

ACIM and Other Good Books

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A Course in Miracles has always been a difficult book for me to understand. Every time I give up on it, something happens to draw me back. At one point this year I dropped my *Course* studies and decided to take the advice of Workbook, Lesson 180 which says “forget this course.”

Instead I began reading three other books. The one I've read the smallest portion of is ***A New Kind of Science*** by Stephen Wolfram. His book, which was 10 years in the making, claims that methods of modern science are hitting a ceiling which is preventing us from learning all there is to know about everything. Wolfram asserts his “New Science” provides a methodology which will enable science to answer all of our remaining unanswered questions in the next 20 years. What a hopeful thought.

For years, a very good friend of mine, who happens to be an Atheist, has contended that subjects like religion, philosophy, and spirituality are all ways of understanding what science hasn't gotten around to explaining. That thought wasn't very comforting. It seemed to me the more scientists learned, the more unanswered questions they had. The complex simply kept getting more complex as the old science dug deeper into the mysteries of life.

The “New Science” proves that some very complex systems can be explained by very simple rules. Possibly the complexity of the *Course* can be reduced to a few simple rules and my Atheist friend will be proven right. Even with this glimmer of hope, I decided not to return to the *Course*, but to push on with my other reading.

The next book was ***The Power of Now*** by Eckhart Tolle which I was introduced to by Karen Amdorfer's talk at the Fellowship on the importance of the “Now.” This book covers many of the same ideas as the *Course*, but presents them in language which needs little interpretation. When the course says: There is no time. Time is an illusion. I ask but what does that mean?

Tolle says: All living is done in the moment. The more attention and conscious presence we can bring to each moment the more we can experience “Being” (Tolle's word for God). This still leaves me with questions. But I know what I'm being asked to do. I'm not asked to throw time out of the rest of my life.

For the practical matters of living I will often have to use some of what I learned in the past to make some plans for the future. Again I'm being asked to remain conscious while handling these practical matters which require my mind to process thoughts involving the past and future.

Next I'm asked to take a few moments and be totally present without any thoughts at all. At first this sounded impossible. Over the years I've spent many hours meditating by counting my breaths and letting my thoughts pass by without giving them any energy.

Early on in my study of the *Course*, I got the message that the voice of the Holy Spirit was available in my mind to guide me. It was during meditation that I experienced the difference between Spirit thoughts and Ego thoughts. Spirit thoughts, I noticed, only occurred while I was in a relaxed, quiet, peaceful state. This experience gave new meaning to the sentences (T-23.II.23:8,10) “How do you feel? Is peace in your awareness?”

Until meditation had given me the experience, these two sentences were just words, which is why the *Course* says “its results are more convincing than its words,” (T-9.V.9.3).

Now I could see that the way to tell if thoughts were coming from Spirit was to check in with my feelings, and if I wasn't at peace, the thoughts were not from Spirit. As good as all this was, it still

didn't show me how to have no thoughts at all.

Tolle is a master at skipping the words and jumping right to the experience. At the very beginning of chapter 5, he asks his readers to try an experiment which quickly proved to me I could be free of thoughts almost on command. I was delighted and suddenly realized I had experienced what the *Course* was trying to teach me. I even found a *Course* sentence on time I could actually understand. "Take this very instant, now, and think of it as all there is of time." (T-15.I.9:5) This sentence is three times as long and twice as helpful as my former "gem" quote from the *Course*. "There is no time." (T-15.V.9:1).

How about these two short sentences: "I am not a body." "You are your body." Many of you will recognize the first as a frequent mantra of the course. The second sentence is from *The Power of Now*. Both books are teaching the same message.

The big difference for me is that I studied the *Course* for years before I found sentences like: "Salvation does not ask that you behold the spirit and perceive the body not. For you can see the body without help, but do not understand how to behold a world apart from it," (T-31.VI.3:1,3) I read *The Power of Now* in two days and never once threw it across the room and smashed it into the wall as some students have done with the *Course* before they fully understand its message.

The third book which helped bring me back to the course is Wayne Dyer's ***There Is a Spiritual Solution to Every Problem***. He quotes the *Course* frequently and brings beautiful clarity to the paradoxical "only Infinite patience produces immediate effects." His *Course* quote on which he based the whole book is, "You have no problems, though you think you do." (T-26.II.3:3).

Of the three books that helped bring me back to working with the *Course*, the most enlightening is *The Power of Now*. Don't miss it!

PS. All of the above Course quotes are included in my new expanded Abstract. It has an easy-to-read format that covers a majority of the Course's concepts with only 1.4% of its words. Available from our book store for a \$5 donation to the Land Endowment Fund. All cost of assembly and distribution is covered by an anonymous donor for donations through the end of the year. Erwin