

## Session 1: Introduction

Hello everyone, Charles Eisenstein here with a course I'm calling "Living in the Gift."

The purpose of this course is to catalyze or accelerate transition that many people are seeking. It's a transition from a mindset of scarcity, a story of scarcity and relations of scarcity, to a mindset and a story and a lived experience of abundance.

Another way to put it is that it's a transition from habits of control and forcing to habits of gift and trust.

And more concretely, it will shed light on the question that people ask me probably the most of anything: "How can I do meaningful work that I love and still make a living?" That question is a version of maybe a deeper question that comes down to, "How can giving and receiving come into alignment in a civilization that's based on taking?"

Now let me say a little bit about what this course is NOT about. It's not about "manifesting financial abundance" through some kind of psycho-spiritual manifestation technology where you try to change your beliefs, although it could very well be that greater financial ease and abundance will result from taking this course seriously and letting the understandings of it enter you and change you

So yeah, the course is also NOT about repudiating money or living outside the money economy. It is not about being pure, blameless and oh, I'm living in the gift and I've exited the distasteful fray of commerce because I'm better than that, I'm purer than that. No no, we're being real here.

It is not about being a good person. It is not about being ethical. If you're aspiring to be praiseworthy, to be able to like yourself because of a certain way that you live, to be maybe recognized for your purity or to escape the taint of competition, commerce and capitalism, then this course really isn't for you, you have a foot on another path and that's not where I'm hoping to go with you and it really is going with you. I'm not speaking as one who has attained any special mastery of living in the gift, but I have been given certain understandings and insights that have been very useful to a lot of people and that's why I'm making this course, I want to share them more widely and more effectively too.

The place the "Living in the Gift" course will take you, I hope, is a place where gratitude is a natural product of how you see the world and not something that you work toward. It's a place where your creative power is not limited by what you know how to MAKE happen. It is a place where you feel at home in the world and it's a place where you give and receive fearlessly.

To get to this place, I'm not saying this course will transport you there, but it will give you tools to undo the habits and the internal structures and to address the external structures that keep us away from abundance, ease, gratitude and belonging.

Mostly this course is a reorientation in our seeing and our thinking. My intention is that new possibilities will become visible as you see the world with different eyes. I will give you what you might call an alternative psychic filter through which to understand life, relationship, community, nature and money. My intention is that a lot of what I say will echo thoughts that you've had for a long time but couldn't put into words. My intention also is that you will have a lot of these AHA moments that come when you see connections between things that had seemed unrelated before.

From this place I'm sure that many of you will find really practical results, for example a readiness to make new life choices. Nothing in this course will tell you what to do or how to live. I will not and cannot actually give you a formula to answer the question, "How do I do meaningful work that I love and still make a living?" If it were that easy, so easy that I could answer it in a formula, that would mean you're pretty stupid because you hadn't thought of it and I have. No, there isn't an easy answer to that question. We are immersed in a world right now in a society that pits our love against our security. There is no spiritual manifestation formula that's going to be a short cut through that that will magically bring in financial abundance and I'll explain later some of the systemic reasons why that is.

Even if we don't answer that question directly with a "how to" it will cast the question in a different light. It will reveal the hidden premises of that question, the underlying wounds that power the question and in the end new questions and deeper questions will replace it. Even if it's not answered it will become less relevant in the way that it might be today.

So, welcome to "Living in the Gift." At the end of each of these sessions I will offer you a kind of provocation, a koan or a mantra. I'm not going to be asking you to do assignments to make it into a real course with assignments and homework and stuff, it's not necessary for this. The work is a lot easier than we've made it and that itself is a kind of an abundance that we need to learn to accept. So yeah, it's easier and more potent what I will offer. It's like a seed, all you need to do is to carry it and trust it to work you. It's more that it works you than you do the work on it. That means that its benefits come as a gift. It is not something you have to figure out. None of these things I'll offer you are a puzzle or a riddle that you have to figure out. All you have to do is carry it and let it work you. You do have to put some attention on it, bring it to attention sometimes once in a while.

So here is the first seed: "I am already living in the gift."

Say this to yourself and practise it a little bit, just bring it in sometimes.

"I am already living in the gift."