

Rick: Welcome to Buddha at the Gas Pump. My name is Rick Archer. Buddha at the Gas Pump is an ongoing series of interviews with spiritually awakening people. I've done over 300 of them now and if this is your first one, you might want to go to batgap.com and checkout the archives. They're categorized in various ways. This program is made possible by the support of generous listeners and viewers and if you feel inclined to donate, there's a PayPal button there.

My guest today is Gary Renard. Gary is the author of *The Disappearance of the Universe* trilogy of books. Here's one of them, *The Disappearance of the Universe*, and we'll be talking about the others. He speaks regularly all over the world, teaching the principles of *A Course in Miracles*, which is the fundamental focus of his books.

In 1992 he began to be visited in person, by two people in the flesh, who identified themselves as Arten and Pursah, two ascended masters. They are the main teachers in the books and Gary is the student. These critically acclaimed books are now in 22 languages. So, welcome Gary.

Gary: Hey Rick, it's good to be here.

Rick: Well you mentioned it's abridged, but I listened to the audio version in its entirety, in the last week, and also the audio version of something else which is called *The Secret of the Immortal*, which was all very interesting. And as I listened, almost everything you said, I thought, "Well we could talk about that, we could talk about that."

So what I'm hoping we'll do in this interview is that you'll be able to bring out all the main points of what you teach, what you say, what you learned over the past 20, 25 years. And I realize that's a tall order, but we can hit the main points and discuss them in some depth.

Kind of paradoxically I found myself agreeing with just about everything you said, but also thinking of devil's advocate perspectives you know, and questions ...like, "is that really so?", or probe you on this or that. So we'll kind of do that as we go along.

Gary: Sounds good.

Rick: Spoiler alert: there's sort of a surprise towards the end of *The Disappearance of the Universe*. Should we talk about that or, if you feel like that's something you might have people discover for themselves once they read the book, should we not cover certain things?

Gary: Yeah, we can talk about it. It's not a secret since I speak so much.

Rick: That's true – it's out there. Alright, so give us the basic premise of what happened to you? How this whole thing started for you?

Gary: Sure. My life seems to have run, pretty much, in 14-year cycles. I would say the first 14 years of my life I was pretty normal – I was happy, I was pretty smart, and I was popular. I was a good baseball player - I was fast - and I had a pretty good life.

Then I would say, when I was about 14 I started to get depressed, and I didn't know why, but I sunk into a depression that lasted about 14 years. By the time I was 28, that was half my life, and it was a miserable existence. I had no idea about spirituality, I had no thought system. And one of the things I'm going to emphasize today is the importance of having a thought system, because without one your mind will run wild, like an animal. It has to be trained.

Then, when I was about 28, I had one friend left – his name is Dan. And he practically dragged me to do this thing called "The EST training".

Rick: Oh yeah, Warner Earhart.

Gary: Yeah, and what EST did was it gave me a thought system. It was actually a pretty good one - wasn't as good as *A Course in Miracles*, which we're going to get to, but it's good. It gave me a way to consistently interpret everything that I saw in the world, in a positive way. And I would say that in a year or two, it really snapped me out of my depression.

The reason I bring that up is because the way that you think determines how you feel. A lot of people think that they're thinking a certain way because of the way that they feel, and they don't realize that the reason they feel that way is because the thoughts that they've been having previously are creating that experience for them.

So the next 14 years I was on a spiritual path - started with EST, but I got into other things. I explored other things, like Buddhism and Hinduism. I got into meditation. I got very good at meditating. I felt I could achieve absolute stillness, where there were no interfering thoughts of any kind coming into my mind. That was a great training ground for what was to come.

And by the time I was 42 or so I was finally ready to have a dialogue with my teachers, so that's when they appeared to me, in the book. Forty-two years old, I'm living in Poland Spring, Maine – in the boonies, and I'm on top of a hill where there are more deer than there are people.

I was meditating one day, I came out of my meditation and there were these two people sitting on my living room couch. There was this beautiful, amazing looking woman, absolutely exquisite, and some guy – you know, I didn't care much about him. And she started to talk to me and what she was saying sounded pretty interesting. There was nothing frightening about them.

You know, people will ask, "Well, why didn't you go running out of the room screaming when these two people showed up?" And I think the answer is, that they were very peaceful – very peaceful looking. They had a look on their face that inspired a calm and peace. There was nothing there to be nervous about. There was nothing there to be frightened of.

Rick: But it must have startled you a bit?

Gary: Yeah, it was kind of more surreal.

Rick: Pretty unusual.

Gary: I was very relaxed because I had been meditating but you're right, it was very unusual and for a few minutes I thought, well maybe I've been meditating too much. But they did a pretty short visit the first time and they said they'd be back in a week. I don't know if I believed them or not but sure enough, they did come back in a week.

I didn't see them appear the first time but I did see them disappear, and it was instantaneous. It was like you were flicking a remote on a TV screen, or something. There was no ceremony or glowing colors or any of that stuff; they just (claps his hands) were gone instantly. And a week later (claps his hands), they appeared instantly and start speaking, I was pretty amazed.

What they were saying was what kept my attention. They were saying exactly what I needed to hear at that time. Because I was ready, not just for non-dualism, I was ready to take it a step further, which we'll get into, which I'll call "pure nondualism" because it involves God as the ultimate reality. So I was ready by the time I was 42 to really get into that.

The next 14 years of my life – the first 10 of those 14 were spent studying *A Course in Miracles* and writing this book, at the same time – *The Disappearance of the Universe*, which follows a timeline which you can see in the book, really chronicles my life. And after about 11 years the book was actually published. The whole time I was doing it you know, I didn't have any guarantee it would ever be published. I didn't know if anybody would ever read it, but it turned out that they did, and that was a pleasant surprise.

So the next 14 years of my life were pretty much *A Course in Miracles*, and then I was ready to make a move that I never thought I would make. I never thought that I would leave New England, but sure enough, when I was 56 I headed to California.

Rick: You never made it to Hawaii, it looks like.

Gary: No, but I'm not Hawaii deprived, because since the book came out, I've spoken in Hawaii I would say, about 15 times. So it's only a 5 hour trip now; it used to be 10 hours from the East coast, now it's only 5 hours.

So I get to go there; I was just there last month. We do a retreat every summer. You know, I love Hawaii. I don't rule out living there but right now the best thing for me is to be in Southern California. Who knows what the future brings?

My life has never gone the way I expected it to. Nothing ever happens the way I expected it to happen. People think that if you're successful that solves your problems, well all it really does is gives you a different set of problems. So you're not going to get away from problems, but I find my problems today to be more interesting than they used to be, because I know what everything is for.

And one of the things that *A Course in Miracles* teaches is that, what everything is for is a certain kind of forgiveness. In fact, that is the miracle in *A Course in Miracles* - it's a certain kind of forgiveness where you are coming from a place of cause, and not effect.

Certainly most people are at the effect of the world. And if you're at the effect of the world, it will affect you. In fact, if you invest your belief in this world, that gives it power over you. And one of the things that *A Course in Miracles* does is, it takes that power back to the mind, where it belongs. And the mind is cause, and what we're seeing is just an effect, so it kind of reverses that cause and effect. And instead of being at the effect of the world, you can start to realize that what you're seeing is a projection.

The American Indians, they used to say, "Behold the great mystery." Well, *A Course in Miracles* says, "Behold the great projection," because that's all that we're seeing. This universe of time and space is just one great big mother- freakin' projection that we've put ourselves under like a spell, and we've invested our belief in it, and that's what gives it power over us. What The Course does is it takes that power and puts it where it belongs, which is with God.

Now I know that it's not considered really cool nowadays to talk about God, and it's certainly not cool to talk about Jesus, but the idea behind *A Course in Miracles* is to undo the idea of separation, including the idea of being separate from God. In fact, that is the answer to the problems that we have.

We think that the answer to the problems that we have is somewhere out there on the screen, because we think it's real. We think it's real, we think it's true, and if it's true, we think the truth must be out there. It's kind of like The X-Files you know... the truth is out there. But what if the truth is not out there? What if none of it is real? What if none of it is true?

Well then you can start looking for the truth where the truth is, which is at a place of cause, which is the mind. So that's why *A Course in Miracles* says, "This is a course in cause and not effect." It says, "Seek not to change the world, seek rather to change your mind about the world." When you do that, now you're dealing with the cause, instead of just dealing with the effect.

An analogy I like to use because I like to go to the movies – if you read my books you know that's my hobby – and I like to go to the movies, the lights go down, and my attention is diverted to the screen. I might forget that what I'm seeing is not real. I might suspend my disbelief and start to actually identify with the movie. I might get into the story; I might even get emotional about the movie, I might even talk to the screen. I might say, "No, no, don't go there!"

So I get into it and I forget that it's not real, and that's exactly what we've done with the world. We've invested our belief in it, we forgot that it's not real, and so it affects us. And it can hurt us because of that.

What the Course does is it reminds you of something: it reminds you that there's this projector. Now if I wanted to change the screen in a movie theater it wouldn't do me too much good to go up and mess around with the screen because there's nothing there; it's a trick, it's an illusion, just like the world. And if I really wanted to have a permanent, instead of a temporary effect on that screen, then I would have

to remember something: there's this projector, and it's hidden – I'm not supposed to think about it. But if I really want to change what's on that screen, I would have to find that projector, and I would have to change what's in the projector.

If I change what's in the projector, the screen will take care of itself. I don't even have to worry about the screen. My focus is changed. Yeah, I can still participate in the illusion, and by the way, I think *A Course in Miracles* does a great job of taking that old idea that 'the world is an illusion,' and further refining it into the idea that 'this is a dream that we will awaken from.' And it's that awakening that is enlightenment. But I'm not talking about being more awake *in* the dream, which is what most people mistake for enlightenment; I'm talking about awakening *from* the dream. That's not just a minor distinction.

That's what Buddha was talking about when he said, "I am awake." He realized that he was the dreamer; he was not the dream. He realized that the entire universe of time and space was a dream that was coming *from* him. What makes Buddha Buddha, and Jesus Jesus, is that they understood something. They understood that the world was not being done to them. They realized that the world was being done *by* them, which puts you at a place of power.

There's no power in being a victim, which is exactly what you are if the world is being done to you. And if this world were made by God, you would be a victim of God. You would be a victim of a force that was outside of you, that did it to you. But what if God has nothing to do with this? What if God is still perfect? What if God, as *A Course in Miracles* and the Bible both say, is perfect love?

Well, we have to understand the implications of that, because if God is really perfect love, then all that It would know how to do would be to love. If It knew how to do anything else, It wouldn't be perfect love. If It could have thoughts, It wouldn't be perfect.

So God is still perfect. God is still perfect love, which is great, because it gives us a perfect home to go home to. In fact, we're already there because the world is a dream and when you wake up from a dream, the dream disappears, which is why the first book is called *The Disappearance of the Universe*, because what happens to a dream when you wake up? It disappears. And what it is replaced by is reality and reality is God, which is perfect oneness.

In fact, The Course describes heaven as the awareness of perfect oneness, the knowledge that there is nothing else – nothing else outside of this oneness, nothing else within. So right off the bat you're starting to get a premise of what *A Course in Miracles* is saying. But the thing is that The Course begins by saying, "Nothing real can be threatened," and the Course is a very big teaching, it talks about very big ideas. And when it says, "Nothing real can be threatened," it's talking about your reality, it's talking about what you really are.

And what you really are is exactly the same as your Source, exactly the same as God – no difference. Which means that it's perfect oneness, which means that you're not just *part* of it; you're all of it – exactly the same as God.

Then the Course goes on to say, “Nothing unreal exists.” Well that would be anything else, anything else that is not this perfect oneness. So that narrows it down a little bit.

Rick: Yeah.

Gary: And what the Course is asking us to do is make a choice between those two things. It says, “In every difficulty, each perplexity, in all distress, Christ calls to you and gently says, “My brother, choose again.”” What it’s asking you to choose is nothing less than your reality. The way that you get to actually experience that, instead of just having it as a theory, is that you see it everywhere, you see it in others. The reason that that works is because of the way that the mind works.

A Course in Miracles understands how the mind works. And the way that it works - and this is a very important principle of the mind that is stated in The Course - it says, “As you see him, you will see yourself.” And it must be pretty important because then it says, “Never forget this. In that person you will either find yourself or lose yourself.”

So the way it works is, if you could get down deep enough into the mind, you would discover that there’s just one mind. And the reason that there’s just one mind is that there’s really just one of us. The Course calls your reality “spirit”, and your unreality “ego.” So this is the domain of the ego – the domain of separation, which sees separation everywhere.

But if you get down deep enough into the mind, it turns out that there’s just one ego. There’s just one ego appearing as many. It’s what the Hindus call the world of multiplicity. You look out there you see all this separation, billions of bodies, trillions of objects, millions of things to choose between, and it looks like we have all this to choose between. But what the Course is teaching is that...no, it may look that way but that’s a trick. That’s a slight of hand. That’s the trickery of the ego, which is separation.

And the truth is there are only two things to choose between and only one of them is real. So you’ve got reality, which is heaven, God, perfect oneness - whatever you want to call it, but it’s a state of perfect oneness, and then you have anything else, which doesn’t appear to be perfect oneness, which is unreality. And that’s what we’re asked to choose between, and the way you choose it is by seeing it everywhere, in others.

Because if the mind knows everything, which it would have to by definition, because that’s where the projection of the universe of time and space is coming from in the first place, but it’s unconscious. We don’t see the projector but we see the projection. If the mind knows everything, which it does, then it knows that there’s really just one of us.

Now that’s good news and it’s bad news. The good news is that there’s power in that knowledge. The bad news is because your mind knows that there’s really just one of us, it will interpret anything that you think about another person to really be about you.

So you know, people wonder why they’re depressed. Just look at the garbage they’ve been thinking their whole lives about other people and their judgment of other people. They never understood that whatever they were thinking, even if it was subtle, whatever they were thinking or saying about another

person was really just going to them. Because your unconscious mind will interpret whatever you think to be a message, not to somebody else; it will interpret it to be a message from you, to you, about you, and that's a pretty sobering thought. Because when you think about all the things you thought your whole life, you didn't know it was just going to you, and that it would determine how you feel about yourself. But not only that, but even ultimately what you believe you are. You're actually establishing your own identity as you will see it and believe that it is, by the way that you think about other people.

Now a great master like Jesus understood that, and he understood that the way to experience his divinity was to see it everywhere. So he thought of everybody as being completely innocent, no matter what images the ego showed him. He knew better. He knew reality. So what he would do is he would kind of overlook the body, which is just a symbol of separation, and think outside of the box. He would think of everybody as being this perfect spirit - that is, not just part of it, but all of it.

So *A Course in Miracles* goes all the way with this. It doesn't just say, "Oh I'm forgiving you because I'm spiritual and I'm forgiving you;" it forgives people because they haven't really done anything, because they're not there. You're the one who made them up in the first place and what you're seeing is a projection, they're just coming from you. And you understand that you can forgive yourself by forgiving others, because you're just the one who is being forgiven anyway.

There's not really anybody out there and what you're seeing is a symbolic representation of that which exists in your own unconscious mind. So the way to forgive yourself is to forgive the images which you're being shown, which are really just symbols of what's there in your mind.

And so to forgive anything that you see in this world is really to forgive yourself, and you will experience the benefits of that forgiveness. You're the one who's going to feel better and you're the one who's going to feel happier.

You know, people have no idea how good they could feel. I mean they could feel so good it should be illegal. You can determine how you feel about yourself by changing the way that you think about other people and seeing innocence everywhere.

Now that is heresy to the ego because the ego wants this all to be real, because there's something we don't know about the ego: the ego likes this idea of separation; the ego wants to keep it going, why? Well for one thing, it feels special. It feels important to have an individual identity and a personal existence in a universe of time and space to play in, and to have all these accomplishments and goals, and possessions, and plans, and things. And of course we've made it all real so the ego will say, "Well it's very important what you do."

And *A Course in Miracles* would say, well it doesn't really matter what you do as long as you're doing it with love - as long as you're coming from a place of love and forgiveness. It's kind of like what Saint Thomas Aquinas said, he said, "Love and do as you will." The only thing I would add to that is that "do as you will," should be done with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because one of the things that *A Course in Miracles* does is it doesn't just describe the problem, it doesn't just describe the ego or the world; it gives you a solution to that problem. It gives you a way out. It gives you a way home, which is something

that most spiritual disciplines simply do not do because they don't know the full truth, which is God, and the only truth, which is the perfect oneness of God.

So when I mention pure nondualism - I know that you understand because you've read the book - that my teachers describe that there's four stages. There's dualism, in which we make everything real and is very real to us, and very important because we've invested our belief in it. And that's the state that most of the world is in.

And then there's the state of semi-dualism where you start to suspect that maybe this isn't all that there is, that there's a reality beyond the veil, beyond what we're seeing. And you start to look there and so the world is kind of losing its grip on you. And you're starting to suspect that maybe I appear to be here but this isn't where I belong, this isn't where I'm from.

At one point *A Course in Miracles* says, "The world you see is not home to you and somewhere in your mind you know that this is true, and the truth is buried there in the mind." I mention that the mind knows everything, well it also knows the truth but it's been covered over. It's been blocked out by the ego – the darkness of the ego is keeping that truth from coming to awareness, which is why *A Course in Miracles* talks about "removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence, which is your natural inheritance."

Your natural inheritance is nothing less than the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, but it's out of our awareness. Reminds me of something that Jesus said 2,000 years ago, which you can still see in the *Gospel of Thomas*. The disciples went up to Jesus and said, "When will the kingdom come?" And he said, "Well, it will not come by watching for it. It will not be said "Behold here," or "Behold there," rather, the kingdom of the Father is spread out upon the Earth and people do not see it." Well the reason that they don't see is, it's not that it's not there; but it's out of their awareness. It's being blocked out. In fact, you can't actually see it with the body's eyes; you can see symbols of it with the body's eyes.

But the kingdom of heaven, which is our reality, is actually a higher life form – a higher life form than being human, so in order to experience it you have to be prepared for it. It's kind of like a butterfly. A butterfly doesn't become a butterfly overnight; it starts out as a caterpillar and it goes through a cocooning process and only when it's ready is it released to this higher life form which is less restricted, more free, more beautiful. It really is more fun to be a butterfly than it is to be a caterpillar, and it really is more fun to be a spirit than it is to be a body. And what The Course says is it prepares the mind to experience this reality in such a way that it would not be fearful, because it really is quite different than what we thought was reality.

It can be experienced even while you appear to be here. Even while you appear to be walking around in a body, it's possible to have these moments which *A Course in Miracles* describes as "revelation," but the Course uses words differently than most people. When the Course talks about revelation, it's not talking about the *imparting* of information; it's talking about actual *experience*. When the Course uses the word "knowledge," it uses it in much the way that the Gnostics used the word *gnosis*. It's talking about actual experience of God, an actual experience of your perfect oneness with your Creator, which is the great mystical experience that the masters of history have talked about. And when that happens

to you, at first it may just last for a second or two, but that's all you need. Because what happens is the body seems to disappear, and the universe of time and space seems to disappear. And what is left in its place is this brilliant abstraction which doesn't have any parts to it because it's perfect oneness, and you experience actually being perfectly one with God. And in that experience is perfection, so there are no problems.

In perfect oneness you can't be attacked, so you're completely fearless. There's nothing to worry about and it's a very sexual experience also. At one point the Course describes your relationship with God as intensely personal and there's a very sexual aspect of this experience of perfect oneness with God. And it's so great that it can't be put into words; all you can do is scratch the surface.

I mentioned Saint Thomas Aquinas, he wrote something like 40 volumes worth of material. And at the end of his life he experienced God and he said, "Everything that I've written is a straw," – you know, it's nothing compared to this fantastic experience that we're all going to, eventually.

We're all going to the same place. Even people who you think don't deserve to [go to] heaven will be there, but the reason that that's fair is because they're not going there as bodies. They simply have a mistaken idea of what they are. Eventually that experience of being separate and being a body and being human will be replaced with the experience of being what you really are and where you really are. The reason I bring that up is because it is possible to get glimpses of that, and what reality is going to be for you eventually – it's kind of a preview of coming attractions.

Rick: So Gary, I have a bunch of questions based on what you said so far and not sure where to start. But maybe one good one to start with was how you spoke of the importance of a thought system, being established from the perspective of cause rather than at the mercy of effect. You know this is the principle of...if you can affect the course of a river at its source, it's going to be a lot easier to change it than down at the mouth of the river where it's entering the ocean, because you have the whole river to work with, and it's just a little stream at that point, so it's easier to turn in a different direction.

You speak a lot about thought – thought of this and thought of that. And just one thing that comes to mind: people can read books, they can get a conceptual framework such as you've just elaborated, but I think just a few minutes ago you were distinguishing between a mere conceptual framework and actual experience. And I think sometimes people mistake understanding for the actual experience. They get really conversant with a certain philosophical understanding such as Vedanta or nonduality and then they kind of think that that's what the great masters of Vedanta had – they had that understanding. But actually, if they could step into the *shoes* of those people and actually *experience* the world as they were experiencing it, they would find it to be radically different than a mere understanding. So what would you say to that?

Gary: That is so true and there is only one way to get from that idea of conceptual knowledge to actual experience, and that is practice. I ask people: do we really believe that we can attain the same level of spiritual mastery as people like Buddha and Jesus without practicing? I mean you can't get good at anything without practicing. You can't be a good piano player without practicing.

What *A Course in Miracles* does is it gives you a specific technology of forgiveness that you practice every day, and that's what changes your experience; it's not just the theory. If you keep anything at the level of theory, including *A Course in Miracles*, it will do you absolutely no good whatsoever. It will get you nowhere; it will just be an entertainment.

Rick: It's like looking at pictures of food and expecting to be nourished, or something.

Gary: Exactly. What The Course does is it gives you a practice, which is what the Workbook of The Course is for.

Rick: What's the nature of that practice?

Gary: Well, there is work to it and that's why it's called a "work-book," and the nature of that practice is a certain kind of forgiveness that understands that what you're seeing is not true, that this is a dream, that you are the dreamer, the dream is not being dreamed by somebody else.

So now you're going to forgive people not because they've done something; you're going to forgive people because they haven't really done anything, because you're the one who made them up in the first place.

So the way it works is something pushes your buttons, which happens to all of us occasionally. Like if I'm driving down the freeway and somebody cuts me off in traffic, right away I have a choice to make. I can respond with the ego and ... "Aahhh that son of a bitch," and give him the finger, and that's one possibility. Or I can stop myself; I catch myself and switch to thinking with the Holy Spirit in the mind instead of the ego in the mind. That involves an active choice, which is why *A Course in Miracles* is proactive. It involves an actual conscious decision on your part to stop thinking with the ego, and start thinking with the Holy Spirit.

And when you do that that's what The Course calls "the holy instant". That's when you start thinking with the Holy Spirit and the Holy Spirit has a totally different story about what's going on here than the ego. The ego is going to say, "Look, this is real. You gotta take care of it. These people are a problem. They deserve to be judged because they're wrong," and the ego has this whole story going. In fact, if you're not going to forgive people, you have to judge them. The Course says that, "He who would not forgive must judge for he must justify his failure to forgive."

So if you're not going to forgive somebody, now you need to make up this whole story as to why they're not worthy of your forgiveness. I mean it would take less time to just forgive the bastards. So it's like you need to have the discipline to stop yourself and what the Workbook of The Course does is it actually trains the mind to get into the *habit* of thinking with the Holy Spirit instead of the ego.

At one point The Course says, "Miracles" -which is this kind of forgiveness - "are habits." So you get into the habit of doing it so much that you would miss it if you didn't do it. It almost gets eventually so that you can't not do it. It reminds me of something that the great violinist, Isaac Pearlman said, he said, "Amateurs practice until they get it right, professionals practice until they can't get it wrong."

Rick: Yeah, nice.

Gary: It's like Jesus was so used to doing this, and seeing innocence and divinity and spirit everywhere, that he couldn't not do it. He would miss it if he didn't do it.

Rick: So then it's not just that Jesus had another way of thinking – I'll say this and then you can tell me if you agree or disagree – it's that he had another way of being. In other words, his whole orientation to the world was radically different. His moment to moment 24-7 perception of the world and of himself was radically different. Not that he was going around ... "Oh I forgive this person, oh I forgive that person," but he, wouldn't you say, he spontaneously, viscerally, fundamentally was in a much higher state of consciousness than the normal or average person?

Gary: Absolutely. In fact, I would say that Jesus didn't just *think* with love; he *was* love. *A Course in Miracles* says, "Teach only love, for that is what you are," so eventually you experience yourself as *being* love. One of the things my teacher says was, "You don't have to go looking for love if that is where you're coming from."

You can just *be* love and everything that you do in your life is just a natural extension of love, and that's the experience that forgiveness leads to *actually*. It leads to that experience of love naturally because it *undoes* the part of the mind that is not love. This is about undoing the ego.

At one point The Course says, "Salvation is undoing." And every time that you forgive somebody - coming from a place of cause, where you realize that they haven't really done anything, which is why they're innocent, because they're not bodies, they're not this separation that they thought that they were – every time you do that the Holy Spirit is actually healing the part of the mind that you can't see.

You may ask, "Well how can I heal my unconscious mind if I can't see it, because it's unconscious?" Well, you don't have to be able to see it. All you have to be able to forgive is what's right in front of your face, which is a symbol of what's in your mind. And by forgiving that and doing your part of the job, which The Course teaches is actually pretty small. The Course guarantees us that the Holy Spirit will take care of the big part of the job that we can't see, and actually heal that which is hidden in your unconscious mind.

Every time you practice forgiveness there's some kind of a healing that's going on. The Course says that a miracle is never lost. It can have undreamed of effects in situations that you're not even aware. So every time you practice forgiveness, the Holy Spirit is taking that forgiveness and shining it all through the universe of time and space [and] any parallel universes that exist.

At the very beginning, in the first fifty miracles for instance, the Course says that, "The miracle works in all the dimensions of time," so we know that this is not the only dimension of time that is happening right now. There are multiple dimensions, you're in all of them, but you don't have to worry about what you can't see. Your responsibility is simply to forgive what's right in front of your face and if you do that, the Holy Spirit will take care of the rest.

Rick: So just to resolve this cart-horse question, taking your traffic example where somebody cuts you off, you're saying that by making the conscious choice to react to that situation differently than one might – not to fly off the handle but to sort of forgive the guy – it has a ripple effect which goes to all the dimensions and universes. Which is a significant step towards the unraveling of your habitual tendency to take the world as real and leads to...I'm trying to find my own words for this....leads to your ultimate liberation or enlightenment. And that if you do this often enough, habitually enough, it's a very potent means of going all the way and unraveling all the layers of conditioning and knee-jerk reaction tendencies. Is that correct?

Gary: Yeah, that's very true. And one of the interesting things is that even though The Course isn't about fixing up the world, it does have fringe benefits in your life. Because when you stop thinking with the ego and you start thinking with the Holy Spirit, then you can think more clearly and you're open to inspiration.

The word "inspired" comes from the words "in-spirit." When you're thinking with the Holy Spirit you're open to inspiration and you can have inspired ideas. You can have brilliant ideas. You can have genius-level ideas that you never would have thought of if you were thinking with the ego and reacting and coming from a place of effect.

Rick: We're just presuming here that everybody understands what we mean by Holy Spirit; there might be a lot of definitions out there. So if we're going to use that term, let's define it.

Gary: Sure. The Holy Spirit is kind of like God's representative in this world. It's the part of your mind that remembers the truth, because as we said, the mind knows everything. The truth is buried there in the mind. Think of that as being the Holy Spirit – the truth that is in your mind that is speaking to you. It's your memory of home; it's your memory of God that is speaking to you. It's the higher part of your mind, the right part of your mind.

Rick: So does everyone have their own Holy Spirit or is there one universal Holy Spirit and there's a certain part of our mind that kind of shares a little bit of that, so to speak?

Gary: That's a good question because there is just one Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit will speak to you in a way that's best for you. The Holy Spirit will speak to you in a way that you can accept and understand and the Holy Spirit knows what's best for you. So even though there's just one Holy Spirit, it will speak to us as individuals because that may be exactly what we need at the time.

Rick: And how do we know when the Holy Spirit is speaking to us and not some individual impulse that we want to indulge in? You know that old saying, "The devil made me do it."

Gary: I think the answer to that question is simpler than we want to realize, because that voice that you hear is talking about love and forgiveness and great things. And if it inspires peace, that's the Holy Spirit. If what you're hearing is talking about judgment or condemnation or making somebody wrong, making it real, that's the ego, and the Holy Spirit is saying the opposite. The Holy Spirit is saying, "Well, it's not real, and what you're seeing is not true, that's why it's forgivable." If it was real, if it was true,

then forgiveness would not be justified. But because it's not real and because it's not true, that's why forgiveness is justified, because there is a reality that is just beyond the veil.

So you learn to kind of overlook the body. You still interact with people in a normal way, I hope, because I've met some of the most famous spiritual teachers in the world and half of them don't know how to carry on a normal conversation. It's like it's all spiritual, it's all they talk about.

Rick: I was going to ask you about that. In fact, there's been this trend in the contemporary spirituality where maybe ten years ago there was a heavy emphasis on... "You are not a person and the world is an illusion, and there's nothing to do and nowhere to go"...and all that stuff. At a certain point people started getting fed up with that. They thought - "I'm supposed to say my children are an illusion? And how about these money problems I'm having, or this relationship problem I'm having...?" and so on and so forth.

And so these days there's a trend towards what a lot of people are calling "embodiment," and a lot of teachers are talking about embodiment. I think what they mean by that could be summarized in saying that... yeah, you are a person, you're just not *only* a person, and you can't utterly dismiss the world as illusory if you're going to live in it.

There's a famous story about Shankara, who is the founder of nonduality. He was confronted by a rogue elephant who was about to trample him and he quickly scampered up a tree. And someone said to him, "Well, if the world is an illusion why did you bother climbing the tree?" And he said, "The illusory elephant chased the illusory me up the illusory tree."

So there's this sort of juxtaposition or paradox where you need and want to take the world seriously, to a certain extent and in a certain way, while at the same time realizing that what people are seeing the world to be is not necessarily ultimately what it is, correct?

Gary: He brought up a couple of big topics. The first one is that teaching that the world is an illusion is of very limited value. It already said, "As you see him you will see yourself." And if you're going through life thinking about people as being illusions and thinking the world is just an illusion...

Rick: Yeah, "I think I'll rob this bank; it's just an illusion anyway."

Gary: Right, well eventually you'll come to think of yourself as being an illusion and that's depression. It's empty and it's meaningless. And what *A Course in Miracles* does is it replaces the illusion with something else. It goes all the way with it and says, "There is a reality and that reality is perfect Spirit, which is God, and God is love." So it gives you something to replace it with; it doesn't leave you hanging.

Now, because The Course is done at the level of the mind and not at the level of the world, you can practice it at the level of the mind. And by the way, you don't have to tell anybody that you're doing this because this isn't a religion, it isn't something you have to proselytize for; it's a self-study course, it's a personal belief system. And because your thoughts determine your experience, you can have these spiritual thoughts at the level of the mind *and* you can have your life too. It's kind of like you can have your cake and eat it too. You can have your life.

One of the reasons that I love *A Course in Miracles* is because it's a happy form of spirituality. You'll notice that it talks about a happy dream; it talks about being a happy learner. One of the ten characteristics of a teacher of God is joy. This isn't your parents' suffering, sacrificial Jesus; this is the happy Jesus. This is the wisdom teacher who existed 2,000 years ago, who simply pointed people in the right direction. He was saying, "This is what works for me, maybe you should check it out. Maybe you'll save a few thousand years in your spiritual development."

A Course in Miracles does not claim to be the only way to get home to God, but I think it's fair to say that it does claim to be a fast way. It says, "The miracle can substitute for learning that may have taken thousands of years." So obviously it's talking about saving countless lifetimes by going to cause instead of effect. And the irony is that even though you understand even more that the world is not real, you can still have your life because The Course isn't asking you to give up anything; it's just that you're looking at it differently.

You're looking at it with the Holy Spirit instead of the ego, and you can still have your life. You can still have possessions, money, plans, you can still have sex, you can still have your goals and dreams; it's just that now you're looking at it with the Holy Spirit, with the understanding that you don't have to be stuck in it. You're like what The Course calls "above the battleground," where yes, you're still living your life, you're just looking at it differently.

Rick: Well your movie analogy is probably pretty good because we never think that what's happening in a movie is *really* happening, you know? There's this battle going on right in front of me, we realize it's a movie but that doesn't diminish our enjoyment of it.

Gary: Absolutely. In fact, I don't think of myself as being Gary; I think of myself as being an actor in a movie and I'm playing the part of Gary, but I'm not Gary; I'm just playing this role.

Rick: And so this perspective hasn't diminished your enthusiasm for life or your interest in life, it hasn't tended to make you more reclusive, or some such thing?

Gary: No, just the opposite. I enjoy life more than I used to and the reason for that is as you do this, your mind is being healed of guilt that you didn't even know that you had. There is this unconscious guilt that can be traced back to the original idea of being separate from God, which engendered a deep ontological guilt in the mind that people are not aware of. But as you practice this kind of forgiveness that is being healed, and with less guilt in your mind you actually end up enjoying life more.

One of the great teachers of *A Course in Miracles*, probably the greatest teacher of *A Course in Miracles*, Ken Wapnick, who made his transition about a year and a half ago, he loved classical music. And at the end of his life he loved it even more than ever. So you're not going to lose the enthusiasm or the love that you have for certain things in the world; you're going to enjoy them even more because you have less guilt in your mind.

So that's why I say this is a win-win situation because you can have your life – probably be a better life because you're open to inspired ideas. You can be more successful. There's nothing wrong with being successful. It's not against the rules here to have fun; this is a happy form of spirituality.

Rick: And why do you have less guilt?

Gary: You have less guilt in your mind because that guilt is actually being literally removed from your mind by the Holy Spirit. As you do your part of the job, which The Course teaches is your sole responsibility, is to practice forgiveness, coming from a place of cause and not effect and replacing in the mind what you're seeing with innocence everywhere, knowing that that is how you'll come to experience yourself. As you do that, the Holy Spirit, according to The Course, is actually healing the mind, actually removing this unconscious guilt from your mind. And after a while that's not just a theory; you actually start to feel it. You actually start to gradually shift your experience from the experience of being a body to the experience of being spirit.

Rick: So you're saying that if a person, which most people do primarily think of themselves as a body, it's because they're carrying around a load of guilt?

Gary: Yes, and they're kind of like siding with the ego, which is reinforcing the experience that you're a body. In fact, that's The Course's definition of temptation. I mentioned that The Course uses words a little differently than most people.

The Course says that, "Temptation has one lesson it would teach, in all its forms, wherever it occurs. It would persuade the holy son of God is a body, born in what must die, unable to escape its frailty, and bound by what it orders him to feel." So if you're at the effect of the world then the body is telling you what to feel. People think that they have pain in their knee. They think that the pain is really *in* the knee but the truth is the pain is not in the knee; it's in the mind.

My teachers taught me that pain is not a physical process; it's a mental process. That's good news because if it's in your mind you can change your mind about it. You can start to get domination over the body. You can start to tell the body what to feel because you realize... "Okay I'm feeling some pain. Well, that's a function of guilt but the truth is I'm not guilty."

Rick: Well pain can be a useful function. If I put my hand on a stove I want to feel pain because I want to know my hand is on the stove and take it away again.

Gary: Yes but as we've seen masters do, it's possible to walk on hot coals and it's possible to experience fire without it burning, because it's not really the fire that is burning you; it's the mind and the guilt in the mind that is burning you. So it's possible to change that and now you have a fighting chance, because you can change your mind, you can have dominion over your mind.

It's like The Course teaches, "If the body cannot heal the mind but the mind can heal the body, then the mind must be more powerful than the body."

Rick: Do you distinguish between pain and suffering? I've heard people say, "Well yeah, Jesus felt pain but he wasn't suffering because he was established on such a profound level of awareness that he was beyond the realm of suffering."

Gary: Actually, he could not feel pain either.

Rick: Really? You mean you whack him with a hammer and he wouldn't feel any pain? What do you think he would experience? What do you think he did experience when they were driving spikes through his wrists?

Gary: It's like this Rick: at the end of his life Jesus had no guilt whatsoever in his mind. *A Course in Miracles* teaches that "The guiltless mind cannot suffer" because the pain is a function of guilt, and the suffering is a function of the pain. With no pain there's no suffering. And his mind had been completely healed by the Holy Spirit, there was no guilt, which means that when he was crucified – and he's very clear about this in *A Course in Miracles* if you read the section called 'The Message of the Crucifixion' – the real message was that what he really was could not be hurt, and it could not be killed, and it could not feel any pain or suffer, because his idea of being in a body had been totally removed. And his experience was his perfect oneness with God.

So the crucifixion was not about suffering and sacrifice; it was about the lack of suffering and sacrifice and the fact that what you really are cannot only not be hurt, but it's possible to experience that to the point where you cannot be hurt, and you cannot suffer, and you cannot feel any pain.

So when they drove those nails into his wrists he felt no pain whatsoever. The body to him was like a figure in a dream. A figure in a dream cannot really be hurt; it can appear to be hurt but it's not really hurt.

Rick: Now you're one of the more advanced *Course in Miracles* people in the world, probably, how would it go if someone drove a nail through your wrist?

Gary: If somebody drove a nail through my wrist it would hurt but not as much as it would have 20 years ago. I've been doing this 22 years...my experience of life is quite a bit different. Back then I was still making it real, even though I had been on the spiritual path for 14 years at that time. It was still real to me, I still thought it was very important, I still suffered. And today I don't feel like it's real, I don't feel like my body is real.

I mentioned as you go along your experience will change. Maybe your body will start to feel lighter, maybe it will start to feel more like the figure in a dream that it really is, instead of this thing that you have to carry around! Maybe it will be more difficult to hurt it, maybe it will be more flexible. Maybe you'll get into an accident and you'll be injured a little bit and you'll say to yourself, "You know, that should hurt. How come it doesn't hurt?" And even you'll be surprised at the changes that are taking place. So it really is possible to shift your identity, to shift your experience to the experience of being spirit.

Now the good news is you could still have your life, you could still have everything. You're not being asked to give up anything; you're just being asked to do it with the Holy Spirit and practice forgiveness as you go along. And one of the cool things is that The Course teaches if there's nothing there for you to forgive - let's say that you're actually in a good relationship with somebody and you're having a good time - well The Course teaches...look, you don't have to go through the day saying, "Oh this isn't real; it's just an illusion." What you should do when you're with somebody and you're having a good time is celebrate. And that's why I mentioned that this is a happy form of spirituality and it's okay to have a good time.

I'm married to a beautiful woman and we have a great time. We love to go out to dinner and I like to have a couple of glasses of wine and we like to have a good time. We like our travelling and our speaking. We just got back from China where I'm going again next week, except this time it will be Taiwan. I enjoy seeing the world and I've been meeting all these great people. I'm not being asked to give up anything and I have a better life than I used to have.

So I think that as you go along you realize that the only thing that's changed is a recognition. The Course teaches, "Enlightenment is a recognition not a change, at all."

Rick: You mentioned this traffic incident as an opportunity for practicing forgiveness - a typical thing that happens to people...getting cut off in traffic. And obviously there are similar examples where people are pushing your buttons at work, but how about the many times where we're in a fairly neutral situation? Let's say we're just walking down the street, walking the dog or something, there's nothing particularly challenging, it's just a neutral situation, would you be practicing something even then, intentionally, to continue to make progress?

Gary: If I'm enjoying the walk then there's nothing to forgive. You notice that The Course doesn't talk about forgiving the good stuff. It doesn't talk about forgiving the romantic walks on the beach or the beautiful sunsets; it focuses on forgiving the negative emotions, when you do get your buttons pushed. It says that anger is never justified, which is a pretty tall standard.

Rick: It is and I heard that. And I wanted to ask you about that because a lot of times people say, "Well you shouldn't suppress your anger, you can end up becoming a repressed kind of person. You should express your emotions honestly and spontaneously," and so on. And I tend to agree with the thing of 'anger is never justified,' but what would you say to those who say that you shouldn't repress, you should express anger or any other emotion if it arises, so as not to be unnatural?

Gary: Right. Well The Course isn't about suppressing your anger it's about transforming it. It actually releases it. Yes, that anger will come up. I'm not saying that if you do this you won't ever get angry, in fact I pretty much guarantee that you will. The difference is now you know what it's for, now you know what you should do with it.

When that anger comes up it's time to forgive. And if you forgive you will feel better, that's right off the bat. And if that were true, which it is, then that alone would be worth doing *A Course in Miracles* but not only that, you get to gradually awaken in God as you go along, so that's also a great thing.

And this can also be very practical even though it's not about changing the world. You know, I have that choice to give the guy the finger on the highway or forgive him. Now let's say I react with the ego and I give the guy the finger. Well what if he has a gun?

Rick: Yeah, road rage. You could get yourself shot.

Gary: But if I don't give him the finger and I choose the Holy Spirit, I'm alive. It's like there's alternate realities, alternate dimensions of time. In one dimension of time I practice forgiveness and I'm alive, and in another dimension of time I respond with the ego and I'm dead. So that's why I say this can be pretty practical on the level of form.

The idea that the world is an illusion is just part of it. You have to replace that idea with something else, you have to go all the way with it eventually, and all the way with it is God. I mentioned earlier that you have this state of dualism - you believe the whole thing, you got this state of semi-dualism where the world is starting to lose its hold on you, then eventually you get to the state of nondualism. And nondualism will say that of the truth, and everything else, only the truth is true and nothing else is true.

And then *A Course in Miracles* goes a final step, I think, and replaces the whole thing with God, which is the truth, which is perfect oneness, which is love and nothing else is true. So that's the only reason that I make a distinction between pure nondualism and nondualism, because pure nondualism involves God as the ultimate truth, whereas nondualism without God is kind of abstract. And I'm not saying that's not valuable; it is, and it is one of the fundamental tenets of a lot of Buddhism. Not all Buddhists believe everything exactly the same, but that's definitely one of the fundamental things.

Rick: Hindu nondualists tend to bring God into the picture more. There's a verse in the Bhagavad Gita which you just reminded me of which is: "The unreal has no being, the real never ceases to be."

Gary: That's beautiful.

Rick: And let's talk about God a little bit because you just brought it up. You know a lot of the most renowned nondual teachers such as Ramana Maharishi and Shankara and so on, were actually great devotees of God and they didn't have a problem with It. And in terms of the world - there being a one unified reality - and yet they were very devotional men that spoke and thought in terms of God, were devoted to God in one form or another.

And I heard you say in one of your books that God is not responsible for the universe - if you put it that way, He's not involved in the universe. Maybe you could clarify what you actually said there and we can go into this area a little bit more.

Gary: Sure. God doesn't think like humans because He's not human. I mentioned Spirit is a higher life form. God does not have separate thoughts; God thinks in terms of perfect oneness. And God's representative, the Holy Spirit, also thinks in terms of oneness and sees oneness everywhere.

Rick: If there's just perfect oneness, then it sounds like you just distinguished there between God and His representative, the Holy Spirit, and that doesn't sound like one; it sounds like there's this other guy that represents Him.

Gary: No, because there isn't another guy that represents Him, but there is the memory of God in your mind, which is the Holy Spirit.

Rick: I see, so it's like a reflection of God or a flavor of God or something.

Gary: Yeah, it's kind of like you're remembering home. So it's like God really didn't have anything to do with the dream and the dream only lasted for an instant, according to The Course, but what we do is we keep reliving it. It says, "Every instant of every day, you but relive the time when terror took the place of love."

So there was this *tiny*, mad idea, as The Course describes it, which is the thought of separation, which symbolizes itself in a dream. A dream of duality has both good and bad, it has both abundance and scarcity. And people then try to fix the problem out there on the screen, thinking that it's real. So they seek abundance in the world and they think that the scarcity exists in the world, and they don't understand that the only place it exists is in the mind, which is why The Course says that "A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need correct."

And if you could correct that one lack, which is the idea of separation from God, then you would never feel lack. You would always feel abundant; you would always feel like you were taken care of. But the truth is God doesn't have anything to do with the world and we should be happy about that, because if God made this world and the things in it, then He'd be just as crazy as we are.

Rick: Well let me probe into that a little bit more, because some people speak of God as this sort of totality, the repository of everything... and that if there's going to be a relative creation it's going to have to have pairs of opposites. If there's going to be fast...there's slow, cold-hot, good-bad, happiness-suffering. And some people say, "Okay, well it's all God playing out this game within Himself, playing different roles like in a movie - you have the good guy and the bad guy. God is playing both roles."

Gary: Right. The Course would say no, God has nothing to do with duality, nothing to do with separation; only perfect love, and this world is here, even though it's not here, in our experience it seems to be here. And by the way, I'm not here to deny people's experiences, I'm not here to say that we don't experience that we're a body or we don't experience that we have real problems in a real world and real bills to pay; I'm just saying that it's a false experience, that it's not true.

Time and space are just separation ideas. It looks like you're over there it looks like I'm over here, that's just an illusion of separation. The truth is there's only one of us and that oneness is really oneness with God, not separation. And God doesn't even know about duality because God is simply perfect love and all we need to do is awaken into that, awaken from the dream by forgiving it. So God doesn't have our experience.

What we did if you look at the Bible is we made up a God in our image, and we made up a God that has human characteristics. He does judge and He is angry and he kills people.

Rick: And we separated Him from the universe like a clockmaker who is separate from His creation – winds it up and then it runs, but he has nothing to do with it.

Gary: Well people will say that God made the universe so that He could experience Himself. If that is true then God is insane, because that's like saying that the only way that you can enjoy sex would be to shoot yourself in the stomach so that you know what real pain is. It's just nonsensical and it's unnecessary, which is why the Course says there's a better way, there's another way, and there's a way to forgive it in such a way that you wake up. The irony is once again, you can still have all the other stuff along the way.

I mentioned earlier that idea of awakening in God. I think that the only reason Rick that people would stick with something like *A Course in Miracles* and keep doing it, the only reason that people would read my books and take them seriously instead of laughing at me, even though they're lighthearted, I think the reason they stay with something like this is because of their experience. Their experience starts to change, they really do feel good, they really do start to experience Spirit and start to feel lighter and start to feel like they're in a process of awakening in God, and that's what keeps them going. Not because I say something or because somebody else says something or writes something, but because their experience tells them that this is true.

Rick: That's a good point. I mean there was a famous spiritual teacher and some reporter asked him, "How many followers do you have?" And he said, "I don't have any followers; everyone follows their own experience," so that's just the point you're making.

Let me ask you another question about God. A single cell has as much information in it as 10,000 volumes and it's as complex as the city of Tokyo, and yet it's only a few microns across and it's this incredible mechanism! And we have a 100 trillion of them or so in our bodies. Each cell has 100 trillion atoms in it, each atom is this precisely arranged little thing that is a miracle unto itself. Now some people look at that, scientists even, and they think, "Whoa, this speaks of a vast intelligence that we can't even begin to comprehend, and maybe that's what God is. Maybe that's what people are talking about when they talk about God." And you could do it with anything; I mean anything that science has taught us. You look at it and there's this amazing thing that's going on.

We're talking about the universe here as illusory and a dream and unreal and so on, but could the universe be seen as sort of a signal or a symptom of a vast underlying intelligence? That it's actually a kind of an indicator of how incredible God is...a signpost that points to this amazing intelligence, if we just stopped taking it for granted and looked a little bit closely at it?

Gary: Well it's like this: when ego made the universe of time and space...

Rick: Some kind of universal ego you're saying, not just the individual ego?

Gary: Yeah, the one ego. Because there appeared to be this separation from God in the ego's experience, it engendered tremendous guilt which the ego wanted to escape from; more accurately, we wanted to escape from it and we chose the ego's ideas instead of the Holy Spirit's because we were confused, we were frightened - all these ideas that exist in separation and duality that could not possibly exist in perfect oneness. And the guilt that it engendered – ideas like sin, guilt, fear, attack, punishment, separation, even death, came into the mind, flooding into the mind. We wanted to escape from it, we chose the ego's idea of escaping from it and all of these ideas were pushed down into the unconscious, and even any psychologist today will tell you that projection always follows denial. So these ideas were pushed down into the unconscious mind and then this vast projection occurred outward.

That is what we today would call the "Big Bang," the making of the universe of time and space. But all that it really is, no matter how impressive it looks, is separation, and it is based on separation. Everything has a beginning, an ending, a border or a limit of some kind to it, and I'm not saying that it can't appear to be very impressive; the ego did do an impressive idea, because the ego was imitating God.

So what we have here is kind of like an imitation of life, an imitation of God, a pseudo-life full of pseudo-intelligence and things that seem to be very impressive when the truth is, at the end of the day, it's just separation, and that's all it is. But what we do is by making it real, we're impressed by it. Then the next thing that we do is we analyze it -we analyze everything to death.

The person who channeled *A Course in Miracles*, Dr. Helen Schucman, she was a psychologist - she was a research psychologist but she also did therapy on the side – she did analysis. And after one of the sessions Jesus asked her in *The Course*, you can see it, "Can you find light by analyzing the darkness?" And the answer is no. You can't find light by analyzing the darkness. You can only find light by *undoing* the darkness – your forgiveness.

Rick: Flick on the light – principle of a second element. Just add light and darkness is no longer found, right?

Gary: Right. So it looks very impressive and the reason that we analyze everything and this is what a lot of our professions do of course, whether you're a psychologist or a physicist or a scientist or a doctor or an engineer, anything!

I trade financial markets, it's kind of a hobby of mine, I analyze things, I just know that it's all b.s., and it's like you do that to make it real. The Holy Spirit is saying the opposite. The Holy Spirit is saying, "Don't make it real, because if you make it real you can't forgive it." So you have to make it unreal and forgive the unreal instead of forgiving the real.

Part of that understanding is that the reality of God is just beyond the illusion, just beyond the veil. So while I'm having that normal conversation with somebody - and I always tell people look, don't forget how to be normal. When I go to somebody's house and they're having a party, I don't start talking about spirituality. Now I can talk about a lot of different things, I don't even tell people about this unless they asked me. If they're interested, if they're asking questions then I know they want to hear about it. If

they're not asking me about it then there's no reason to talk about it. But I'm still forgiving, I'm still thinking, "Okay, this person thinks that they're a person but I know better," and I'm thinking outside of the box, I'm thinking with the Holy Spirit. I'm thinking that just beyond the veil is a reality that this person shares with all of us, and that is this perfect oneness with God. And I know that there's a fringe benefit to that too because if I think of that person that way, that is how I will experience myself.

So this is something you can do and really not change much of anything except you're thinking differently.

Rick: You equated God with love; God is perfect love. Does God have any other qualities you can enumerate?

Gary: I would say what is reflected in the right part of our mind, things like love and forgiveness and beauty – yes, there is beauty that appears to be in the world. The only problem with duality is that for every beauty there is a corresponding ugliness, for every healthy body there's a sick body, and eventually the bad part of duality will eventually show up.

So you can't get away from that in this world; the only thing you can do with it is forgive it and awaken to a real world, which is the ultimate goal of *A Course in Miracles*, but I really think it gives you a life as you go along. You just kind of like forgive as you go.

Rick: But I asked you about qualities of God. God is love – everybody says that, and actually this is sneaky question because I'm leading back to coming back to what we were just discussing, which is that we see some amazing qualities displayed in the creation. You just attributed the whole creation to the ego, but if we look closely at creation it's a pretty darn cool thing in the sense of the unbelievable complexity and the vast intelligence that seems to give rise to that complexity.

And so I guess the question would be: is intelligence an attribute of God in addition to love? And is the intelligence we see in creation symptomatic of God's intelligence percolating up into the material world? And I think you just said no it's not, God has nothing to do with it; it's just the ego. And that's a bit of a head-scratcher for me because I tend to think if God is omnipresent, then He is not only beyond creation but pervades all creation.

Okay...I'm answering my own question here. You're going to say that creation doesn't even exist so God doesn't pervade it.

Gary: Let's put it this way: intelligence without love is nothing.

Rick: Yeah, no, I'm cool with that - so God can be both.

Gary: What's the first thing we did with atomic energy?- built a bomb. So intelligence without love is nothing and what The Course is asking you is to choose, to choose love instead of the ego, and that's the only choice that we're asked to make. Now as far as creation and the dream, I think what we have to understand is that there is no truth in the dream. The truth doesn't exist in the dream.

It's kind of like this: let's say you have a 3-year old daughter and she's in bed at night and she's dreaming. You peek in on her, you can tell that she's having a bad dream – she's tossing she's turning, you can tell that she's not having a good experience, but you can't see her dream because it's not real, it doesn't exist. But you can see that she's having a dream. So what do you do intuitively? Maybe you'll sit down next to her and you're not going to shake the hell out of her because you want her to wake up peacefully, so maybe you'll whisper to her, maybe you'll say, "Hey, it's only a dream. What you're seeing is not true. In fact, you don't have to worry about it. I'm here with you. I'm going to wake you up gradually so that you'll be happy when you wake up."

And an interesting phenomenon occurs: she can hear your voice *in* the dream. She can hear the truth in the dream and start listening to the right voice that speaks from the reality that is greater than the dream, instead of that voice in the dream that is speaking from the reality of the dream. And she starts to listen to the right voice and she starts to relax and you're speaking to her from outside of the dream, because the truth is not *in* the dream, ever. And if people remember that they're going to save themselves a hell of a lot of time.

There is no truth in the dream but the truth can be heard *in* the dream. And what happens is eventually your daughter starts to relax and then she wakes up. And when she wakes up she's surprised to find out that she never left the bed; it was there the whole time. It's not that the bed wasn't there; it was just out of her awareness, she couldn't see it.

Just like Jesus said 2,000 years ago: "The Kingdom of heaven is here but people cannot see it" - it's out of their awareness; the bed was out of her awareness. And you can think of what we woke up to this morning when we woke up from the dreams we were having in bed last night –it was just a different form of dreaming. The Course teaches that all your time is spent in dreaming.

Rick: Well it's an interesting metaphor you just used because what you're sort of saying is the world, which is illusory, is whispering to us..."Wake up, wake up." And different things, different experiences we have and even if, let's say you're a scientist and you're studying the mechanism of a cell, you're getting information from that study that is hinting to you that there is a deeper reality that you're ordinarily oblivious to.

Gary: No, no, no, no, no.

Rick: I'm not going to get you on this one. 😊

Gary: The universe isn't whispering to us to wake up; it's the Holy Spirit that is whispering to us to wake up - our memory of God.

Rick: Which is God's representative, so to speak.

Gary: Right, and the Holy Spirit can be heard in the dream. The Holy Spirit is in the mind and it's kind of like the part of the mind that chooses. Well you could think of you, when you say "I," you could think about it as the part of the mind that chooses, and what you're choosing between is the Holy Spirit and

the ego. But the Holy Spirit isn't technically *in* the world or in the dream; it's speaking to us through the mind.

So it's really the Holy Spirit, kind of like, educating the ego to choose against itself, in a way. You're choosing the Holy Spirit and the ego is weakening, and maybe even the ego will start to get the idea that it's more fun to be spirit than to be a body but that takes time. But The Course does say that the ego can learn. So it's like you're choosing against the ego, the ego doesn't like that at first, but eventually the time comes when even the ego starts to get used to the idea that, "Hey, this is a good thing." And then you're really getting there – you're getting there towards the end.

Rick: Speaking of the end, I heard you say quite a few times in your book that, as would the Buddhists say, it's a good idea to get off the wheel of reincarnation, that you sort of want to end the cycle of rebirth and come home to your ultimate state, which I think you equated with heaven. Let's talk about that a little bit, about why it's advantageous to stop being reborn and what heaven is...that we're going to end up in if we stop being reborn.

Gary: Right, well this is a world that includes pain and it's always going to come back to that, sooner or later. At one point The Course describes this as "the dream of death." There is no death in heaven and The Course says "there is not death here either; it's just the *belief* in death," and what gives death power over us is our belief in it.

So in The Course, the last two obstacles to peace are the fear of death and the fear of God. We don't realize that if we didn't have this fear of God that we wouldn't fear death either; that these are inventions of the mind that we've invested our belief in.

I think that what you have to remember is that it always comes back to that choice. No matter how difficult things get, The Course says, "In every difficulty, each perplexity, in all distress, Christ calls to you and says, "My brother, choose again."" Choose with the reality of the Holy Spirit instead of the unreality of the world and undo its power that it has over you.

If you do that, your experience starts to change and that brings up the real answer to all of our most difficult questions in life. There's this great part in the Workbook of The Course... Jesus is speaking and by the way, people think of Jesus as being a leader, he didn't think of himself that way. Jesus was the ultimate follower.

He says in The Course, "Eventually I just listen to one voice." Eventually he just listened to the voice of the Holy Spirit instead of the ego. He never listened to the ego. So he was a follower too. He wasn't really the leader that people made him out to be. The real answer [that] he says in the Workbook: "The ego will ask many questions that this Course does not answer." For example, how does the impossible occur? Because people always ask, "Well how did I get here?" And I'll say, "Well you know, according to *A Course in Miracles* you're not here."

"Yeah I know, but how did I get here?"

Rick: Yeah, you know that example of the snake and the string in Vedanta? People *think* they see a snake on the road and it's really a string, or a rope. And they're running around you know, "... how to deal with the snake?" and... "We should get it!", and ambulances are coming because people are having heart attacks and so on, but it's really only a string.

Someone might ask, "Well how did the snake get there?" It never did! It was always a rope. You just mistook it. Maybe the light wasn't enough, or something.

Gary: Yeah, so this Course will ask many questions the ego does not answer. And then Jesus says something very interesting. He says, "There is no answer, only an experience. Seek only this and do not let theology delay you."

What he's saying there is that the real answer to our most difficult questions in life is going to come to us not in the form of words, but in the form of an experience - an experience of what you really are and where you really are. And when you have that experience of revelation you understand that that is the answer. *In* that answer there are no questions. The questions only exist in the dream.

Then you appear to come back here, to the dream, and you have questions again. And you realize... "Hey, I'm dreaming the questions." The Course says, "The awareness of dreaming is one of the functions of the miracle worker. You become more aware of the fact that you are dreaming and it becomes kind of like a lucid dream. And you realize, "Yeah, I'm just dreaming all those questions, and I'm flying to China while really I'm just having a dream that I'm flying to China."

The Course says, "You travel but in dreams while safe at home." It says, "You are at home in God, dreaming of exile, but perfectly capable of awakening to reality." And the way that you facilitate that awakening is, once again, through this kind of forgiveness.

So you might notice in my books that even though we talk about a wide variety of subjects – all kinds of different things – eventually my teachers always bring the conversation back around to forgiveness, because that's the fundamental teaching and tool of the Holy Spirit, and sooner or later it's going to come back to that. Understanding that, what I try to do is I try to do it whenever the opportunity comes up.

We have a phrase that we coined – I have an online discussion group, it's the biggest *A Course in Miracles* study group in the world and we coined a phrase the very first year. This is about, oh 12 years ago, we call it JAFO – J-A-F-O. It stands for: just another forgiveness opportunity. Now we know what things are for! Things aren't going good and we don't get what we want, which is an ego special, and you're disappointed and you're feeling anxious about something - however it shows up, that's the forgiveness opportunity. And if you take advantage of it, you'll get the benefit of doing *A Course in Miracles*, and if you don't do it, well then it can't help you.

I think one of the questions is how bad do you want the results of The Course? How bad do you want the peace of God? At one point The Course says about those words: 'I want the peace of God' – "To say

these words is nothing, but to mean these words is everything.” And the way that you show that you mean it is through your practice, by doing it every day.

It’s like let’s say you wanted to be a great piano player. Well the first time that you sit down to play the piano you suck. And the only way that you’re ever going to be that great piano player someday is if you sit there every day and practice... a lot. But if you do, if you want it badly enough, then eventually you can be a great piano player. And when it comes to forgiveness, eventually you will be like Jesus. So it’s not a question of *if*; it’s a question of *when*.

Rick: You mentioned that *A Course in Miracles* is not the only path but an effective path, and a fast path. And as I recall – I haven’t listened to it again since I did it, but I think when I interviewed David Hoffmeister I asked him, “How many people in *A Course in Miracles* would you say are enlightened?” And we went into what enlightenment actually means and you can elaborate on what you say it means in your answer here, and he said, “Not too many”- if that’s what he said, and I hope I’m not misrepresenting him.

Do you agree that percentage-wise, among all those who practice *A Course in Miracles*, there isn’t a fairly significant percentage of enlightened people? And by enlightenment I guess we mean you’re off the wheel of birth and death, or whatever. Please elaborate as you answer this question.

Gary: Sure. I would say that it’s a low percentage but I definitely believe it’s increasing. My teachers say that there are certainly more enlightened people today than there have ever been. *A Course in Miracles* is just one reason for that.

Yeah, it’s like anything else. Maybe one in twenty *Course* students will stick with it long enough and really do it, really practice forgiveness to the point where they eventually do it all the time. Eventually they will be enlightened, and even if they’re not, they would have made so much progress, and that progress stays with you by the way; you don’t have to start all over again -that all stays in the unconscious mind, you don’t ever lose it.

Rick: It says that in the Bhagavad Gita too by the way. It says that wherever you leave off at the end of this life, you pick it up again, from there, in the next life.

Gary: Yeah, so maybe your next life you’re 25 years old and you go to this meeting, and these people are studying this strange thing called *A Course in Miracles* and they don’t understand it. And you pick it up and you start reading it and it makes sense to you. Mozart could play the piano when he was six and started writing symphonies when he was nine - it wasn’t his first time; he had been doing that. It’s the same with The Course, but I do think it is possible to be enlightened in one lifetime with The Course.

I think one of the scribes of The Course, Bill Thetford, his good friend Judy Skutch - the original publisher of *A Course in Miracles*, who I’m now friends with and privileged, I’d say – she said she thought that Bill was the first one to graduate from The Course.

Rick: Would you say that you’ve graduated? Would you say that you’re enlightened? Kind of putting you on the spot here, but...

Gary: No, I've come a long way. According to my teachers I do live one more lifetime. The lifetime that I'm going to live is the form of the woman who appears to me as a teacher – Pursah. That's her in my final lifetime which is my next lifetime, which takes place 100 years from now in Chicago.

Rick: She was Saint Thomas and so therefore so were you, 2,000 years ago, who wrote The Gospel of Thomas – just to throw people a little tid-bit there that might intrigue them.

Gary: The reason it's a trilogy is because it shows how these lifetimes are connected. *A Course in Miracles* says, "The trials are but lessons presented once again, so that where you made a faulty choice before, now you can make a better one and thus escape all the pain that your previous decision brought to you."

She had lessons as Thomas, 2,000 years ago. The guy who appears to me was Thaddeus – Saint Thaddeus. In this lifetime those two people are myself and my wife Cindy, which is explained in the books.

Rick: Oh, Cindy was Thaddeus? I see, right...

Gary: Right.

Rick: And therefore you were Arten!

Gary: Right, and in our final lifetime 100 years from now, I'll be Pursah and she'll be Arten, and both achieve our enlightenment in *that* lifetime. You know I don't mind coming back one more time. I figure one lifetime is worth coming back for to be enlightened.

Rick: Sure. This one's fun right, why not another one?

Gary: Well, you gotta be careful with that because the ego wants this world to be attractive. You notice when people remember their past lifetimes they always remember the good ones?

Rick: Yeah... "I was Cleopatra or whatever."

Gary: Few people remember the lifetime that they died in prison, or the lifetime that they died face down in the gutter. And they always remember the good stuff because the ego wants this to be attractive and wants us to keep coming back for more, because the ego likes it. And it's all the ego knows is it's afraid of losing it, but eventually you learn that there is a better way.

Rick: And you would never have known all this stuff, obviously, if Arten and Pursah hadn't shown up and told it to you? I mean you would never have known that you were them or that they even existed, or that you were Thomas or anything else, and so you're pretty much taking their word for it. Other than what they told you, have you had any cognitions or insights that corroborate what they said?

Gary: Yes. My mystical experiences have usually been very visual. I have this place, I call it the "in-between zone", when I'm kind of falling to sleep at night but not really asleep yet - kind of like in-between conscious and unconscious. In that state I'll very often have visions and this is really like

watching movie – even with sounds sometimes -and I'll see scenes from past lifetimes. And intuitively, it's like I know which person is me, which person is someone who I know in this lifetime, or I'll know that I haven't met them yet in this lifetime. But the way that my teachers explain it is they say that we're kind of in each others' orbit. You're in somebody's orbit – you seem to go away from them for a while but you always come back, close to them.

Because we're in each others' orbit we will meet again. The Course says, "The script is written. Those who are to meet shall meet." I like the way Emerson put it. He said, "If we are related we shall meet." When you meet someone it's not an accident, the only question is what is it for? If it's not to forgive, it's to celebrate. If there's something to forgive, that's what it's for. Either way it's interesting because it's all a set-up.

Rick: The Buddha said we've had so many lifetimes that everybody we ever meet has actually been a direct family member to us, at one point or another.

Gary: Yeah, you could say in some way we are even physically related – in the dream anyway. It's like the whole thing fits together and that's why the books fit together and the story in the third book eventually is resolved. And they explain their final lifetime, how they achieved enlightenment and things that happened that they had to forgive and it's very interesting.

I am doing a fourth book with Arten and Pursah, but it's not really part of the trilogy; they talk about other beings who have become enlightened.

Rick: So are they still visiting you, Arten and Pursah?

Gary: Yes.

Rick: Oh cool, good.

Gary: The only difference is instead of talking about Thomas and Thaddeus, and Cindy and me, and Arten and Pursah, they're talking about other masters and how they achieved enlightenment. It's a good way, I think, to paint examples for people to follow and kind of say, "Well this is how they did it, and this is how you can do it too."

Rick: On the Internet of course people can be pretty cruel and crass...

Gary: Really?

Rick: Yeah and so I'm sure that people are going to hear what you've been saying...you know, that you were Saint Thomas, and Arten and Pursah came and showed up in your living room and all that, and think that you're either crazy or delusional, or have a good imagination, or a big liar. So do you ever bother responding to those types of things, or do you just sort of let those who have ears to hear, hear?

Gary: It's like this: everybody who is watching this in some lifetime has been somebody who is so famous and so awesome and so amazing that they would gasp if they knew who they were. That's duality, because you've got to have those kinds of lifetimes. Unfortunately because it is duality, you're

going to have other lifetimes you know, when you're born starving to death in Africa. So you can't get away from that in a world of duality. The only question is what is it for?

Now I don't care if people believe *me* personally, but even if they don't believe me they can still get a lot of help from the ideas that are in the book.

Rick: Yeah.

Gary: The point to the book is I believe it. I believe it; if somebody else believes it it doesn't matter.

Rick: No, that's good. On the topic of belief, I don't know if you ever watched the debate between Ken Ham who runs the Creation Museum in Kentucky, where they say the world is 6,000 years old and people used to ride around on dinosaurs. And they have pseudo-scientists who they claim are supporting their views. And there was a debate between him and Bill Nye the Science Guy... that guy that always wears the bow ties... and it was very interesting, [it was] like a two hour debate.

And what Ken Ham from the Creation Museum kept coming back to was, "Well, there's a book," you know what I mean? Bill Nye would bring out all this scientific evidence about something and refuting something Ken Ham was saying and Ken would say, "Yeah but there's a book," claiming that The Bible is the final authority on all this stuff and we can take that as absolute, ultimate truth, and spin everything out from there.

So in a way some people might say, "Well you're doing that with *A Course in Miracles*," because so many times you say, "Well this is so because The Course says such and such." How would you respond to that and the whole topic of believing in what a book says as being a super important thing to do, or is it something we should take as evidence or theory that can be investigated experientially, rather than taking it on faith?

Gary: Right. The reason that I believe *A Course in Miracles*, the reason that I believe the Holy Spirit, is not because of some blind faith or a religious type of thing; it's because of my experience. My experience has changed.

The Holy Spirit has earned my trust. The Holy Spirit has earned my trust by leading me to good things, by showing up as my teachers. Arten and Pursah are the Holy Spirit taking on a form, and The Course says about the Holy Spirit, "His is the voice for God and is therefore taking form. This form is not his reality."

So the Holy Spirit's reality is always spirit but the Holy Spirit has to take on a form in order to communicate with us because if it didn't, we'd never be able to hear it. So it has to literally take on some kind of a form in order to communicate with us. That form could be something different for different people, which is why I said that the Holy Spirit will show up for people in whatever way is best for them. That form could be an angel, it could be another saint, it could be the Virgin Mary, it could be any one of a hundred things.

Most of the time the Holy Spirit takes the form of an idea that simply comes into your mind, a form of guidance, an inspired idea. You just know it because you didn't think of it; it just came to you. You know

how People do great things and you'll ask them, "Wow, that was a great idea, how did you think of that?" And they'll say, "Well, it just came to me." You know the ideas just come to you, and that to me is an example of the Holy Spirit *earning* your trust. It's not like, "Oh, it's true because The Course said so" - that's not real for me. What's real for me is that the Holy Spirit has earned my trust by changing my experience of life.

Rick: If we could give it a ratio or a proportion, what percentage of your inspiration has come from the books themselves - or the book itself, *A Course in Miracles* - and what percentage has come from your actual cognition or direct experience, irrespective of the book?

Gary: Yeah, I don't make a distinction between them because it's all the Holy Spirit to me. So it's kind of like Arten and Pursah keep speaking with me in-between visits and they edit my writing, but it's all the Holy Spirit.

I'm one of few people who actually has it in my contract that the publisher cannot change anything in my books because they (Arten and Pursah) wouldn't allow that. I'd literally have to keep it the way that they do it.

I'm not a writer, I never have been...

Rick: You are now.

Gary: I don't like to write. I'm from the Richard Bach School of writing. He said that if he got up in the morning and made a list of 10 things that he would like to do that day, writing wouldn't even be on the list. So I'm definitely not into writing, I do it because I feel better later. I feel better when I write. It's an old saying among writers: 'I hate to write but I love to have written.'

Rick: Nice.

Gary: So it's fun, when it's over. So it's all the Holy Spirit to me.

Rick: Okay, good. Unfortunately our live streaming didn't work today. I'm going to have to figure out how to get that working more reliably but before we started, someone sent in some questions and before we run out of time I want to show her the courtesy of asking you these questions, at least some of them. It's someone named Goji, from Nitra, Slovakia.

All these questions are related to *A Course in Miracles* and your books. We'll just take them in order and see where we go. There's six of them altogether, so you might want to pace yourself in terms of how much we talk about each one.

Question number one: How do you reconcile that people on one hand are figures of the dream, and on the other hand brothers in Christ? These are two opposing views because "...as you see him, you see yourself." So for example, if a vicious person or a dog is attacking me, am I to view the person or the dog as a figure in the dream, or as a brother?

Gary: You're really talking apples and oranges because one of those things is true – the spirit that is real - and one of those things is false, which is the body that you're seeing. Now I said don't forget how to be normal. If somebody is attacking you, for example if you're a woman and you're out on the street and somebody is attacking you, you don't stand there quoting that *A Course in Miracles* lesson – you know, "If I defend myself I'm attacked." What you do is you do the normal thing.

It's not going to inspire peace for you or your family....

Rick: Yeah, get out the mace or whatever.

Gary: ... for you to be murdered. What you do is...yes, it's okay for you to defend yourself. You have to remember that the lessons of *A Course in Miracles* are meant to be applied at the level of the mind; not in the world. They do not always work in the world. In the world you do whatever you're guided to do by the Holy Spirit, and it may take the form of temporary defense in the dream.

For example if somebody sues you, the Holy Spirit's advice to you may be to get a good lawyer, you know? So it is okay to take practical action in the world and be normal, and these lessons are applied at the level of the mind. So if that dog is attacking you or if that person is attacking you, I would say do the normal thing. It's okay to defend yourself but what you do, when it's appropriate, is you forgive that person for attacking you, you forgive that person for taking any action that they did. It may not be at the exact instant that they're attacking you, but the Holy Spirit can inspire you as to what you should do to defend yourself even then.

One of the things that I like about *The Manual for Teachers* in The Course is that it teaches that, if you're in the habit of working with the Holy Spirit and you've put the Holy Spirit in charge of your day, say... spend five minutes in the morning putting the Holy Spirit in charge of your day, that wisdom will be given to you when you need it.

So an emergency could come up, like 9-11 or something, and you don't have time to be standing around asking the Holy Spirit what you should do. The Course teaches, well, you'll know what to do; "Wisdom will be given to you by the Holy Spirit when you need it," even if you don't have time to ask. So it's because of that habit that you've gotten into, of being with the Holy Spirit.

So I would say to that question: do the normal thing, defend yourself but forgiveness is done at the level of the mind with the Holy Spirit, so it's a totally different thing.

Rick: Remember a couple of months ago when that fellow Dylann Roof shot a bunch of people in the church in Charleston, South Carolina? Within a day or two the relatives of the people who had been shot were coming on TV with tears in their eyes saying, "We'd forgive him." And a lot of people would say – I know I myself thought– "Well, what does that really mean? How do they actually perceive this guy? How have they forgiven him? There must be so much pain and hurt and remorse and all."

I mean if that happened to you or if someone, God forbid, shot your wife or something like that, I presume you'd forgive them. How would you go through that process? How would you perceive them a few days, a week, a month later, after they had done that?

Gary: If that did happen, I'm not saying that I wouldn't go through the normal steps of grieving, I'm not saying that I wouldn't be angry or that I wouldn't be upset, and yes, I would forgive. Maybe not immediately but I would forgive. And if the memory kept coming up in my mind, I would forgive that. Because what is a memory but a picture in your mind? And what is this that we're doing right now but a picture in our minds?

So you can forgive something, even the worst thing that happened to you. Maybe 30 years ago you were abused as a child; it's possible to forgive even that. I'm not saying that it's easy.

Rick: Would you go and let's say, hypothetically, go and visit that murderer in jail and give him a hug and try to establish a complete new clean slate with that person? Would it go that far?

Gary: No, I probably wouldn't. Just because you forgive somebody doesn't mean you have to have lunch with them. You don't have to establish a relationship with everybody who you're forgiving. Forgiveness ultimately is for you more than them because you're teaching them, once again, not because they really did it, but because they didn't [do it].

This is your dream and the dream is not being dreamed by somebody else. You know *A Course in Miracles* students are experts at spotting the ego in somebody else – they're great at it, but that's not forgiveness. Forgiveness is noticing what's out there... yes, you notice it but you realize, "Well, that's my insanity out there. That's my ego that's out there and I can be free of it if I choose forgiveness," and realizing that the ego is you and that you can be free of it through forgiveness.

It's not about spotting it out there on the screen, other than recognizing that that is what needs to be forgiven and forgiving it.

Rick: So you're liberating yourself from a burden, primarily?

Gary: Sure, what was the next part?

Rick: Next question from this woman: The Course uses a "brother" as a means for salvation. Do animals, plants, and inanimate objects represent a "brother" as well?

Gary: Yes, The Course says, "You are as God created you and so is every living thing that you look upon," which by the way is everything. Even a table has atoms and molecules and will be returned to heaven, but it's the conscious mind that needs to choose forgiveness.

Now people ask me if their pets, their animals, which they consider, of course, to be part of the family, are those animals gonna be in heaven with you? The answer is yes. Everything will be returned to heaven.

Christianity teaches that animals don't have a soul, which is ridiculous; they're just a different form. But we assume that it's better to be human than to be a dog or a cat or something, but that's only because we've established a hierarchy of illusions – "Oh, so I'm more important than something else."

The truth is that we're not even the most important animal on this planet. You know we use like 10% of our brain capacity; dolphins use 20. We're not even the brightest tool in *this* shed, much less all the other galaxies and planets out there. So we've come to think of ourselves as something very special but the truth is, everything, everybody, every being will return to heaven, in that state. And they're already there but all they have to do is awaken to it and everyone will be there.

Rick: So if there are people in heaven, and dogs and cats and dolphins...

Gary: But they're not people, remember.

Rick: They're spirits.

Gary: Right.

Rick: Okay, but they're distinguishable. I mean do they recognize one another, interact with one another and so on, in that realm?

Gary: No they don't interact with each other as individuals because they're not individuals; they are this perfect oneness with God. The reason I say that they're there with you is because everything's there in your awareness. Nothing could possibly be left out in that experience of perfect oneness; it's so full and so whole and complete that it's inconceivable to think that anything could be left outside it.

Rick: Okay, so it's just a state of perfect oneness. It's not some kind of celestial realm where people are playing harps and walking around and having all kinds of experiences. You're just saying it's pure oneness, is that correct?

Gary: Right, and then the ego will add doubts about that and say, "Well isn't that boring?" or, "Where are these people that I love so much? Am I going to miss them?" and those are just ego tricks because this is such a great experience. It literally blows away anything that this world has to offer.

Rick: Well it sounds like you're not even going to exist anymore in any kind of individuated form; you're just going to be pure oneness. The ocean has settled down and there's no waves anymore; it's just ocean.

Gary: Well yes but that conscious existence that doesn't exist anymore is going to be replaced with something better. It's going to be replaced with an awareness that is so amazing, so wonderful, that you're not going to miss anything else.

Rick: And it's not an awareness *of* something because it's pure oneness. Because an awareness of something would imply ... "Okay, *this* is aware of *that*," right?

Gary: Right. That awareness of perfect oneness has an experience to it - an experience of love, an experience of unspeakable joy.

Rick: Okay, but in a sort of just a completely unified, oceanic way... not like all sorts of actors playing parts anymore?

Gary: Actually that's a good analogy – now you're not a drop in the ocean; you're the ocean.

Rick: Okay good, third question: Whose responsibility is the undoing of fear? Jesus says that it's ours as he cannot interfere with the most basic law there is – cause and effect. But he also says, "Never approach the holy instant trying to remove fear yourself; it is his function," – meaning the Holy Spirit's function.

Gary: Right, you kind of like activate spirit in your mind by choosing it. At one point The Course says that, "Mind is the activating agent of spirit." So you *use* the mind to choose between spirit and the ego, which is symbolized in The Course by the body.

The usual approach to spirituality is to try to balance body, mind, and spirit, that's not the approach of *A Course in Miracles*. The approach of The Course is that you *use* the mind to choose between the body and spirit, and whichever one you choose will be what you think is real.

So The Course says, "Choose once again what you would have him be, knowing that every choice you make will establish your own identity as you will see it and believe that it is." So you're establishing spirit in your mind as your identity by choosing it.

Rick: Okay. Question number 4: Why is there so much emphasis, so many instances of asking Jesus or the Holy Spirit for help, even specific help in The Course, when Ken Wapnick says that Jesus or the Holy Spirit don't do anything in the world, being only love's presence? And to quote Ken, "Jesus gets angry about specifics?"

Gary: Jesus doesn't get angry; he's outta here! He's at home with God. People ask, "Is he coming back?" No, but he can show up in the dream as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, which is what Arten and Pursah are also. Yes, they took on a form, a very real-seeming form, but what they really are is the Holy Spirit.

If somebody sees Jesus in the dream, that's the Holy Spirit appearing as Jesus. If Jesus speaks in *A Course in Miracles*, that's the Holy Spirit speaking *as* Jesus in order to communicate with us. So it really is that love.

Ken Wapnick was, I think, a very good example for The Course, because he's probably the *kindest* person whom I've ever met. I remember the first time I met him I was nervous and he knew it, and he was just so *kind* to me.

He would always try to light me up. You know he would come up to me and completely mess up my hair. He knew that I hated it but he did it anyway just to say, "Look, don't take any of this seriously." He was a great guy and I miss him. But he was a living example, I think, of The Course. I can't guarantee that he was enlightened but it sure seemed that way to me.

I asked him once and he said, "Well if I was enlightened I wouldn't tell anybody. You saw what they did to Jesus."

Rick: So it sounds like the Holy Spirit is kind of like an intermediary or an interface between God and the illusory world. It's sort of a bridge area that causes beings like Arten and Pursah to take apparent manifestation and that (the Holy Spirit) inspires us with this thought as opposed to that thought, and it seems to be playing an active role in the dream and that that's its function, based on your definition.

Gary: That's a good way to put it. In fact, there's a section in The Course called 'The Bridge to the Real World', involving the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit is kind of like a bridge and that stepping stone that leads on to the experience of heaven.

Rick: Okay. Question number 5: Jesus says in The Course that, "Jesus doesn't get angry; he's outta here! He's at home with God. People ask, "Is he coming back?" No, but he can show up in the dream as a symbol of the Holy Spirit,

Gary: Well I guess it's a fine line. I would put it this way: it's okay to have normal relationships with bodies and it's okay to do normal things in the world, it's just that at the end of the day what made Jesus and Mary different than other people was that they knew who the other person really was. So they would think of that person as being nothing less than God. And it doesn't mean that you can't make love with someone anymore than it means that you can't eat a meal or that you can't travel somewhere.

Yes it's true that the body can be used as a communication tool for the Holy Spirit and Jesus says that's the only real use for it, but he doesn't forbid us to do other things. He doesn't say, "Oh, don't do this," or "Don't do that;" he's simply saying that what you do, you do with forgiveness. And I'm not saying that you may be actively practicing forgiveness while you're having sex, but when the time is appropriate then you remember who that person really is and where they really are, and that's how Jesus and Mary got in touch with their own divinity, was by seeing it in each other and by seeing it everywhere.

Rick: Good, final question: What changed for Helen Schucman that she is going to get enlightened in her current reincarnation? She died in misery in her last reincarnation after she had scribed The Course, being unable and/or unwilling to practice The Course successfully, (Rick here speaking of himself says... I don't know anything about this of course; I'm just asking this person's question). I am asking this because practicing forgiveness has been extremely difficult for me and I don't see myself completing it, at least not this time around.

Gary: Sure, you know Helen probably understood *A Course in Miracles* probably better than anybody but she couldn't do it. She was too set in her ways – a very conservative psychologist. At one point she said, "I know The Course is true, I just don't believe it." And what she meant by that was that she knew factually that what it was saying is true but that she couldn't do it, she couldn't live her life that way. And I think that in her final lifetime - and she's been reincarnated and she is here – the difference is that she will do it.

The person who I know to be Helen Schucman in this lifetime, whose name I'd never say, but she read *The Disappearance of the Universe* when she was 8 years old and she started doing *A Course in Miracles* when she was nine. She is 15 now and she practices forgiveness better than anybody I know. So I'm very clear that this is her final lifetime and that she will be enlightened in this lifetime. But the difference

between Helen Schucman then and Helen Schucman now is that she *is* able to actually practice The Course and get the results of The Course that she couldn't get as Helen Schucman.

Rick: I can understand that, I mean a good friend of mine died about a week ago and [a] very highly enlightened, awakened fellow. And he didn't think that he was totally done; there was more progress yet to be made, but he had severe health problems and they were really an impediment for him. It was sort of like he was driving around in an old jalopy that was always breaking down. And when he died I thought, "Alright, it's time for him to get a nice shiny new model that's going to serve him as a much more effective vehicle to complete his journey."

Gary: Yeah, yeah, I lost my best friend to cancer – he was my best friend for like 40 years. But he understood the truth, did *A Course in Miracles*, he knew he wasn't all the way there yet but he learned so much that I'm sure he'll be enlightened too, in his next lifetime.

His big problem, his big forgiveness lesson in this lifetime was his alcoholism and I'm sure that he'll forgive that and overcome that in his next lifetime. I'm not exactly the poster boy for sobriety myself but at least I'm dealing with it, I'm able to forgive it. So I think that at the end of the day what it comes down to is: if you really practice this, you're going to make so much progress that even if you don't go all the way in this lifetime to enlightenment, you're making so much progress, it makes it so much easier for you to actually be enlightened in your next lifetime.

Rick: Yeah sure. I know you said you were a bit of a wild man in your younger days – drinking and drugs and so on, a lot. Did you just insinuate that you still have a bit of a problem with that stuff?

Gary: I wouldn't say that; I would say that it's changed over the years. I think that when I was younger I drank because I had to, because I didn't realize people drink because they're afraid – it's one of the main reasons even though it's unconscious to them. If I drink today it's not because I have to; it's because I just like it.

Rick: Glass of wine or two? I mean, you don't get plastered I presume.

Gary: Once in a great while but not usually, no.

Rick: Well that's a strange note to end on so maybe we shouldn't quite end. But we've talked about a bunch of things and there are so many more things we could talk about, even on the subtitle of your book it says, *Straight Talk About Illusions: Past Lives, Religions, Sex, Politics and the Miracles of Forgiveness*.

We didn't talk too much about religion and politics but is there anything that you'd like to cover before we wrap it up, that you feel is important? And again I apologize to the people who were hoping to watch this live, and I'm really going to figure out this live streaming problem so it doesn't happen again, so I'm sorry I wasn't able to answer your questions. What would you like to throw in Gary before we wrap it up?

Gary: I would just remind people when that politician, who you can't stand, comes on the TV screen... that's your opportunity right there to forgive. It doesn't matter if you're a democrat or a republican or whatever, there's going to be somebody that's going to push your buttons. And when they do, now you know what it's for, it's for forgiveness. If you take advantage of what it's for you will get the benefits of it, and if you don't do it you won't get the benefit.

So you really are at the end the captain of your own soul. You have the power to choose. In fact, that's your real power in this world, is the power of decision. You can decide to see it right, you can decide to see with the Holy Spirit instead of the ego - that's your real power. If you take advantage of it, it will change your life.

Rick: Yeah, I was listening to a recording just this morning and some guy was emphasizing how much everything depends upon our perspective. He was just saying [that] nobody reads the same book, nobody sees the same sunset. It's like the blind men feeling the elephant; we all have our interpretation of things. And people tend to take their personal interpretations so seriously sometimes that they'll fight wars over it, get into huge pissing contests over some philosophical idea on the Internet or something. And if we could just take things a bit more lightly and realize that we're all just looking through a peep hole and nobody has the entire picture.

Gary: That's true. If you're in a movie theater with 50 people, you got 50 different movies going on.

Rick: Exactly.

Gary: And the ego loves that because we're in the same room, we see the same room because there's only one of us but now we're each seeing it from our own point of view, a different point of view. Which means we're going to have a different interpretation of it, which means eventually we're going to argue about it, which means that eventually one of us is going to have to die.

You know that's like the illogical extension of the ego thought system. It always wants conflict because if there's conflict, not only is that making it real, but you're not looking in the right place for the answer; you're looking out there on the screen to resolve the conflict, where it can't be resolved, which is why you'll never have world peace until the people of the world have inner peace. When they have inner peace then you'll have outer peace.

Rick: Have you noticed that people seem to like conflict because it fortifies the ego?

Gary: Yeah, I don't think they know that but I think that it's true.

Rick: Yeah, it's like if there's some conflict then it's like, "Okay, I'm maintaining my integrity as an ego because I'm up against this other ego."

Gary: Yeah, yeah, egos will do that. It's all making it real, it's all making it true, and here's the Holy Spirit saying, "Look, you know this is all a bunch of bull, right?" Look, if I'm running through an airport, I'm late for a plane, I can do my act and try to make the plane on time but there's still the Holy Spirit whispering in my ear saying, "You know none of this is true. You don't have to get caught up in this."

Rick: Well that's a good note to end on. Well thank you Gary. I've really enjoyed this talk. I enjoyed listening to your book, it's very thought provoking. I'll be putting up a page on BATGAP.com about this interview and with links to your books, links to your website and all.

Is there anything in particular that you'd like to announce in terms of some online course or any particular thing that you've got going on that you want people to know about, keeping in mind that this interview will be up for years, but anything in the near future since we get most of our views within the first month or so?

Gary: Well sure, if people want to know where I'm speaking they can come to my website which is www.garyrenard.com. I thought of the name for the website myself. There's a page that says 'Appearances' and if they click on that it will give them my schedule and where I'm going to be.

I'm fortunate enough to speak all over the world. I get to see the world for free so, fun. Yeah, I love to meet people so if you're there, come up and say that you saw this interview and I'll like that. And I want to thank you, Rick, for having me here. I think you're doing a great thing here and it's a pleasure, and maybe we could do it again someday.

Rick: Yeah, thanks. Yeah, I have a lot of fun with it. Incidentally we have a page on BATGAP.com that's a geographical index that indicates where people are going to be. So I'll send you some information about that, or my wife will, and your assistant can fill it in. So if a person types in "Chicago" or something, then if you're going to be there people will see that.

Gary: Great. I don't have an assistant, believe it or not. Cindy and I work together...

Rick: Send it to you guys then.

Gary: Yeah.

Rick: Alright, thanks a lot and thanks to those who have been listening or watching. Next week is a fellow named Joel Morwood, who looks interesting. And if you go to www.BATGAP.com you'll see a bunch of things. I mentioned at the beginning the various ways that the past interviews are categorized, there's a place to sign up to be notified by email each time there's a new interview, there is an audio podcast which gets as many listens as YouTube gets views, if not more so sometimes, so you can sign up for that if you like. There's the 'Donate' button which we depend upon and a bunch of other stuff if you explore the menus. Thanks for listening or watching and we'll see you next week.

BATGAP theme music plays.