



CIRCLE OF ATONEMENT

Dedicated to A Course in Miracles

The Senselessness of War (Part 2)

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Exploring A Course in Miracles Podcast

Episode #16 Discussion Guide

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In the previous episode, Robert and Emily talked about the Course's radical view of war—that, rather than being good or evil, war is simply senseless. But knowing this is merely a starting point. What we really need to know is how we ourselves should respond to war. That is the subject of this second episode: What is our role in relation to war? To answer that question, Robert will share six points gleaned from *A Course in Miracles*. Through these points we will discover the surprising relevance of war for our personal lives. For ultimately, there is no difference between wars in distant countries and the small wars we wage every day in our homes and workplaces. We are all combatants on the battlefield, and we all can choose to rise above it and become a force for peace in a world that desperately needs it.

1. We can be emotionally immune to it.

This is the point of Lesson 14: "God did not create a meaningless world." The first example we are given is to apply the idea to a war of our choosing: "God did not create that war in _____, and so it is not real." In Helen's notes, however, you can see that what she originally wrote was this: "God did not create the war in Vietnam, and so it is not real." (The line over "the" is Helen's symbol for "that," and the line over "Vietnam" represents the blank that we are supposed to fill in ourselves.)

"God did not create the war in Vietnam,
+ so it is not real."

This mention of the Vietnam War brings home the fact that the Course's teachings are meant to be applied to actual specific wars. The point we are meant to take away is that, since that particular war, along with every other war, is not real, we do not have to grant it the feelings that would logically flow from it being real. We can be at peace in spite of the war.

2. We can forgive it.

In a beautiful passage on the Holocaust, Jesus says, “I shed many tears over this, but it is by no means the only time I said, ‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’” (T-1.43.8:2). It is touching to see Jesus respond with a warm heart: “I shed many tears over this.” Yet he also responds with the peace of forgiveness. And while we sometimes feel that we have no right to forgive those who perpetrated the Holocaust, since we were not among its victims, Jesus clearly has that right. For, exactly like the victims of the Holocaust, he was a Jew who was cruelly executed by a tyrannical state, and he responded with forgiveness, using the very line he quotes here. In this one sentence, then, he expresses an intimate identification with the “victims” of the Holocaust (both with the reference to shedding tears and the reminder of his own crucifixion) while still expressing compassionate forgiveness for its perpetrators.

3. We must lay down our arms.

While we are probably not a member of the armed forces serving in a war, from the Course’s standpoint, we are all at war. Our battlefields are just smaller—in the home, at the workplace. Our weapons are both behavioral—sharp words, aggressive actions—and mental—the Course many times refers to anger and judgment as a “sword.” Our goal with these weapons is not to use them more effectively, more judiciously, or even more sparingly. Our goal is to lay them down. It is astonishing just how many times the Course asks us to do this very thing:

Truth...comes to any mind which would lay down its arms and cease to play with folly. (W-136.15:1)

Lay down your arms, and only then will you perceive it [what you defend against] false (W-170.2:7)

For love would ask you lay down all defense as merely foolish, and your arms indeed would crumble into dust, for such they are. (W-170.5:4)

Take time today to lay aside your shield which profits nothing, and lay down the spear and sword you raise against an enemy without existence. (W-182.11:1)

Lay down your arms, and come without defense into the quiet place where Heaven’s peace holds all things still at last. (W-190.9:1)

Lay down the cruel sword of judgment that you hold against your throat. (W-190.9:4)

Now must you once again lay down your sword, although you will not realize that you have picked it up again. (M-20.4:4)

4. Rather than staying on the battleground, we should rise above it and respond with miracles, not murder.

This is the theme of the longest war passage in the Course: “Above the Battleground” (T-23.IV). This section is about our ongoing interpersonal wars. We stay on the battleground, it says, hoping to win something, and hoping to disguise our attacks in “loving” forms, so as to protect ourselves from the guilt that comes from making war. Through these disguises and through effective defense, we believe we can find safety on the battleground. But there is no such thing. The only real solution is to mentally rise above it, into “the quiet sphere above the battleground” (T-23.IV.15:5). From there, we are able to respond with miracles—expressions of love—rather than murder:

Be lifted up, and from a higher place look down upon it. From there will your perspective be quite different. Here in the midst of it, it *does* seem real. Here you have chosen to be part of it. Here murder *is* the choice. Yet from above, the choice is miracles instead of murder. (T-23.IV.11:3-8)

5. We need to see peace as the underlying reality of this world and the call of every heart.

If we are to behave differently—to stop engaging in war—we will need to perceive differently. We will need to perceive two things in particular. First, we will need to hear that underneath the calls to war there is a deeper call that everyone is making, which is a call to peace: “Nothing but calls to you in soft appeal to be your friend and let it join with you” (T-31.I.8:2). Second, we will need to see that, even while war rages on the surface, peace is the underlying reality in this world and in all hearts, even if those hearts aren’t aware of it. If we can see that underlying reality of peace and if we can hear all the calls to war as calls to peace, then peace will be the natural response on our part.

He will hear plainly that the calls to war he heard before are really calls to peace. He will perceive that where he gave attack is but another altar where he can, with equal ease and far more happiness, bestow forgiveness. (T-25.III.7:1-2)

How wrong are you who fail to hear the call that echoes past each seeming call to death, that sings behind each murderous attack, and pleads that love restore the dying world! (T-31.I.10:3)

When I see the world as a place of freedom, I will realize that it reflects the laws of God instead of the rules which I made up for it to obey. I will understand that peace, not war, abides in it. And I will perceive that peace also abides in the hearts of all who share this place with me. (W-57.4:2-4)

6. We are called to work with Jesus to usher in the time of peace.

We have an active role in ending all forms of war forever. Jesus calls us to take up this role and work with him to usher in “the time of peace”—a phrase he repeats three times. This time of peace is the destiny the world is heading towards: “The world will end in peace, because it is a place of war” (M-14.5:3). The end of the world will not be the punishment for the war that has engulfed this world since time began; it will be the complete *reversal* of that war.

Together we can then work for the real time of peace, which is eternal. (T-2.III.12:3)

No peace is possible until His Word is heard around the world; until your mind, in quiet listening, accepts the message which the world must hear to usher in the quiet time of peace. (W-125.1:5)

His Voice would give to you His holy Word to spread across the world the tidings of salvation and the holy time of peace. (W-125.4:2)

Can we make a difference? Jesus says that if we can just love a single instant without attack, a miracle will go out from our holy instant to heal the effects of war:

[The miracle] carries comfort from the place of peace into the battleground, and demonstrates that war has no effects. For all the hurt that war has sought to bring—the broken bodies and the shattered limbs, the screaming dying and the silent dead—are gently lifted up and comforted. (T-27.VI.3:3-4)

The direct personal relevance of war

War can seem like a very distant thing. Wars tend to take place in distant lands and most of us don't directly know any of the combatants. Yet what comes through in the Course's references to war is just how directly relevant war is for each one of us. The root of wars lies in the private battleground within each of our minds. On the outside, each one of us is engaged in personal swordfights throughout our days, wielding the sword of anger and judgment. And finally, each one of us is called to work with Jesus to bring closer "the time of peace," the day when all war, international and interpersonal, internal and external, will be over.

We each have a responsibility towards the war that rages constantly across this world. We can contribute to it or we can heal it.