

ACIM Preface Second Edition
WHAT IT SAYS

What It Says

Nothing real can be threatened.
Nothing unreal exists.
Herein lies the peace of God.

This is how A Course in Miracles begins. **A Course in Miracles** makes a fundamental distinction between the real and the unreal; between knowledge and perception. Knowledge is truth, under one law, the law of love or God. Truth is unalterable, eternal and unambiguous. **Knowledge** can be unrecognized, but **knowledge** cannot be changed. **Knowledge** applies to everything that God created, and only what **God** created is real. **Knowledge** is beyond learning because **knowledge** is beyond time and process. **Knowledge** has no opposite. **Knowledge has** no beginning and no end. **Knowledge** merely is.

The world of perception, on the other hand, is the world of time, of change, of beginnings and endings. **The world of perception** is based on interpretation, not on facts. **The world of perception** is the world of birth and death. **The world of perception** is founded on the belief in scarcity, loss, separation and death. **The world of perception** is learned rather than given. **The world of perception** is selective in its perceptual emphases. **The world of perception** is unstable in its functioning. **The world of perception** is inaccurate in its interpretations.

From knowledge and perception respectively, two distinct thought systems arise which are opposite in every aspect. In the realm of knowledge, no thoughts exist apart from God, because God and **God's** Creation share one Will. The world of perception, however, is made by the belief in opposites and separate wills. **The world of perception** is in perpetual conflict with itself and with God. What perception sees and hears appears to be real because **perception** permits into awareness only that which conforms to the wishes of the perceiver. **Perception permits into awareness only what conforms to the wishes of the perceiver** and this leads to a world of illusions. This **illusionary** world needs constant defense precisely because **a world of illusions** is not real. **This imaginary world becomes our "provisional reality"**. **This world of provisional reality appears real to us, yet since this imaged world is based on changing perceptions instead of knowledge, it is unknown and non-existent in the Mind of God.** The mind of God only knows and recognizes the truth that His creations must remain as God created them.

When you have been caught in the world of perception you are caught in a dream. You cannot escape **this dream of illusions** without help because anything your senses show you, merely witnesses to the reality of the dream. God has provided the Answer, the only Way out, the true Helper, **which is the Holy Spirit**. It is the function of **God's** Voice, His Holy Spirit, to mediate between the two worlds **of knowledge and the world of perception**. **The Holy Spirit can mediate between the two worlds of knowledge**

and the world of perception because, while on the one hand **the Holy Spirit** knows the truth, on the other **hand, the Holy Spirit** also recognizes our illusions without believing in **our illusions**. It is the Holy Spirit's goal to help us escape from the dream world by teaching us how to reverse our thinking and unlearn our mistakes. Forgiveness is the Holy Spirit's great learning aid **and forgiveness brings about this thought reversal of correcting our thinking and unlearning our mistakes**. However, the Course has **the course's** own definition of what forgiveness really is just as **the course** defines the world in **the course's** own way.

The world we see merely reflects our own internal frame of reference—the dominant ideas, wishes and emotions in our minds. "Projection makes perception" (Text, p. 445). We look inside **ourselves** first. **We** decide the kind of world we want to see and then **we** project that world outside, making **that projected world** the truth as we see it. We make **that projected world** true by our interpretations of what it is we are seeing. If we are using perception to justify our own mistakes—our anger, our impulses to attack, our lack of love in whatever form it may take—we will see a world of evil, destruction, malice, envy and despair. All this **projected world that we envisioned**, we must learn to forgive, not because we are being "good" and "charitable," but because what we are seeing is not true, **since what we see is only the perceived world we made up by our projection**. We have distorted the world by our twisted defenses, and are therefore seeing what is not there. As we learn to recognize our perceptual errors, we also learn to look past **our perceptual errors**. **This look past our perceptual errors is defined by the course as "forgiveness."** At the same time we are forgiving ourselves, looking past our distorted self-concepts to the Self That God created in us and as us.

Sin is defined as "lack of love" (Text, p. 11). Since love is all there is, sin in the sight of the Holy Spirit is a mistake to be corrected, rather than an evil to be punished. Our sense of inadequacy, weakness and incompleteness comes from the strong investment in the "scarcity principle" that governs the whole world of illusions. From **the** point of view **of the "scarcity principle"**, we seek in others what we feel is wanting in ourselves. We "love" another in order to get something ourselves. **Our distorted definition for love which always requires that we get something that we want in exchange for our "giving up of our love"** is what passes for love in the dream world. There can be no greater mistake than that, for love is incapable of asking for anything. The course defines love as unconditional giving. **Love never asks for anything since love gives all by sharing all.**

Only minds can really join, and whom God has joined no man can put asunder (Text, p. 356). It is, however, only at the level of Christ Mind that true union is possible, and has, in fact, never been lost. The "little I" seeks to enhance itself by external approval, external possessions and external "love." The Self That God created needs nothing. **The Self That God created** is forever complete, safe, loved and loving. **The Self That God created** seeks to share rather than to get. **The Self That God created** seeks to extend rather than project. **The Self That God created** has no needs. **The Self That God created** wants to join with others out of their mutual awareness of abundance. The special relationships of the world are destructive, selfish and childishly egocentric. Yet, if **the special relationships of the world** are given to the Holy Spirit, these **special relationships of the world** can become the holiest things on earth—the miracles that point the way to the return to Heaven. The world uses its special relationships as a final weapon

of exclusion and a demonstration of separateness. The Holy Spirit transforms **the special relationships of the world** into perfect lessons in forgiveness and in awakening from the dream. Each one of **these special relationships of the world** is an opportunity to let perceptions be healed and errors corrected. Each one of **these special relationships of the world** is another chance to forgive oneself by forgiving the other. And each one of **these special relationships of the world** becomes still another invitation to the Holy Spirit and to the remembrance of God.

Perception is a function of the body, and therefore **perception** represents a limit on awareness. Perception sees through the body's eyes and hears through the body's ears. **Perception** evokes the limited responses, which the body makes. The body appears to be largely self-motivated and independent, yet **the body** actually responds only to the intentions of the mind. If the mind wants to use **the body** for attack in any form, **the body** becomes prey to sickness, age and decay. If the mind accepts the Holy Spirit's purpose for **the body** instead, **the body** becomes a useful way of communicating with others, invulnerable as long as **the body** is needed, and to be gently laid by when **the body's** use is over. Of itself **the body** is neutral, as is everything in the world of perception. Whether **the body** is used for the goals of the ego or the Holy Spirit depends entirely on what the mind wants.

The opposite of seeing through the body's eyes is the vision of Christ, which reflects strength rather than weakness, unity rather than separation, and love rather than fear. The opposite of hearing through the body's ears is communication through the Voice for God, the Holy Spirit, which abides in each of us. **God's Voice, which is the Holy Spirit**, seems distant and difficult to hear because the ego, which speaks for the little, separated self, seems to be much louder. This **apparent strength of voice between the Holy Spirit and ego** is actually reversed. The Holy Spirit speaks with unmistakable clarity and overwhelming appeal. No one who does not choose to identify with the body could possibly be deaf to **the Holy Spirit's** messages of release and hope, nor could **anyone who does not choose to identify with the body**, fail to accept joyously the vision of Christ in glad exchange for his miserable picture of himself, **which comes from the voice of the ego. The ego's voice always comes from the ego's belief in limitation and separation. The Holy Spirit's Voice always conforms to Its knowledge of abundance and oneness.**

Christ's vision is the Holy Spirit's gift. **Christ's vision is** God's alternative to the illusion of separation and to the belief in the reality of sin, guilt and death. **Christ's vision** is the one correction for all errors of perception. **Christ's vision is** the reconciliation of the seeming opposites on which this world is based. **Christ's** kindly light shows all things from another point of view, reflecting the thought system that arises from knowledge and making return to God not only possible but inevitable. What was regarded as injustice done to one by someone else now becomes a call for help and for union. Sin, sickness and attack are seen as misperceptions calling for remedy through gentleness and love. Defenses are laid down because where there is no attack there is no need for **defenses**. Our brothers' needs become our own **needs**, because **our brothers** are taking the journey with us as we go to God. Without us, **our brothers** would lose their way. Without **our brothers**, we could never find our own way.

Forgiveness is unknown in Heaven, where the need for **forgiveness** would be inconceivable. However, in this world of **provisional reality**, forgiveness is a necessary

correction for all the mistakes that we have made. To offer forgiveness is the only way for us to have **forgiveness**, for **forgiveness** reflects the law of Heaven that giving and receiving are the same. Heaven is the natural state of all the Sons of God as **God** created them. **Heaven is God's Son's** reality forever. **Heaven, God's Son's natural state**, has not changed because of the **Son's false dream**. **The Son's reality has not changed, but the Son of God must remember what he truly is rather than what he imagines himself to be. When the Son of God reawakens, our dream world of "provisional reality" will fade with the darkness.**

Forgiveness, **which is defined as looking past our perceptual errors**, is the means by which we will remember **what we are and always have been. We are and always remain God's one Son, perfect, whole and complete.** Through forgiveness the thinking of the world is reversed. The forgiven world becomes the gate of Heaven, because by **forgiveness's** mercy we can at last forgive ourselves. Holding no one prisoner to guilt, we become free. Acknowledging Christ in all our brothers, we recognize **Christ's** Presence in ourselves. Forgetting all our misperceptions, and with nothing from the past to hold us back, we can remember God. Beyond this **remembering of God**, learning cannot go. When we are ready, God Himself will take the final step in our return **to God, Our Father.**

Note: This overview has been basically taken from the Preface of A Course in Miracles pages X – XIII. Areas that are shown in bold have been added for clarification purposes. Readers are encouraged to go to the original text for exact wording.

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