

From Self-Sufficiency to God-Sufficiency

Written by Vic Zarley, preached at Tabernacle of Worship in Brandenburg, KY in May, 2008 (audio of this is available on this site also)

I loved my parents. They were like God to me. They provided all my physical needs and emotional needs. They gave plenty of comfort, nurturing and love. Their views became my views and I believed all that they said. I followed them with confidence, even when they journeyed away from the real Jesus, trading him off for strange doctrines. I don't know if they rejected traditional church out of rebellion from the truth, or if they just got battered by too many threats of fire and brimstone sermons that neglected a balance of grace and love. Whatever their problem, they became weary of the sound doctrine of the Nazarene Church to which they belonged, and its fundamentalist teachings. Dad began to search for a religion that made him feel better. One Sunday, at a Unity Church, as they listened to a soft-spoken lady minister, Dad passed a note to my mom which said, "This is it."

The Unity faith was established by Charles and Myrtle Fillmore at the turn of the century. It is a religion in which followers believe that all the characters and places in the Bible have been given what is called metaphysical interpretations. To them, every character in the Bible represents some aspect of our mentality, our minds. They consider the Bible as a mere guide to unraveling the code of how our minds work. It culminates with Jesus, who, in the Unity movement, represents the Christ within us. To them, when He dies on the cross, this represents our dying to the worldly things, mammon, if you will. There is nothing wrong with that. Through Christ, the worldly things must die. But Unity misses the point of salvation (the real nails pounded into His real hands as He really died for our real sins)--it misses the

blood, shed for all of us on the cross. Because the Unity faith is rooted deeply in a need to understand everything on an intellectual level, the simple, pure truth that God sent his Son to die in our place, making atonement for our sins, is missed or neglected. It is passed on by, in favor of a more pleasing and comfortable interpretation. Salvation is reduced, then, to something we achieve by intellectually understanding its interpretation, rather than by humbling ourselves to admit we are sinners in need of a Savior.

My parents were so excited about this feel-good religion, my dad sold his thriving commercial art business and we moved to Missouri, so they could both become Unity Ministers. So began my mental training, my indoctrination into a religion that appeared to give me control over my world.

Unity believes that there is power in using affirmations and denials. I was trained to get what I wanted through affirming the things I wanted and resisting the things I did not want, through denial. I was ingrained with the practice of taking charge of my life through positive thinking and mentally exerting my will. Basically, we were making ourselves sovereign, rather than God. This was my way of life for many years. I was taught that negative thinking was counter-productive and sent forth negative energy. Therefore, since there was no way I wanted to entertain negative thoughts, I learned to watch my thoughts carefully. I wanted to maintain positive thoughts and know that God would get me anything I wanted. I was trained to believe, and believe I did. It's true that in the Word, Paul tells us to take charge of our thoughts, but that is not to channel them into our desires and will, but to BRING THEM UNDER SUBJECTION TO CHRIST. It took me a long time to

learn that we can't begin to know what is best for ourselves. We must let God determine what is best for us, as only He knows.

Led astray from the truth by the New Age teaching of Unity, my parents explored many occult teachings, including reincarnation. Unity does not particularly endorse reincarnation, but allows for believers to consider that possibility for themselves. We also bought a Ouija Board and communicated with spirits which I now know is demonic activity. In addition, we used to go out to UFO conventions, held in a desert place in southern California called Giant Rock, and listen to people tell their wild stories of encounters with alien beings and sightings of alien space ships.

I even saw their manifestations myself. My dad claimed to have mentally contacted a being, who agreed to show us his lights in the sky, to a group my dad had assembled. Folks, I now know those lights I saw were not of God, and I believe my dad was talking with demons. I know now that Satan is able to disguise himself as an angel of light, and is more than happy to perform signs and wonders to lead people astray. I now believe my dad was delving and spiraling down into a dark spiritual realm that is eternally dangerous. My childhood and young adulthood was a nightmare that I didn't even know I was having, because I trusted my parents completely and did not think they could err. But I also know and can testify that even in the midst of all this madness, God kept me near to Him.

There are some positive things that came from my New Age upbringing that is good when applied to Christian principles and the truth of God's Word. We practiced discipline of our minds and developed a strong ability to focus, resisting

distraction. We learned to go after that which we believed and let nothing hinder us. We learned to not be alarmed by appearances or obstacles, knowing our minds could overcome them. Because of these mental disciplines, focused prayer comes easy for me. Fixing my mind on things above is a snap. Resting in the arms of my capable God is no problem. Walking in faith and not wavering in doubt is something I learned long ago, but it is so much more powerful when submitted to God's will and truth.

Jesus told a parable about a dishonest manager who set about making deals with debtors. He longed to see God's people go after heavenly things with the same zeal that worldly people go after carnal things. I would like to see more Christians apply these principles and disciplines to their faith. If only we would all believe God's Holy Word, instead of the unbelievers, mockers, scoffers and doubters around us, or the TV or the newspapers and fear-propagating media.

Around 1985, I was introduced to A Course in Miracles by my mom. I studied it intently for a year. Then, I'm sorry to say, my wife, Linda, and I taught classes in our home. I also taught it at a Unity church and even an adult night class in a school. Oprah Winfrey is introducing this occult teaching now, to the masses through her subscription radio show. There is a lot of talk about it lately and this is why Lida invited me to speak with you today. I want to inform you as to what this Course is all about. We want to proclaim it as the lie that it is, but we need not be caught up in fear and alarm. In fact, the Church should be rejoicing because all the attraction Oprah is seeing only proves that there is a great spiritual hunger upon the earth. The fields are white and ready for harvest! Now is the time for the Church

to step in and show the love and peace this world is starving for; the fulfillment only Christ can give.

The Course was written over a seven year period by a self-proclaimed militant atheist named Helen Schucman. She was assisted by a man named Bill Thetford. One day she heard an inner voice say, "This is a Course in Miracles. Please take notes." For seven years she "heard" a voice dictate to her, as she wrote first what is known as the Text, which is over 600 pages. Then she wrote the Workbook, which is 365 daily lessons. The Workbook is what Oprah is currently sharing over her radio show. Finally she wrote the Teacher's Manual which is only 70 some pages. When she was taking the dictation, she could be interrupted and the voice would continue exactly where it left off once the interruption was over. She did not agree with the teachings she was being given, as they did speak of God as real and dynamic. Remember, she was an atheist. Also remember, Satan believes in God. She once asked the voice, why her? The voice said, because you'll do it.

The material is spiritual psychology. The voice identified itself as Jesus. However, the material does not acknowledge Jesus as God. It calls Him an elder brother. Nor does it give credence and value to the blood He shed on the cross for us. These are red flags for the Christian. It is vital that we all understand that this: *Jesus Christ as the spotless sinless, Lamb of God, who by His shed blood takes away the sins of the world*, is the cornerstone of our faith and the test that every doctrine must be able to stand up to. We are warned that in these last days men will no longer endure sound doctrine but having itching ears, will heap unto themselves teachers after their own lusts. (2Timothy 4:3) The cross is declared as foolishness in

the Course, which it always is to those who think themselves wise in their own eyes. New Agers are notorious for their intellectual pride. The cross and suffering of Jesus is an offense to them. The idea that they are sinners in need of a savior repulses them. Does not God's word declare throughout, that this is so...and that is why Jesus is the rock that makes them stumble?

Despite what Satan intended for evil, by bringing the Course into my life, let me say this. God used it for my good. It pleases our Lord to thwart the plans of our enemy by turning his own activities against him and this is why we need not wring our hands in despair, as this heresy seems to gain in popularity.

Prior to my involvement with the Course, please understand, Jesus did not play a role in my life. I did not know Him as my savior, but I respected Him as a teacher. I also did not know the Holy Spirit. My religion had been a purely intellectual one. My heart needed to be worked on. The Course material allowed me to begin to consider the reality of Jesus and His Holy Spirit (God's voice). For someone who was as duped in New Age teachings as I was, I was very challenged by the material and it did rock my boat.

One of the workbook lessons says, "Nothing I see means anything." That went against my belief in affirmations and, in fact, was a negative sounding statement. But that lesson of the Course was trying to loosen my grip on trusting the appearances of this world as the reality. Over time, I did begin to see that nothing in this world means much, in relation to Heaven and God's eternal reality, anyway. I did need to understand that. Too often we let appearances draw us into

fear, robbing us of our confidence in the Lord. And, in the Word, Jesus admonishes us not to judge by appearances.

Truth can come at us from many sources, even those which are carnal and incomplete. Did not God use a donkey to bring rebellious Balaam to his senses? Even with the Course's refusal to acknowledge the work of Calvary and the deity of Christ, I did begin to love Jesus more, but I still didn't know Him as my savior. I also began to consider that God's Holy Spirit was the only viable voice I wanted to hear in this world.

The Course called Satan the ego and suggested we needed to allow the ego to die in us (die to self as the Bible puts it.) The Course also logically led me into the belief that my judgments about what was going on around me were completely inaccurate, due to my inability to be omnipotent. This is why we must rely on the Holy Spirit's voice and not our own inadequate one, in order to know what to do in any situation. As I said, Jesus Himself, said not to judge by appearances, so that was an accurate teaching that Christians need to walk in.

But the deity of Christ and the need for His shed blood was not upheld, nor was the sin nature of every man born under the curse of Adam, admitted anywhere in the entire manuscript. In fact, the Course is antagonistic toward the necessity of Jesus' blood being shed for us. It is, therefore, a dangerously false teaching that jeopardizes human souls. It gives some truth, but not the whole truth. When this happens, it is a key signature of the work of Satan. He has been deceiving by misquoting and distorting the Word of God, since the beginning of time.

After many years of studying the Course, my wife, Linda, became sick with breast cancer. My whole world was about to fall apart. God began to turn my heart back to Him because Linda, in her last days, had returned to traditional Christianity and I did not want to discourage that. We attended a Nazarene church and got baptized. She was encouraged by Benny Hinn's healing ministry, so we attended as many of his services as we could, traveling to Southern California, Las Vegas, Montana and more. She also loved Joyce Meyer and got on her prayer list. However, she continued to deteriorate, eventually dying in Austin, TX where she had gone for health therapy.

After a time for healing, I began to search the Christian Internet dating sites and met Eva. By then, I was living in Idaho. We communicated by phone many hours every day for many weeks. Eva said she was a Christian and I assured her I was also, and I sincerely believed I was. Since "A Course in Miracles" uses the same terminology and teaches many Christ-like principles as the Bible, I spoke and behaved like a devoted Christian. The problem was, I was in truth, very new in the Lord, with a lot to learn, and still under the spell of a false doctrine.

I had built a huge web site of my Course in Miracles-inspired writings. I even had a book I had written online entitled "The Wizard of the Wires." It had many far out New Age concepts incorporated in it, whereas my other writing at the site had more of the soundness of God's truth as found in the Bible. I invited Eva to read my book but, though she could visit all other areas of my site, SHE NEVER COULD ACCESS MY BOOK even though everyone else could. Later I found out that if she had read that book, she never would have allowed our relationship to grow. I

believe that God withheld that part of the site from her, because He had a plan for our lives together.

One day, I was sitting in my prayer-chair when I got the uncanny idea that I was to check to see what the requirements were for marriage in Indiana. I did check, and found the requirements were minimal, but what a strange idea! I hadn't even met Eva in person yet. With tears, I related this strange occurrence that evening, during our nightly phone conversation, and, from what I could tell, Eva broke down, also crying. She said that earlier that day, the same notion came to her and she laughed it off, certain that she was NOT hearing God. Although we made plans at that time to get married, because we felt that God was arranging it, upon meeting her, I cancelled out—but later we did as God suggested. Our wedding, at Celebration Worship Center in Georgetown, IN, was our second time we saw each other. We both know ours was an old fashioned “arranged marriage” by our Heavenly Father.

I came into this marriage with a lot of baggage from my New Age days—including the Course in Miracles. Shortly after we were married, God urged me to take down my huge web site of Course-inspired writings. This was a blow to me. I felt as if I were going to tear down ME, I had become so ingrained in that web site, putting so much time and work into it. After Eva had gone to work one day, I sat in my computer chair and wept as I began dismantling it. I knew it was God's will, but it was very difficult to do. This was the beginning of God's dismantling of the towers I had built that were not His will for me.

About this time, I had asked Eva to at least read the Course for herself. She finally agreed, but as she read it, she pointed out its errors and showed me how it conflicted with scripture. She urged me to read the Bible instead. That was when I began to face the reality that there really is a hell and many people really will go there and it broke my heart.

So, first the physical website came down and then my own strongholds, my own mental and emotional towers were brought down. Folks, let me take a second to ask you, "Is there anything in your life that you identify with so much, that God may want you to tear down? I believe I had made an idol out of the Course in Miracles and my writing on that web site was representative of worshipping it. I was still in bondage to that old new age intellectual pride. God cannot get through to you IF you have built your life around anything other than Him. Think about it. What idols do you worship that might be limiting you to doing God's work? Is there anything occupying your time that could be interpreted to be an idol you are worshipping?

Idols don't come down easily and even though I did obey God and tore down my site and wanted to be a good Christian, I still enjoyed reading the Course and for a while, took portions of it to read into the local woods nearby, while Eva was at work—even though she had asked me to throw it away. One day, sitting on a log, I got the worst case of poison ivy Eva had ever seen. It was an oozing mess covering much of my body, eventually requiring medical help. You know, if God is dealing with you on a matter and you stubbornly continue on your path, He is merciful to give you a more persuasive warning. But I was still so hard-headed and A Course in

Miracles had such a grip on me that I began to secretly correspond with other students of the Course, online. God does not condone deceit.

Supernaturally, God revealed this deceptive practice to Eva and I sincerely promised her that I would remove all copies of the Course from our computers and all books of it from my life. So God tore down the emotional towers I had built of the Course as well. No aspect of the Course would be allowed in my life. Period. I felt as if I were losing my God—and I was. He was being replaced with the real one—the God of the Bible. I received an insatiable appetite for God’s truth and have studied the Bible, listened to sermons by sound preachers online, every day, since. It is my daily bread. I can’t get enough of feeding on God’s Word and I get so excited about praying, communing with and feeding on God’s word, I can’t wait to get started. Tell me, are you hungry for Jesus Christ and God’s Word? Is it the first thing you want when you rise in the morning? It should be.

I appreciate Eva's patience with me as God guided me back into His arms, prodigal son that I was. The Course in Miracles really had a grip on me. God, however, had a greater grip on me and pulled me onto the Rock, after my years of detour from the truth. That detour began when I was 12, when my parents took flight, chasing after every strange wind of doctrine.

It is too simplistic for me to say that the Course in Miracles should never have been a road I was to take. From my self-sufficient position, God felt it necessary that I take that journey—but He never wanted me to stay on that road. He wanted to bring me back to Him, back to my Christian childhood roots. He

wanted me to take Jesus as my Lord and as my savior, and take His teachings of love and mercy seriously.

I urge you, folks to pray that, as Oprah introduces the Course to millions of people, that they, like me, not stop there, but continue on into a true relationship with Jesus, the one who shed His blood for us on the cross. Truly we must grasp God's reality through Jesus, as He is revealed in the Bible. This must be done on a personal level by each of us, daily. In these last days, the deception will get worse and the Bible says that even the elect will be deceived if that is possible. I warn you, **IF YOU DON'T KNOW THE WORD, YOU ARE VULNERABLE TO DECEPTION.** And if you let anything have your heart over the truth of God's Word and the Lordship of His Son, you will be easily misled. If you don't commune with the Lord every day, you won't know His unique voice. Most of all, if the sin nature of man and the need for a perfect sacrifice to make atonement for us in the divine person of Jesus Christ is not your unshakeable foundation and cornerstone, you will be without a sure standard of measure to determine a false teaching.

Let's remember that God is always in control. He will thwart every plan of the devil and God will even use this false teaching of A Course In Miracles for His glory. My life and testimony is evidence of that. I thank my Lord and praise Him for bringing me through so much and I know that He is able to deliver our loved ones out of deception, if we will only pray.

(Pray now to help people release any strongholds they may have that are holding them back from knowing their God.)