'll let that run off your lips, "There is another way to look at this." But what you don't say is, "But I don't want to look at it yet because I don't want to have to change! I don't want to have to put myself in the vulnerable position of becoming . . . I don't know what?"

Well that's called being dead already. It's just a silly habit. It's a silly habit but it's a devastating habit. Devastating, because by virtue of your word and your commitment, you stay locked into suffering. And part of the orphan mindset is that suffering always gets worse. "It'll get worse before it gets better." And sometimes it won't get better. It gets worse [snaps fingers] and you're gone. Or it gets worse [snaps fingers] and you're locked into it. You go past a point of no return. Too much damage done. No way for it to be reversible.

See, but hey, this is more about thinking isn't it. These are just ideas. They are just ideas. They're not facts. But if you take that idea and you make

commitment to it, and you put the full force of your being behind it, nothing will change. And indeed, things will seem to be irreversible.

You have all kinds of little rules that you made up as you grew up. Some of the rules were provided to you by parents, teachers and society. And some of the rules, you just made up out of whole cloth. You just made up out of pure imagination.

Paul discovered this week that he had a log in his log-jam. And it was just an idea, just a phrase, "Your word is your bond and your bond is your trust." Mighty, weighty words. All of which have to do, for him, with his self-worth. If his word isn't his bond, then he is not trustworthy. And you know what? He discovered that the word he had given he didn't even broadcast to anyone. No one else knew that he'd given the word, even though to him, the word was given on their behalf. He didn't even have others' expectations of him to support that idea, or a need for him to remain committed to it. It was his own little private head-trip. And because he hasn't been able to keep the word he gave, he has held himself in a state of internal misery. Constant on-going frustration at being invalid and worthless because he wasn't keeping his word. And then he stuffed it and didn't deal with it. He just endured it.

Now, the word that he gave was a word made as an orphan. It doesn't matter how lofty the idea is, if an orphan is making that his word, there is nothing lofty about it, it's pure imagination. And if that imagination is adopted and maintained, it becomes memory. It becomes a foundational aspect from the past.

All of you have these nasty little rules that you don't even remember bringing into play and you're not aware of how completely they govern the way you perceive anything and everything that comes into your experience. And you know what? As long as you search for them from orphanland, you will not find them because you lack the perspective to recognize what is false. This is one of the reasons that it is so very important and imperative for you to, as this section heading says, find the present. Bring yourself into the little gap of silence, absent thinking called the past, and absent thinking called the future.

The silence is always ever-present in you and available to you if you will do one thing: For twenty minutes a day, take the time to stop thinking. And you will find it is there no matter how loudly your world seems to be clamoring for your frightened attention. No matter how dire the circumstances are, your peace is present and available to you. It's present and available to you because it's the one and only thing that is real. The past isn't present and isn't real, and the future isn't present, and it isn't real. And no matter how much force of intellect and no matter how much force of personal will you attempt to

bring into your mind to create images and sensations that seem to be real, it's all fantasy. It's all flimsy nebulous fantasy. It's all nothing.

Let's go into the book.

Time can release as well as imprison,¹ . .

Again . . .

Time can release as well as imprison, depending on whose interpretation of it you use.

Now we're not talking here about Joe's interpretation, or Henrietta's interpretation, or your Mother's interpretation, or your third cousin's interpretation, or your Boss's interpretation. There are only two interpretations: One is the Holy Spirit's and one is the ego's.

Time can release as well as imprison, depending on whose interpretation of it you use. Past, present and future are not continuous unless you FORCE continuity on them.

And again, the only way you can force continuity on them is by imagining a continuity is not there and then fleshing it out with reasonings, and logic and ideas that you've made up through the process of thinking.

You can PERCEIVE them as continuous, and make them so for YOU. But do not be deceived and then believe that this is how it IS, for to believe that reality is what you would HAVE it be according to your use for it IS delusional.

Insane. Because it's insane, there is no real reason to it. There is no logic to it. There is nothing holding it together. It is fabulous, fabricated, flimsy, lacking integrity . . . smoke and mirrors. That's what I mean by fabulous—of the nature of fable, and nothing else.

You would destroy time's continuity by breaking it into past, present and future FOR YOUR OWN PURPOSES. You would anticipate the future on the basis of your past experience and plan for it accordingly.

And we talked at some length about that last week. It is your normal, natural and ingrained habit. You would not be foolish enough to enter into any endeavor without bringing your memory along with you relative to all similar sorts of endeavors and encounters so that you can be sure you will be able to avoid the pitfalls. No-one, as you would say, would go into a new venture

blindly. And so what do you do? You bring memory into play, which means you go into a state of unconsciousness of being in the now.

Now, is that not going into something blindly? You're not even paying attention. You're not present enough in the present to respond to what's really going on. You have given up consciousness of the present by giving preference to memories; a replay of old tapes back somewhere out of the present in the dark recesses of your mind where it's easy to see flimsy images that have very little illumination to them. See? And all the time you are looking there, you are being unconscious in the now, able to bring no wisdom, intelligence, or Knowing of truth into the situation. Bringing no light, the light that your mind is lit with by God to illuminate what's really going on. That's going into something blindly.

Again . . .

You would anticipate the future . . .

. . . and I'm going to say, you would unavoidably, and for sure . . .

*. . . anticipate the future on the basis of your past experience and plan for it accordingly. Yet by doing so you are **ALIGNING** past and future, and not allowing the miracle, which could intervene **BETWEEN** them.*

Between them. Oh yes, in the little gap between memory and imagination. The little gap of silence. The little gap of presence of Mind.

*Yet by doing so you are **ALIGNING** past and future and not allowing the miracle, which could intervene **BETWEEN** them to free you . . .*

. . . what? To have this scary experience . . .

. . . to be born again.

To see everything with new eyes. To see everything as it is minus the overlay of your memory and your imagination in which the nature and character of all that is, is fully visible to you and awesome because it's nature and character is the Movement of God; Creation in its full glory itself.

Am I just using flowery words here because they're spiritual? No. It's important for you to be expecting something other than just a glossed over current human experience. Because the experience of Reality is far greater than the dusty, tarnished images of reality that you see through your memory and the cobwebs of your rules that you govern yourself by.

The miracle . . .

. . . a sudden shift of perception . . .

. . . enables you to see your brother WITHOUT his past, and so perceive HIM as born again.

Why? Because you had a revelatory experience that changed him? No. Because you let the scales fall from your eyes. You let memory fall from your focus of attention. You let imagination dissolve in favor of the silence; in favor the direct experience of Reality. And as a result, you see him as he really is, your Brother.

His errors ARE all past, and by perceiving him without them you are RELEASING him.

All of you are utterly unaware of the part you play in holding your Brother to points outgrown by him, by refusing to see him as he is becoming, as I may put it that way. And so when your Brother begins to behave in a new way, and I'm going to say specifically exhibits enough self-respect not to let you or anyone else abuse him or misuse him mistreat him, you, by virtue of his growing beyond where he was before, are called upon to change yourself and stop attempting to abuse or misuse or mistreat him or her.

Hey, if you're not willing to change just because it might mean that you're going to experience wholeness and health and joy, what in the hell makes anyone think you're going to change when your Brother says, "Hey, I respect myself enough to say stop mistreating me!" Why would you change for that? Oh no, you're going to bring up your memory and all the little rules that help to set in place his being dominated by you and you're going to not release him.

Now, I've described something extreme here. But this sort of thing goes on all day long every day with your friends if they begin to behave in a way that stretches you, in one way or another. You may kindly and politely say, "You know, I've gotta to get going—lots of things to do" and withdraw without providing confirmation or interest; withdraw without shining light on what's being shared. So you may not have been downright mean, you've been politely terse and have conveyed that you're not interested. And although you've said, "I've got a lot of things to do," the other knows its bullshit. And the moment of communion and connection that could have occurred hasn't occurred and in a way, that one is still alone. And that may be all it takes to get that one to shut down.

You could say, “Well, that’s his responsibility he doesn’t have to do that just because I’m acting like an asshole.” No, he doesn’t. But you also don’t have to act like an asshole. So take care of your part of it.

The miracle enables you to see your brother WITHOUT his past, and so perceive HIM as born again. His errors ARE all past, and by perceiving him without them you are RELEASING him. And since his past is YOURS, you SHARE in this release.

His past is a mutually shared memory so-to-speak. He remembers it from his point of view, and you remember it from your point of view, but together you can share enough corresponding elements that make it seem as though you are sharing something actual. So his past is yours. You know what? If someone new walked into this room at this moment or the very room you are sitting in as you are listening, someone you had never met before, you couldn’t release him from his past because you don’t know what his past is.

So whatever past you can release someone else from, is the past you have accumulated in terms of memories. That’s why it says . . .

And since his past is YOURS, you SHARE in this release. Let no dark cloud out of YOUR past obscure him from you, for truth lies ONLY in the present, and you will find it if you seek it there.

You see, the orphan mentality—the ego frame of reference has everything backwards. There are those whom you would look at and consider releasing him or her from his or her past. But you say, “He or she is not worthy of my being that good to him or her,” or thinking that well of him or her.

What makes you think any of this has anything to do with him or her? Your problems stem from the use you are putting your mind to. And the use you are putting your mind to either keeps you in memory or in imagination; whichever it is, it keeps you out of the gap. It keeps you out of your release from thinking. It keeps you out of your release from sin, sickness, and death. It keeps you out from, out of, your peace which it is your ever-present birthright to be experiencing. It keeps you unconscious.

The only arena, if you will, that you have available to you for the experience of being conscious, is in the silence, in the little gap. And if you are not in the little gap, you are experiencing insanity. You must learn to see this clearly so that you may be perfectly honest and not blame the other fellow for your unwillingness to release them from their past.

Why? Because they deserve it? They deserve to be released from it? No. Because you deserve not to be delusional. You deserve not to be insane. You deserve not to be unconscious.

Let no dark cloud out of YOUR past obscure him from you, for truth lies ONLY in the present, . .

. . . in the gap, in the silence, in the presence of Mind that constitutes your being when you're sane. Meaning, not thinking.

You have looked for it where it is NOT, and therefore have not found it.

What? What have you looked for? The present.

Learn then to seek it where it IS, . .

. . . and where it is, is not difficult to get to. And there's no complicated process to it. [chuckles] It's the most uncomplicated thing you can imagine. Shut up. Be still.

Paul—Raj did not read “. . and it will dawn on eyes that see.”

Your past was made in anger, . .

“My past was made in anger? Gee, all I was doing was growing up. I wasn't making my experience out of anger.” Well, your experiences weren't the past. Your experiences were always the present. Your experiences were always the Movement of God Moving as you, whether you were conscious of it or not, whether you were in the gap or not.

So, your past was made in anger. See, your life experience isn't your past. Ah-h, the pictures, the snapshots you took; the ideas that crystallized in the moment that you made up and cherished; Ah-h-h . . . those memories were made in anger.

Always they were made, whether you like to look at it or not, always they were made as further and further means of securing control over your environment and your experience and your life so that you could become personally successful—dominant, whether for good reasons or bad reasons. That's not love.

Your past was made in anger, and if you use it to attack the present you will not SEE the freedom that the present holds.

You will not see the freedom the gap holds; the silence holds, the presence of Mind holds in the absence of thinking: the miracle.

Judgment and condemnation are BEHIND you, . .

... in the past ...

... and unless you bring them WITH you, will see that you ARE free of them.

That's why you need to give up the idea that the reason for going into the silence or that the reason for going into the gap, or the reason for connecting with your Guide, or the Holy Spirit, is so that you will have divine aid, and divine reasoning and spiritual truth to use to clean up things in the orphanage, or straighten out things in orphanland. Because when you get into the gap, when you go into the silence and with innocence, listen—invite in the conscious awareness of truth that its your birthright to be experiencing, your perspective is going to change and you will see that there isn't any orphanage. And that orphanland was imaginary and the things that needed to be straightened out there were part of the delusion.

To get divine help in straightening out a situation in the orphanage is not called a sudden shift of perception, it's called staying right in the same perception with some new sparkly tools that put you at an advantage over the other orphans who don't have those new tools yet.

Look lovingly ...

Look lovingly upon the present, ..

... it's so hard to do because the present is made up of the past you think.

Look lovingly upon the present ...

... anyway, I'm adding ...

... for it holds the ONLY things that are forever true. All healing lies within it because ITS continuity is real.

Continuity ... continuity in the presence has nothing to do with space and time. Continuity means, I'm going to say for lack of better words, that the fabric of infinity and eternity is unbroken—has no boundaries over-laid upon it. You and your Brother have no boundaries between you. All of Creation is continuous, meaning forever One, meaning forever indivisible and therefore forever undivided. And so you cannot be divided from your Brother or Sister. You cannot be divided from God. You cannot be divided and different from all of Creation infinitely speaking, even though Creation is infinite.

The fact is, that at this moment you cannot show me the boundary of your mind. And therefore, you cannot demonstrate to me that within the

boundarylessness of your mind is the boundarylessness of your neighbor's mind, or the person sitting next to you, or your mate. It's continuous, it's unified. But the unification does not reduce all of Creation into an amorphous indistinguishable nothingness. All of the infinite characteristics of Creation are still there, but the characteristics are not boundaries. If you take an ingot of gold, it has properties; it has color, it has specific density, it has specific weight, it has specific softness. Well is the softness different from the weight? Is the weight different from the density?

No, there's no way to look at it and say, "Here's the density, here's the weight and over here on this side is the color." You might have different words that you use regarding different properties, but it's one unified thing. It is one pure element. All of Creation is one and pure with infinite characteristics, if I may put it that way, that make Creation awesome.

So, you must stop thinking in space time terms.

Look lovingly upon the present, for it holds the ONLY things that are forever true. All healing lies within it because ITS continuity is real. It extends to all aspects of consciousness AT THE SAME TIME, . .

. . . the color of gold extends to all parts of the ingot at the same time that its specific density which will never change, extends throughout all parts of the ingot at the same time . . .

. . . it extends to all aspects of consciousness AT THE SAME TIME, and thus enables them to reach EACH OTHER.

But not through space, not you over here to me. It's in the gap. It's in the silence. It's in the presence of Mind that the Oneness of all things becomes available to you as your conscious experience and it will have no connotations, and it will have none of the limitations of the concepts of space and time.

That should peak someone's curiosity. What an interesting experience to have waiting for you.

The present is before time was, and will be when time is no more.

The gap is before memory and imagination were. And the gap will be when imagination and memory are no more.

In it . . .

. . . the gap, the present . . .

... is everything that is eternal, ...

... is everything, plural, that is eternal ...

... and they are one.

Just like all of the characteristics of an ingot of gold.

Their continuity ...

... their connectedness; their union, their unity, ..

... is timeless ...

... has nothing to do with time and never did ...

... and their communication is unbroken, for they are not separated by the past. Only the past CAN separate, and IT is nowhere.

It's not occupying eternity or infinity. It's a delusion—an imagination, a fantasy. It isn't anywhere because it isn't actual. Now this is the truth. This is the truth like, two plus two is four; a fundamental building block of mathematics.

The present ...

... this wonderful little jewel that's constantly in the center of your Vision because its in the center of your being, called the present—the gap ...

... offers you your brothers in the light that would unite you with them and free you FROM the past. Would you, then, hold the past AGAINST them? For if you do, you are choosing to remain in the darkness that is not there, and refusing to accept the light that is offered you.

Now mind you, maybe harsh words they sound like, but what's the solution? The solution is to simply bring into play, curiosity—benign curiosity. Interest. Interest in something different from this monotonous rehearsal of suffering to one degree or another that you're experiencing.

For the light of perfect vision is freely given as it is freely received, and can be accepted only WITHOUT LIMIT.

You see, the orphan says, “Um-m, Okay. . . , I’m gonna tune in this Saturday night and I’m gonna see if I can get a little bit of the truth here that I can use to my advantage. I’m not going to accept everything that said without limit, because that’s very likely to lift me out of the orphanage. And then I wouldn’t be able to use this power to my advantage. So, I’m not going to accept it without limit.”

Are you an orphan or are you the Christ? Stand up and be counted. Not by each other, but stand up and count yourself as one or the other and be honest. The minute you’re honest and you stand up and count yourself, you’ll know whether you want to change or not. But in the haziness of orphanland and orphanages, and all of the mutually agreed upon definitions that you live by, its easy to remain a little bit vague and not really count yourself, not really stand up and declare yourself.

The light of perfect vision is freely given as it is freely received, and can be accepted only WITHOUT LIMIT. In this one, still dimension of time, . .

. . . the present . . .

. . . which does not change and where there is no sight of what you were, you look at Christ . . .

. . . your Brother, yourSelf, Me . . .

. . . and call His witnesses to shine on you BECAUSE YOU CALLED THEM FORTH.

You stopped calling forth your orphanhood and you stopped calling forth the orphanhood of your Brothers and Sisters.

In this one, still dimension of time, which does not change and where there is no sight of what you were, you look at Christ and call His witnesses to shine on you BECAUSE YOU CALLED THEM FORTH. And THEY will not deny the truth in you because you looked for it in them and FOUND it there.

Now is the time of salvation, for now is the RELEASE from time.

The cap is the release from time. The silence, when you choose for it, is the release from time. It is the release from illusion. Time and thinking are inseparable. Time and thinking are synonymous. Thinking and being unconscious are being synonymous. Silence and consciousness are synonymous.

I love you all. The simpler the truth becomes, the more irresistible it is.

A Course In Miracles (reference pages)
Chapter 12 – Section – FINDING THE PRESENT
¹ Sparkly Book – p.294, 2nd Full Par. / JCIM – p.124, 1st Full Par.
Chapter 13 – Section – FINDING THE PRESENT
First Edition – p. 234, 1st Full Par. / Second Edition – p. 251, Par. 4

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