

The HOLY ENCOUNTER



May / June, 2013

A Miracle Distribution Center Publication

...when you meet anyone,
remember it is a
holy encounter.



Healing Our History

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff



As readers of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** know, the Center turned thirty-five this year, and we have been running articles about our history. This got me thinking about history in general and how it's taught.

Back in the old days, when I was in school, our heroes were always so noble and true. For example, Christopher Columbus was the great, daring discoverer of America, and Abraham Lincoln was the saint who emancipated the slaves. Today we have learned that Columbus really didn't discover America; he only sailed as far as Central and South America and never really got to what we now call the United States. The only reason we attribute our founding to Columbus is because we didn't want to credit John Cabot who sailed under the English flag. At the time when we in this country were devising our history, we were at war with England not Spain. The idea of giving the glory to Columbus rather than Cabot was more appealing. Therefore, it's the District of Columbia and not the District of Cabot. In Lincoln's case, he did end up being the great emancipator of the African American but not before he tried every way possible to keep the Union

together and avoid freeing the slaves.

With so much new light on these old stories of history, are we to judge and condemn those we have previously applauded? No, not at all. If anything, we can look at them with a new understanding that can help us see how the average person (with their flaws and less than perfect motives) can grow, change, and achieve great things. Columbus helped establish a great deal of knowledge about trade winds and began a permanent presence of Europeans in North and South

"That's how it is with forgiveness. It is a process of healing and not something to do or say just once and then you're done with it."

America. Lincoln, though he proposed five different ways to keep the concept of slavery alive in order to preserve the Union, eventually recognized that slavery could no longer be tolerated.

These things were a process.

That's how it is with forgiveness. It is a process of healing and not something to do or say just once and then you're done with it. If you have ever tried to forgive a situation or person, you know that when you think you're done with it, that's when the unforgiving thought decides to visit you when you can't sleep at 2:00 in the morning. The Course offers us great wisdom when it says, "God is the love in which I

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Beverly is the co-founder and president of MDC, one of the longest running organizations based on *A Course in Miracles*. As a student, lecturer and author on the Course since 1977, her recorded weekly commentaries on Course principles have become a wonderful source of inspiration and study for many around the world. Receive a FREE recording by contacting MDC.

Admissions...

a short film based on the Course



by
John Viscount

I originally wrote *Admissions* as a response to 9/11. After that tragedy occurred, I felt an overwhelming compassion for the family of humanity because I knew we were entering into another destructive cycle of attack and counterattack that would greatly increase the amount of suffering in our world.

This inspired me to illustrate a more forgiving interpretation of life's events so people could more easily find a pathway to forgiveness, no matter what the world served up. To do this, I decided to create a modern parable that reflected the teachings from *A Course in Miracles*, and the related lectures of Kenneth and Gloria Wapnick, which I had found most healing in my own life.

In the film, James Cromwell plays an enlightened clerk who works in the admissions room for the afterlife, where he processes new arrivals. He is called on to guide an Israeli couple (Anna Khaja & Anthony Batarse) and a Palestinian man (Oren Dayan), who go through admissions together because they have suffered similar tragic endings. By making "The Clerk" the

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John Viscount is a branding specialist, writer, composer, and explorer of the spiritual path.

What's Happening...with the Course and the Center

● **35 years ago...** a gallon of gas cost 63 cents, *Annie Hall* won the Best Picture Oscar, the prototype of the Sony Walkman was built, a stamp cost 15 cents, the average cost of a new house in the U.S. was \$55,000.00, the first test tube baby was born in England, and Miracle Distribution Center was founded! When you look back, it's amazing to see how things have changed. One thing has not changed, however, and that is the commitment of MDC to be of worldwide support to students of *A Course in Miracles*. Our purpose has never wavered, and we are grateful that you continue to join us on this journey.

● **Worldwide Support** – We are happy to be of service to so many people around the world. Last month our site had visitors from 64 different countries, from Finland to France Polynesia, Venezuela to Vietnam, and everywhere in between. We hope we can help YOU, too. Check us out at www.miraclecenter.org

● **Keep it in Print** – We have been gratified by the response to the article about our commitment to continue producing a printed version of our magazine. Obviously many of our readers feel the same! One comment came from our long-time friend Bob Davis of Oklahoma. He said, "I have been a commercial artist since the early 1960s. In mid-career (the 1980s) my industry began to move toward doing art/graphic design on desktop computers. There was talk of the paperless office, e-books and the death of print. My favorite quote from that time was, 'You don't have to boot-up a book.'"

● **We Can Help You Find Yourself** – We are happy to announce that we've added an exciting new feature to our

Worldwide Study Group Database. Our Google Maps page now incorporates geolocation. This allows our website to automatically recognize your location and immediately display *A Course in Miracles* study groups in your area. After you grant

permission, your location will be recognized and results displayed without any additional effort on your part. We trust this will make it even easier to search our listings, as thousands of people do each month. Visit our website and give it a try! www.miraclecenter.org

● **Giving a truly meaningful Gift** Here's what many students of the Course have done: Given a tax-deductible donation to MDC in someone's honor or memory. If you would like to give in such a way, send your donation and request, and we will send him, her or the family a personalized letter acknowledging your appreciation and support. It's a wonderful honor for that dedicated someone or their family. And, what a blessing it will be to those the Center serves, for your donation will go to support its free services! **Gifts in memory of... Robert N. Best** – beloved son of Fran Best. Fran gives this in honor of Robert's loving memory and we are honored to welcome Robert's memory into the life of the Center!

● **Lookup Improved** - We recently improved our free, web-based e-version of *A Course in Miracles*. The powerful search engine now provides even more accurate searches. You can also read it as you would the book, with each vol-

ume clearly accessible via a convenient table of contents. You'll find it on our website at www.miraclecenter.org

● **Free Podcasts!** Two new **Miracle Moment Podcasts** are now online for your free listening experience. As Sharie in Wisconsin wrote, "I want to thank you both for your loving response to my e-mail and to Paul for his beautiful reading of my words. I felt very loved and close to you both with that reading and discussion. Also, I appreciate the love that was facilitated when you extended my message beyond just the three of us on your podcast.

More joining. More connection. And more miracles. Love it and love you both." Founder Beverly and her husband Paul, share practical Course insights to your questions from their combined nearly 60 years of study! Listen today by going to www.miraclecenter.org and clicking on **Miracle Moment Podcast**.

● **You are entitled to miracles on August 10-11, 2013!** Our annual International Conference on *A Course in Miracles* will take place in Irvine, California on August 10th and 11th, 2013. Commemorating our landmark anniversary of 35 years, we have assembled a stellar group of presenters to help us celebrate! Joining Beverly will be Marianne Williamson, Jacob Glass, Carol Howe, Jon Mundy Dick Gayton, Steven Halpern, and screenwriter John Viscount who will be screening his short film based on the Course. These conferences are always an inspiration. Mark your calendar and plan on joining us! See back cover or go to miraclecenter.org for more details.





Miracle Musings... Amazing Grace!

by Paul McNeff



The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld the glory of the Father, full of grace and truth." (John 1:14)

"Grace is an aspect of the Love of God which is most like the state prevailing in the unity of truth. It is the world's most lofty aspiration, for it leads beyond the world entirely." (Lesson 169)

The daily barrage of headlines reads: "Forty Killed in Terrorist Bomb Attack." "Teen Commits Suicide, Victim of Cyber Bullying" or "20 Children Massacred in School Shooting Spree." Humanity despairs at these events as we all wretchedly feel the pain. If we personally fall victim, our lives are changed forever. Can we move through it? If yes, then how? Can we help others move through it? Questions abound in search of substantive answers.

In all this worldly tragedy, where is the God of grace we so often hear about? Surely, the world is in great need of it. The bigger question: Can we actually be purveyors of grace -- part of the healing? Can we join the Sonship with Jesus and become the "Word" (as the Bible proclaimed Jesus) and dwell with humankind with the pedigree which states, "full of grace and truth?" *A Course in Miracles* and the teachings of Jesus boldly lead us to the infinite "YES!" Answers that are not of this world but "beyond the world entirely."

Grace -- unmerited favor. In my early life as a fundamentalist, that was how we described it. Simply stated, we understood grace as something good coming our way when we actually deserved something bad. Further, I deserved God's judgment because "all have sinned and come short of God's glory," and "the wages of sin is death." Interestingly enough, the Bible also teaches, "For by grace are we saved

through faith," ... grace being that unmerited favor that God bestows on us when we deserve only the wrath of God (at least from the evangelical's point of view).

The Course's teaching is infinitely gentler on the subject of grace. Though he may have forgotten, the Son of God actually merits grace. Wow! What a concept. We need not be saved from eternal damnation, just saved from our error of thinking that we could actually be separated from God. In Course terms, "saved" means the realization that we really did no wrong in God's eyes. "Grace is acceptance of the Love of God within a world of seeming hate and fear. By grace alone the hate and fear are gone, for grace presents a state so opposite to everything the world contains, that those whose minds are lighted by the gift of grace cannot believe the world of fear is real." (ibid)

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Regardless of our religious background and heritage, I think most of us are acquainted with the ever-popular Christian hymn, *Amazing Grace*. The lyrics are profound, and they so beautifully relate our experience of release from this world and a return to the arms of God.

*"Amazing grace how sweet the sound,
that saved a wretch like me.*

*I once was lost but now am found, was
blind but now I see."*

Ironically the writer of Christendom's most beloved hymn, John Newton, was a former slave ship master. By all definitions, he was a wretch. In 1748, Newton's tortured ship encountered a treacherous storm which threatened to send everyone on board to their death. After praying for deliverance, Newton was miraculously rescued by a sea captain and returned to England. This experience began his conversion to Christianity. Later, while aboard another slave vessel bound for the West Indies, he became ill with a violent fever and asked for God's mercy; Newton claimed this experience was the turning point in his life. Despite these dramatic events, Newton continued to participate in the slave trade. Between 1750 - 1753, he made many other voyages to buy and sell human beings just as if they were animals. As he himself admitted, he was still a ruthless businessman and an unfeeling observer of the Africans he traded.

In 1754, after a serious illness, Newton completely gave up his trade, and then later, was ordained into the Anglican priesthood and ministered as a priest at Olney in Buckinghamshire. The reformed slave trader became well known for his pastoral care and was respected by both Anglicans and nonconformists. *Amazing Grace*, as it is known today, did not appear until 1773, as a poetic illustration written by Newton for his New Year's Day sermon.

The familiar story of John Newton's conversion experience has too often been simplistically cast: Once Newton had the epiphany from God, he immediately repented, became a Christian, stopped his slave trading and wrote *Amazing Grace*. But it did not happen that way. It took time for grace to mature in his life. To many Christians, their spiritual journey pivots upon frozen moments in time...the date

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Paul McNeff is married to MDC's founder and has been a student of the Course since 1986. He is a professional singer and conductor and holds a master's degree in vocal performance. In 1997, along with Beverly, he founded *KidSingers*, an inner-city, after-school children's chorus. The program has won many awards and been featured on *Good Morning America*. Learn more at: www.kidsingers.org



35 Years in Retrospect...

The life of Miracle Distribution Center

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

*In celebration of the 35th Anniversary of the Center, we will be sharing its journey with you throughout the next several issues. Even though the Center was founded by Beverly and Richard Hutchinson, it has developed a life of its own. These articles will share the Center's birth, growth, life, and purpose as it continues to evolve and support students of **A Course in Miracles**.*

Part III: Partners on the Path

Nothing you undertake with certain purpose and high resolve and happy confidence, holding your brother's hand and keeping step to Heaven's song, is difficult to do. (T550/T-26.V.2:5)

Through our thirty-five years of service, we have had the opportunity to take the hands of many brothers, and each one has brought a blessing to Miracle Distribution Center (MDC) and its growth. I have written in previous articles about how my brother, Richard, was the moving force in starting the Center, but I also want to mention the impact that our parents have had on MDC's growth, for it truly has been a "family affair." As students of *A Course in Miracles*, they spent many long hours in support of this work. Both my mom and dad have made their transitions into eternal life, but during the years that they graced us on this earth, it was common to see our dad, Clarence, repairing a leaky faucet, changing a light bulb or helping out in any number of ways. Tona, our mom, was a familiar voice to many since she was often the voice you'd hear when you phoned the Center. She was an invaluable helper to us, and we fondly called her our best secret "weapon," for she was our ambassador of

love to all who called or visited MDC.

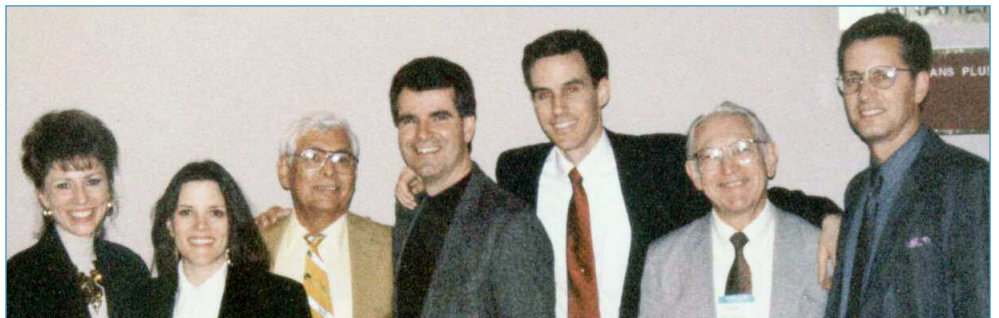
Since her death in 1997, we have been blessed by a series of wonderful receptionists: Monica Castillo, Gina Wolf, Jennifer Fitzgerald, Roxanna Spencer and presently Tess Patton and Maria Zakich, who continue to provide the same love and

the scene and was an answer, quite literally, to prayer. He found out about *A Course in Miracles* through his mother, Rhea Zakich (creator of The Ungame and an international lecturer on inner healing). Darin became a student of the Course and began attending our study group. As time went on, it became apparent that he was the missing piece in our puzzle. He became a part of the Center and he now serves as our administrator.

In the "old days," when the Course only came in three hard covered volumes, we were sent large cases of individual Texts, Workbooks, and Manuals for Teachers. These books were then repacked into small boxes which held one of each of the hardcover books. It was a tremendous job to repack hundreds of sets of the Course each week to be mailed out to anxious students — we needed help! Darin invited two friends to come and help us at MDC — Susan and Robert Perry. From this beginning in 1985, Susan remained on as the receptionist of the Center for four years before moving to Arizona. Robert, whom



From 1987. L to R - front: Darin Zakich, Beverly, Bobbie Rothstein, L to R - back: Bill Thetford, Richard Hutchinson, Robert Perry



From 1993. Beverly, Marianne Williamson, Bud Mendoza, Steve Doolittle, Darin, Conrad Hanson and Paul McNeff

nurturing spirit that my mom started back in 1978. I know this makes my mom smile.

My family has been involved with MDC from the beginning, but another part of our "family" joined us in 1982. At that time, we were growing and needed to become more knowledgeable in the ways of the Center's burgeoning business growth. Darin Zakich, who has a degree in Economics, came on

Darin had known since high school, was also involved with the Center and assisted in editing part of our recorded series with Steven Halpern and collaborated with us on the writing of a booklet entitled *An Introduction to A Course in Miracles*. His involvement with the Course started at Miracle Distribution Center and from there he has gone on to form his own organiza-

tion, The Circle of Atonement.

Also in 1985, after his work as director of the New Hope Counseling Center at the Crystal Cathedral had come to an end, we invited Conrad Hanson to join the Center as director of education and counseling. With over two thousand study groups worldwide, he had a mighty task keeping track of things and keeping the listings updated on a daily basis. Conrad retired at the end of 2010 after twenty-five years of service to our Center.

In the mid 1980s, Howard and Donna Sell had found the Course through Gerald Jampolsky's book, *Love is Letting Go of Fear*. The Sells became invaluable in their help to MDC. If you recall, in the mid



From 1998. The Zakich Family: Lauren, Darin, Maria and Emily

1980s, personal computers were just coming into fashion, and the Sells were the first to get us set up on computer so our study group information could be digitized. They also helped us produce the first issues of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** magazine. For years, Donna came into the Center to volunteer her time and to help us duplicate our study group meetings on cassette tapes. After Donna retired from this volunteer position, Mary Mount stepped in to take over. Mary's dedication was invaluable. After she retired, Maria Zakich filled the void without missing a step. As the popularity of MDC's recorded study group meetings continues to grow, Maria continues to meet the need. Cassettes have gone the way of 8-track tapes. We still duplicate on to CDs, but mp3 downloads are now becoming the popular choice, so things are changing!

And no mention of "partners on the path" would be complete without the

names of Bud Mendoza and Steve Doolittle. These two dedicated friends completely rebuilt and improved the Center's computer system and brought us into the information age. We owe a great thanks to Steve for designing our website in 1996 and now, for his incredible help with live streaming many of our events.

"Darin Zakich, who has a degree in Economics, came on the scene and was an answer, quite literally, to prayer."

Bud (who made his transition into eternal life in June of 2007) will always have a place in our hearts not only for his expertise in fixing computer malfunctions, but for his loving spirit that touched every aspect of the Center. We truly miss him, but we are grateful that these two "miracle



workers" continue to touch our lives.

As our office family began to

From 1999. Donna Sell and Jeffrey McNeff

grow, our partners on the path began to find their own partners. Those partners have become part of our family as well. When I got married in 1988, my husband Paul became a vital part of MDC as has Darin's wife, Maria, and Tess's husband, Tim. The children that have come from these unions have also touched the life of MDC. Darin and Maria's two girls, Lauren and Emily, Tess and Tim's girls, Casey and Tara and the apple of my and Paul's eyes, Jeffrey, provide us with the best lessons for joy and learning than any of us could imagine.

There are so many other dear friends who have touched the life of MDC. We have been truly grateful for each and every one of them. Whenever there was a need, a loving brother was directed our way. A good example of this is Ed Foote who lives in Pennsylvania and serves as our ambassador-at-large, scouting new locations for our Holy Encounter Weekends across the U.S. and helping to spread the word about the Center's services. Perhaps that is why, even though we work long hours, the task of the Center has never seemed difficult, for "Nothing you undertake with certain purpose and high resolve and happy confidence, holding your brother's hand and keeping step to Heaven's song, is difficult to do."

Next issue . . . **"Divine Decisions"** ✧

"Thank you so much for all you do to raise the consciousness of our planet."

That's how Linda in Santee, California feels about THE HOLY ENCOUNTER. She wrote...

Dear Beverly and Staff,

Thank you for your wonderful publication of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**. I look forward to every issue and want to give the gift of a subscription to my dear *A Course in Miracles* friend of thirty years. Please find enclosed a check to help defray the cost of sending it to her. If you could send your current issue to begin her subscription, it would mean so much as her birthday is in March.

Thank you so much for all you do to raise the consciousness of our planet.

We are grateful for Linda's comments and that she values THE HOLY ENCOUNTER so much she would want to send it as a gift! We are always honored by this gesture and happy to oblige. If you would like to send THE HOLY ENCOUNTER as a gift to someone, just let us know. We will enclose a note saying it's a gift from you. Then all you have to do is sit back and enjoy the miracles!



Heal Your Mind, Heal Your World

Seeing Through the Eyes of God

by Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. and Diane V. Cirincione, Ph.D.

For the last few months, I have had some “ego hiccups” regarding the state of my right eye. I have had glaucoma in both of my eyes for several years. My left eye has been legally blind for about eight years.

My visual acuity rapidly began to go downhill about four months ago. Four weeks ago, I had a cataract successfully taken out of my right eye. My visual acuity continued to deteriorate, and the pressure in my right eye increased to 24, which was alarmingly high. It should be below 14.

Another surgical operation, this time an emergency, was recommended. Although the operation was a success, bringing my eye pressure down to an acceptable level, the doctors will not know the state of my visual acuity for 4 to 6 weeks. There are lots of measurements with each doctor’s visit.

Mind you, for years we have practiced saying out loud that our spirit, our love, and our truth are immeasurable. Nevertheless, we find a lot of ego hiccups popping up with the multitude of measurements taken on the earthly plane.

A Course in Miracles has helped us in so many ways. During the challenges with my eyes, I liked to repeat, “I have decided to increase the focus on my spiritual vision and not the vision of my eyes. “This ultimately reawakens spiritual vision, simultaneously weakening the investment in physical sight.” (T-2.III.3:8)

I choose to see what I think of as a physical challenge as just one of many illusions that I have dipped into. I do my very best to see my illusions as part of my insanity, and then immerse myself into the consciousness of God and immerse myself into Oneness with God and a Oneness in all that is life. I focus on frequently saying out loud this paraphrase of lesson 219:

I am not my eyes. I am free.
For I am still as God created me.

I like repeating to myself: “Today I let Christ’s Vision look upon all things for me and judge them not, but give each one the miracle of love instead.” (Lesson 349) Then I follow this with: “The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love.” (T-26.IX.6:1)

Another favorite I love repeating to myself: “I place the future into the Hands of God.” (Lesson 214) This helps me let go of all expectations or concerns about outcome as I do my best to live only in the present and let the past and future disappear.

Many people have asked me how my

“Mind you, for years we have practiced saying out loud that our spirit, our love, and our truth are immeasurable. Nevertheless, we find a lot of ego hiccups popping up with the multitude of measurements taken on the earthly plane.”

eyes and vision are. Rather than focusing on an answer to that question, which tends to take me into the physical plane, I like to respond by saying and meaning what I say, “*My Spirit is soaring, and my Light is shining brighter and brighter.*” This allows me to focus on my spiritual identity and not to drop into my body identity.

As my vision has become worse, I have also had some interesting and unexpected moments. For example, Diane and I go to the gym several times a week. At times I like coming up from behind and giving Diane a surprise kiss on her cheek, and she likes doing the same to me. It spices up our physical exercises.

Well, I have stopped doing that because there were two occasions I thought I was

kissing Diane and was shocked to find out it was not Diane whom I was kissing! Now when Diane is coming towards me in the gym, she waves her arm... and then I know it is Diane approaching me. We have found that bringing humor into our ego challenges really works.

Another helpful focus for us is to have our iPhone alarm go off every hour with a harp sound to remind us of the lesson for the day. We love the lesson that says “All things are lessons God would have me learn.” (Lesson 193)

For the first three days post-operatively, my physician asked me to be still and to keep my eyes closed to promote more rapid healing. I feel rather certain that my physician was talking about physically healing my eye. But I found that closing my eyes, having a still mind and a still body allowed me to take a giant step toward healing my mind and feeling my Oneness with my Source.

So in summary, I have chosen to look at my physical challenges as spiritual challenges. I then choose to look beyond my body and to see what is happening to me through the Eyes of God. That means I choose to look beyond all form to see only the Consciousness of God’s Love.

Another question I like to remember to ask myself is the following: Is this thought, this attitude, or this word I am about to utter to another person or to myself, a thought from God that will bring about joining or is it an ego thought that will bring about separation?

It is amazingly freeing to let go of the outcome of how well I see with my physical eyes, which focus on the future, and instead be determined that the form or health of my eyes or physical body does not have to interfere with God’s Will for happiness for me. This is something Diane and I are continually learning together on our way Home.



Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. and Diane Cirincione, Ph.D., international lecturers and bestselling authors, share their insights and experiences in applying the principles of *A Course in Miracles* in our world. Jerry and Diane’s books and other items are available at www.miraclecenter.org



The Two Emotions

by Jacob Glass



“Simplicity is very difficult for twisted minds.” (T-14.II.2)

It's still amazing for me to realize that I can sit out on my patio in the evening, looking out at the world as it goes by, and without one single thing in my world changing at all, I can make myself feel grateful, peaceful, happy, contented and blessed. Or I can make myself feel depressed, grief stricken, lonely, sickly, afraid and full of anxiety. And it all happens simply from HOW I tell the story of my life within my own mind.

Each one of us is like the editor of a motion picture, and we sit in the little editing room of our own consciousness, deciding which scenes to leave in, what to leave out and even the general theme and feeling of the movie. On top of that, we also choose the music that plays in the background, and an almost unending array of significant and sometimes subtle choices which will affect how we, the audience, feel as we watch the movie in our mind. I used to watch a very sad, scary, and upsetting movie all day, every day. And I did NOT like the guy who was playing the lead role either.

Thankfully, the Course slowly took me through this “mind training” process which has allowed me to change the movie significantly even though all the past scenes are still the same scenes. I have simply edited them differently to make a depressing independent film into a big studio comedy that is slightly boring to audiences because there is so little conflict.

My friend Fannie Flagg wrote a wonderful book, and then later the screenplay for the movie *Fried Green Tomatoes*. What a fabulous movie and yet what a terrible “story.” What I mean by “terrible story” is that the story is one of almost endless ego darkness of every form

imaginable – domestic violence, dismemberment, murder, rape, cannibalism, death, racism, alcoholism, poverty, young death, disease... it just does not let up. HOWEVER, because of the WAY that Fannie tells the story, it is inspired, funny, filled with love and the milk of human kindness, deep, deep friendship, and yes, forgiveness and miracles.

It is so clear to me as I sit on my patio at night, that I could look in one direction and tell a story of how my whole life has been a massive failure and that loss and disaster has followed me all the days of my life.

“It may seem to be what is happening that is making me feel this way, and within the illusion that may be perfectly understandable. But, I do not have to stay in that place.”

And I can turn my head the other way and tell the story of how my life is the best it's ever been and getting better every day, and that my life has been filled with one miraculous blessing and success after another. And BOTH of those stories would be factually true; I would use data to back each of them up as my mind proved me

right about the story. The choice is up to me, to all of us. I know that it is not easy, but it is extremely simple. And with practice it does GET easier over time.

“I have said you have but two emotions, love and fear.” (T-13.V.1)

I once heard a spiritual teacher say, “There are only two emotions. One feels good, and one feels bad.” I love how simple that is. Sometimes Course folks get caught up in the definitions of “love” and “fear” – and get stuck there, making it more complicated than it needs to be. How simple to boil it down to feeling good or feeling bad. If I am feeling bad, I am thinking something that feels bad when I think it. If I am feeling good, I am thinking something that feels good when I think it. It may seem to be what is happening that is making me feel this way, and within the illusion that may be perfectly understandable. But I do not have to stay in that place. I can change my mind and start to reach for slightly better-feeling thoughts. I don't have to think the most spiritual, loving, amazing, positive thought I've ever thought before, but I CAN reach for a slightly better-feeling thought that starts to turn my head in the direction of the emotion I WANT to feel – the one that feels good.

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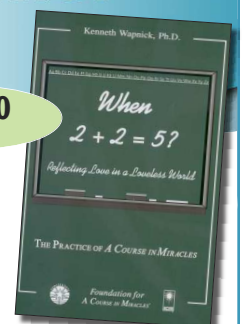
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Recognizing Spirit Enlightenment is a Recognition

by Dr. Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

For a while now, each morning I have been writing my thoughts and spiritual reflections. I have been sharing these with just a few people close to me. This morning I am guided to share these with the broader audience of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** readers. The reflections are not meant to be polished or cohesive, but are an intimate sharing of my daily journey. I hope you may find them helpful.

Many years ago, I had a Hollywood director as a patient. He was best known for a series of action B-movies with a well-known star. The director told me the actor had some psychological issues in that he had difficulty separating his character from his life. The director said there were times the actor believed his role as an elite spy was his real identity. The actor became so involved in the role he increasingly forgot who he actually was, even after the filming was complete. When the director would kindly point this out to him, the actor would become angry and defensive.

Though this was many years ago, this morning this story came to mind during my contemplation. I know my mind well enough now to know that stories often come to my awareness to teach me something. This morning my inner wisdom is creatively telling me to *be careful I don't forget who I am and defend who I am not.*

We forget who we are. We forget we are love. This is our only real problem. When we forget, we then make up some elaborate story about who we are, and we go about defending that story. The more we defend it, the more we believe it to be true.

My story is "The Story of Lee," and when I pay too much attention to this elaborate drama spanning the last 56 years, I stay in a perpetual state of forgetfulness, where happiness can seem like a temporary condition, at best. Fortunately, after years on a spiritual path, most days I

now remember to reclaim my tender heart, the heart we all share.

This is not to say I don't sometimes still behave like the actor in the story above, believing my role is who I am. I can mistakenly give more credence to "The Story of Lee" than the truth of how God created me. I then go about defending and justifying my story, not listening to my "inner director" when He tells me I am mistaken in my identity.

This morning, I pause and ask the rather obvious question we should all ask but usually don't: What causes me to forget?

*"We forget who we are.
We forget we are love.
This is our only real
problem. When we
forget, we then make up
some elaborate story
about who we are, and
we go about defending
that story."*

Simply put, the world around me that I can get so wrapped up in makes me forget. Most people have had the experience of going to the store and becoming distracted by something, then arriving home with a bag of groceries containing everything except what they went to the store for in the first place. This is what my ego does best — it distracts me from what I really want, and I go about accumulating what I don't.

This morning, I remind myself of the early lessons in the Course, and that what my body's eyes show me can take me on a long and wild ride of distraction and temptation. The purpose of this ride, driven by my ego, is to distract me from my function of forgiveness, for when I forgive, the story and distractions stop,

and only love remains.

Without the awareness of love, we come to believe we are something other than love. Recently I purchased a ranch where I am building a small retreat center. One of our team is living in a trailer on the ranch, a very old and run down structure. I told him to go ahead and fix it up to make it livable and comfortable. In his friendly Texas drawl, he replied, "Ok, but you can't polish a turd."

Not a pretty saying, but this morning I can see this is how so many people feel about themselves — that who we are deep down is flawed and no amount of self-improvement is going to make us beautiful within. How tragic. At one time I also believed this to be true about myself. Over the decades, I have worked with thousands of people on their journey, coming from diverse backgrounds, and at some level this has been true with every one of them. A belief is built by our ego that fuels a well-hidden fear that who we are, in the very center of our being, lurks something flawed, broken, somehow deficient, void, less than, and not good enough. This has been true with people who are wildly successful in the world and with those who feel mostly like victims. It keeps us from looking within deeply; how can we remember who we are if we don't look? Thus, the state of forgetfulness persists.

Our ego then keeps this state of forgetfulness even more intact by throwing so many reasons and justifications for us to believe our story that we don't shift our mental stance at all. Yesterday I contracted a skin condition that caused a great deal of itching. I know if I scratch it there may be momentary relief, but the itching will become worse, and even spread. Despite knowing this, there is still a very large temptation to give in and go ahead and

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Emotional Healing

The Guitar Man

by Richard Gayton, Ph.D.



The cool morning breeze has been burned away by a rising white hot sun that sends clouds of humidity through my open door in Pattaya, Thailand. I need to turn on the A/C but I delay to finish reading an email from the California Parole Board on my laptop. They have decided for my protection, and to keep me from stalking and killing Michelle, that I will continue to be prohibited from seeing her or communicating with her in any manner.

Let me back up, fellow *farang* (that's Thai for "foreigner," which I figure you might be). Michelle, who participated in the home invasion burglary that resulted in the murder of my wife, was paroled from the California Institute for Women in January. The night before she was released I was told that as a member of the victim's family, I could not pick her up at the prison. My ego didn't like this one bit. Knight in shining armor with the wrinkled face and the bald head couldn't ride in and rescue her from jail while looking so spiritually fine in the process. But I figured this was just some snafu from a giant institution malfunctioning which, having been in the Army, the Navy and having run my own little dysfunctional organization, I know how prone they are to hand down crazy instructions from on high. The Parole Board would realize their mistake of thinking me a revengeful maniac and see I was a gentle child of God.

But now as the sweat forms in my armpits and everywhere else on my body, I get it: they really mean for me not to have contact with her — ever. I wish I could tell you, dear spiritual *farang*, that I was just overcome with sadness over not seeing my friend Michelle, which was partially true, but it was more that my ego was not getting its way. After a fair amount of teeth gnashing and planning how to raise ned ("hell" for those who did not learn fake

swear words in Sunday School) with the Parole Board, this child of God decided to ask the Holy Spirit what I was supposed to do. Before listening for an answer, I stood up to shut the door and look for the A/C remote control.

I began to hear it; a lilting refrain that echoed through my surrounding neighborhood of small food stalls, restaurants, massage joints and apartment houses. Lovely blues guitar chords played in a way I sort of recognized. An old blues melody that reached into my heart. Of course, it was him; he had come. The Guitar Man. He was coming closer. I pulled on my sandals and ran out the door listening for his direction. He must be on the soi (small street) next to mine and headed toward the VC Hotel. Shoot, I forgot my hat! Back into the house. I must look good when the Guitar Man comes.

"Michelle, who participated in the home invasion burglary that resulted in the murder of my wife, was paroled from the California Institute for Women in January."

I ran down the street, hearing the amplified sounds of an electric guitar of a type I had never seen or heard before — except from him. I turned right. He wasn't there, yet the sound kept getting closer. And then I turned around. He was right behind me, slowly making his way down the street in the opposite direction. A short ageless, Thai man in a way-too-hot for the day Vietnam War style jungle jacket and a bush hat. He wore man-with-no-eyes, mirrored sunglasses with his hat pulled down; I could hardly see his face. He trudged one foot in front of the other, checking for cracks and

holes in the street, pulling behind him a two-wheeled cart which held a little electronic amplifier. Strapped over his neck was a homemade electric guitar made of a rainbow wood base with steel strings stretched across its neck. At the end of the neck, small Buddhist charms dangled over an ornate begging bowl. His left fingers moved nimbly through the chord placements as his right strummed and everyone on the street stopped to stare. The Guitar Man stopped playing for a moment to feel his way around the fruit lady's cart as two boys on motorcycles slowed to avoid him. Then his hand went back on the guitar and another rift of chords was sent soaring through the neighborhood.

I want to do something. The Guitar Man has come to my neighborhood — to me. I can choose to respond or not. I will follow. I want to learn this melody. I watch him move slowly and carefully down the soi and then run ahead of him like a small boy. I sit in a doorway and watch him pass by and I am filled with joy. I put 20 baht (Thai money) in his cup and he stops for a moment and wais (a Thai greeting with hands together in what looks like a prayer) and then returns to his playing and more chords fill the soi and resonate to the deepest part of me. I walk behind him. I want to play like he does and fill the world with joy. He is reminding me who I am. I can move softly and carefully down the streets of the world needing no earthly sight to guide me, not knowing where I am going because an unseen presence shows the way. I don't need to know who I will meet for it has been decided for me. I only need follow my melody and the inner music that plays from you to me.

*"The Guitar Man" by David Gates
Then you listen to the music and you
like to sing along,*

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The Basic Metaphysics of A Course in Miracles

by Jon Mundy, Ph.D.



Here, simply put, are the basic metaphysics of miracles.

1. Projection makes Perception.

The world is what we make it. It is our construct – totally. We make up every aspect of the world. That is why (Hold onto your hat!) There is no world! Another way to say this is: There is no outside. This world looks nothing like our real home – Heaven. There is no world because the thought system which gave rise to the world does not exist.

It is hard to understand what “The Kingdom of Heaven is within you” really means. This is because it is not understandable to the ego, which interprets it as if something outside is inside, and this does not mean anything.

The word “within” is unnecessary. The Kingdom of Heaven “is” you. (T-1.II.3:1-13)

2. Time is relative.

This is Einstein’s big discovery. It can speed up. It can slow down. It can stop. In which case – (Have you still got your hat on?)

There is no time!

Time cannot intrude upon eternity. When correction is completed, time “is” eternity. Eternity is not space and time. Eternity is “timelessness.” Space and time are on the outside. Eternity by definition is where Heaven is. Heaven is by definition where Eternity is.

It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which “means” there is no time. (T-27.VIII.6:5)

3. We are not bodies!

We mistake our bodies for ourselves. It

is an easy mistake. After all, the body looks pretty obvious.

It is almost impossible to deny its existence in this world. Those who do so are engaging in a particularly unworthy form of denial. (T-2.IV.3:10-11)

Bodies are temporal.

In just a few years, neither your body nor my body will exist. It doesn’t matter now, and it won’t matter – then! (You don’t need a hat if you don’t have a body to put one on.) Life does not begin with the birth of a body. Life does not end with the death of a body.

Physical birth is not a beginning; it is a continuing. (T-5.IV.2:4)

Time, the body and miracles are described in the Course as “learning devices.” They are the tools, the mechanism by which we may learn the truth of our identity.

“In just a few years, neither your body nor my body will exist. It doesn’t matter now, and it won’t matter - then.”

Learning is living here, as creating is being in Heaven. (T-14.III.3:2)

Once we complete the work, the tool is no longer needed.

4. There is no duality.

There are no opposites. There is no other. Judgment implies duality. There must be “something” to judge against.

Again – there is no outside. There is only Oneness. We are already and have always been One with God.

We remember Oneness by not projecting against it.

5. I’m Nobody.

Not only are we not bodies, neither do you nor I exist in an individualistic (egocentric) way. We cannot and do not exist apart from God. There is no “we” that we are making up. You are not your resume. Resumes are about the past.

6. The script is written.

There are no accidents! The more conscious we become, the more aware we are, the more we see the truth. The older we are the more easily we can look backward though the spectrum and see that things happen exactly as they are supposed to, given our level of awareness and maturity. As Albert Einstein said it, “God does not play dice with the universe.”

7. All decision making must be turned over to God

– The sooner we do so, the happier we will be.

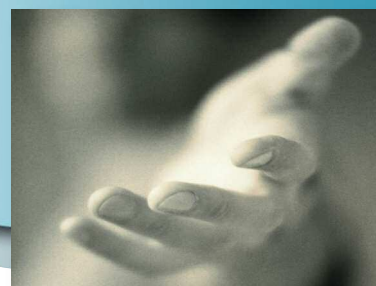
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Update: Prison Project

by Maria Zakich



The Prison Project of Miracle Distribution Center sends

A Course in Miracles and other Course-based items to those in prison. Through your generous donations, we have been able to supply many newly-started spiritual libraries in prisons. In some cases we have been able to provide multiple copies of books so more inmates can read about the love that is their essence. These principles are truly making a difference and quenching a thirst for truth that many in prison have found no other place.

We will do our best to keep you abreast of the work that is being done and the way this work is impacting inmates. The following is one such letter:

Dear Dr. Jampolsky,

I've just come home from the Attitudinal Group at San Quentin and, with the prisoner's permission, have a story to pass along to you.

Kamal, an Egyptian, has been in prison for years and years and was denied parole many times. He went again to the Board on February 12 and had a very long hearing; his victim's family was also present. He told us in group that this time he decided to just talk from his heart and not try to "explain things" over again.

He was asked a question, and didn't really have an answer for it. When the Board asked him what he

had to say, he replied, "In my defenselessness my safety lies. I choose to leave weakness behind." One of the Commissioners asked him, "Where did you learn that?" He explained that it came from a small red book entitled, "A Mini Course for Life." He feels this turned the tide for him. The Board finally granted him parole that day!

In our group, the men draw a card (from the book) after they share and they read it out loud. Kamal drew that very card tonight after his sharing! Your teachings are a blessing to us all.

With love, Holly

We feel honored to be able to meet each request that is sent to us, because of your generous support of The Prison Project. If you would like to support this project, you may make a tax deductible donation here.

If you are aware of an inmate who would like to have books related to the Course, or **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** magazine, let us know. Because of strict rules for sending items into prisons, please check with the particular prison authorities before you request that we send items.

Together we can experience healing by demonstrating healing through our willingness to be truly helpful to others. ✧

Maria Zakich coordinates The Prison Project at MDC. You may e-mail her at maria@miraclecenter.org

The Guitar Man

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You want to get the meaning out of each and ev'ry song

*Then you find yourself a message and some words to call your own
And take them home.*

Let's go home together listening to each other and sending the endless song of prayer to the Father. The Parole Board can't help but hear the melody.

P.S.: The parole board later e-mailed me to say that they had changed their minds and would allow contact. ✧

What's Happening

Continued from page 2

"A daily practice of prayer and meditation has a cumulative effect, but the effect is within the heart. Spiritual practices do not eliminate accidents, mistakes, tragedies, and suffering. But deep turning to God unites the mind and brings it peace. It lifts the spirit and sets it free. And it imbues ordinary events with beauty and real enjoyment. Prayer and meditation won't get us a new life, but if we are sincere, we fall in love with the life we already have." This beautiful thought from Hugh Prather's perpetual flip calendar shares the true transformation that prayer brings us. It

helps us to see the Hand of God in every experience of our lives. As we turn our focus toward the loving truth in each life experience, fear falls away. Then we truly do "fall in love with the life we already have." We invite you to join us in this experience of love by joining in prayer each day at 4:30pm (Pacific Time) for yourself and others through MDC's Miracle Prayer Ministry.

Thoughts for:

May: *"I will step back and let Him lead the way."* (L155)

June: *"God's peace and joy are mine."* (L105)

July: *"Your peace is with me, Father. I am safe."* (L245) ✧

when one is saved (the most important date of all), when one is baptized, and when one joins the church. Like so many of us however, as was Newton's experience, our spiritual maturity likely unfolds in baby steps. In my own life it has so often been more like two steps forward, one step backward. But we must be patient. Jesus always encourages us, "When you are ready, I will be there to help."

One of the most dramatic lines in Newton's hymn, "that saved a wretch like me," could actually be thought of as a metaphor for our ego thoughts, which as the Course teaches, is the source of our misery. But the main theme with which the Course resonates is that we are all God's holy, innocent children. When Newton entertained those old ego thoughts that allowed him to treat human beings as chattel, he was not free to experience amazing grace.

"I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see." The Course equivalent teaches: "Grace is not learned. The final step must go beyond all learning. Grace is not the goal this course aspires to attain. Yet we prepare for grace in that an open mind can hear the Call to waken." (ibid)

The key to experiencing grace is to prepare an open mind by releasing our judgments and pre-conceived notions of what spirituality looks, tastes, smells or feels like. "Forget this world, forget this course, and come with wholly empty hands unto your God." Grace is an ongoing process that prompts us to lift the blinders off, see through the eyes of God and thus awaken . . . or in the words of that famous hymn: "was blind but now I see."

Abraham Lincoln was a man of grace. My nightstand book has recently been the Lincoln biography, *Team of Rivals*, by Doris Kearns Goodwin. Reading hundreds of intriguing accounts of Lincoln's actions as president, I've arrived at a new appreciation of how great a man this backwoods country lawyer from Kentucky really was. Of his many virtues, perhaps the cornerstone of his spirituality was his ability to surrender his life to grace.

Shortly after Lincoln's re-election in 1864, U. S. Supreme Court Chief Justice

Roger B. Taney passed away of a long illness in the final months of the Civil War. To fill this lofty position required only the president's approval. As one might expect, the role of Chief Justice was most coveted and an abundance of highly qualified men lobbied for the president's appointment. Lincoln's former Treasury Secretary, Salmon P. Chase, was one of the front runners to get the nod. During the country's most difficult period of Civil War, he had performed a herculean service in his position. But for many, Chase was not an obvious choice.

"I can't help but think that Lincoln, like Jesus, simply had matured to the point in his spirituality that he habitually saw beyond his ego to the perspective of the higher good..."

As secretary-treasurer under Lincoln, Chase tried to fulfill his own unquenchable ambitions for higher office by repeatedly hurling bitter accusations against the president; some of the most serious claiming that Lincoln was unfit to be president. So contentious was their relationship that Chase resigned five times from his post before Lincoln finally held him to his word. When Lincoln was asked why he was seriously considering the appointment of Chase to Chief Justice, Lincoln gracefully responded: "Now, I know meaner things about Governor Chase than any of those men can tell me, but we have stood together in the time of trial, and I should despise myself if I allowed personal differences to affect my judgment of his fitness for the office." Lincoln was a man of incredible integrity. He never held a grudge, even though it could have been justified, and he seldom missed an opportunity to bestow grace in the midst of any situation. In the end, Lincoln appointed Salmon P. Chase to Chief Justice. He went on to admirably serve in the position until his death in 1873.

I can't help but think that Lincoln, like Jesus, simply had matured to the point in his spirituality that he habitually saw

beyond his ego to the perspective of the higher good -- a state of mind the likes of you and me might think unachievable, yet given a little willingness, it could consistently be well within our grasp. Hate, fear, bitterness and jealousy can be vanquished when grace is present because it emanates from the mind of God.

When I discovered the Course I had just gone through a divorce, left my church job, and changed careers, all within a very short span of time. Moving away from the traditional Christian path, however, was an adventurous time when I could investigate spiritual paths outside the confines of my fundamentalist upbringing. In many ways, finding and embracing the Course was like my homecoming. When I first picked it up and started doing the lessons, a first-hand experience of God's presence started to slowly kindle the flame of truth within me. It was an experience that I could totally own.

Amazing grace had reached down to me and gently led me to the next step in my journey. Thus having shed a lot of the baggage from fundamentalist Christianity, for the first time in my life, I felt like I could truly be God's purveyor of grace to a hurting world. Did I have to dispense God's grace by words? No, I just had to thoughtfully hold my brother in the unity of truth. Can I stop all the world's nightmares and injustices? Perhaps not, but I can accept the gift of grace for myself and my brother, because grace cannot exist outside the sphere of all God's children. Lastly, can I erase my slavery-to-ego thoughts in this illusion we call our world? Well, I'm not quite there yet, but I feel I am on a much better footing for making my "journey without distance." What I do know is that along with singing that old hymn ... "Amazing grace how sweet the sound.... I once was lost but now am found, was blind but now I see," I can also sing the sequel: "By grace I live. By grace I am released. By grace I give. By grace I will release." (ibid) ✨

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scratch. This is a great lesson for me in regard to the ego. In short, the only way I can overcome the condition of the ego is by not scratching my fear-based thoughts when they demand my attention.

Based on all of this, here are my directions to myself today. I invite you to join me if you choose:

Just stop. Be with what is there. Stop long enough to really know what you don't know, and then step into that "not knowing," the nothingness you fear may be there. There is wisdom in accepting and embracing that "knowing God" is beyond where you are, but don't use "not knowing" as a copout, or a reason to stay on the spiritual fence. Deepen your path by stepping into the unknown. This is the paradox of true faith, of surrender; we step into what we are unsure of – something beyond our self – and away from what we think we are sure of – our personal story.

"As the Course teaches, happiness becomes inevitable when we forgive..."

A *Course in Miracles* tells us, "Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all." Step into this recognition today. Know that if you have any doubt at all, forgiveness holds the answer, and is your only function here. Today see the very obvious connection between forgiveness and your happiness. Contemplate it often, and discover that only one thing happens when you are unforgiving – you are unhappy. Practically put, to forgive yourself or someone else results in your being happier. Not only is forgiveness giving up an irrational hope for a better past, forgiveness is also a gentle giving up of all of your justifications for being unhappy. Let them all go – from mild worry to long-standing upset, release it all. Let it go, even if it is just for an instant in time. As the Course teaches, happiness becomes inevitable when we forgive, and there could be no other result than this. Today remember. Remember who you are. Remember who we all are. See how you forget. Do so with forgiveness. And, remember that lack of forgiveness is a decision to remain unhappy. ✨

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forgive.” Of ourselves, we can’t forgive, for we see all the reasons why forgiveness is not warranted. God, on the other hand, looks past the illusions we have made and focuses on the truth — the extension of love and the calls for love.

The Course’s counsel to focus on the extensions of love or the calls for love is so wise, yet something we might rarely do except in hindsight. This still works, however. As we read in the first fifty miracle principles found in the text, “They (miracles) undo the past in the present, and thus release the future.” (Principle 13)

In one of our study group meetings at the Center, an attendee shared how he had recently experienced a miracle with his mother who had died many years ago. He never had a very good relationship with her and did not see her as a very loving person. Recently his six-year-old son wanted him to make cupcakes for his birthday to take to school. His son was very specific that the chocolate cupcakes needed to have white frosting and the white cupcakes needed to have chocolate frosting and how the sprinkles needed to be in a certain way, etc. He wanted to do it just like his son asked and realized how much work went into doing a project like this. As he was doing all this, he had a flashback to when he was a boy. He said he remembered that from the time he started school until he was in about 7th grade, his mother had always made lemon filled cupcakes with meringue topping and brought them to school for his birthday. He never realized until that moment when he was making those cupcakes for his son how much work his mother went to in order to prepare those cupcakes ... baking the cupcakes, cutting out the center to fill it with lemon filling, preparing and topping them with meringue, and then baking the meringue to a golden finish. Plus, his mother didn’t drive, so he had no idea how she got the cupcakes there, but somehow she did.

In that moment of realization of what she had done for him — her extension of love — so much hurt and anger fell away. He was able to see her in a new way. A miracle had entered his mind, and in that moment, he could see the truth about his

mother that all his judgments had prevented him from experiencing. It didn’t matter if she was no longer walking this earth, he was able to allow forgiveness to reign in his mind and in doing so he was released. He is released from being haunted by an image of an angry, uncaring mother and now he is free to experience the love that he is entitled to through the miracle of forgiveness.

The Course so wisely redefines forgiveness by saying that it is the return to sanity. It tells us that fear condemns and love forgives. When we forgive, we are returning our minds to the presence of God. When we dwell with God, fear has no hold. “For this reason, forgiveness can truly be called salvation. It is the means by which illusions disappear.” (L46)

“The Course so wisely redefines forgiveness by saying that it is the return to sanity. It tells us that fear condemns and love forgives.”

Why would we want to focus on an illusion? Have you ever gone to a scary movie, got caught up in the movie, jumped and screamed, and then afterwards walked out saying, “Boy, I’m glad that was just a movie?” It’s the same for the movie of our minds. We have written the script, directed a doozey of a scary movie, but it doesn’t have to keep scaring us unless we want to keep focusing on the illusion.

Forgiveness becomes the means by which we see each other the way God sees us. Do you really think God sees the person you’re angry at as that “S*#%B”? The Course asks us to question our thoughts in this way: what are you thinking that God would not think, and what are you not thinking that God would think. It is asking us to change our minds to think with God. For many, this seems too hard to do, but the Course reminds us that our mind is one with God. Denying this, therefore, and not joining our thoughts with God, keeps our egos intact but “has literally split your mind.” (T-4:IV:2:8)

We have all heard the saying, you can’t serve two masters. We can’t serve the ego

and God; not because it’s a bad thing to do but because they are mutually exclusive. It’s like trying to compare apples and oranges. When our minds rest in God (love) there is no ego (fear), but when our minds are dwelling on fear (ego-thoughts) then there is no love (awareness of God). The only caveat to this statement is the fact that God is always present because we are creations of Him — we’re just not aware of it when we are consumed with our fearful thinking. No thinking, though, can discount or change our reality in any way.

The Course tells us that forgiveness is a correction of our perception, so it can also be called a correction of our history. The Course defines forgiveness as: “... a selective remembering, based not on your selection;” a focus to remember only the loving thoughts you have given and those given you — everything else must be forgotten; a desire to see your brother as yourself; and your way out of hell.

Forgiveness becomes our course-correction, so we can be released from the past. That’s why the Course doesn’t spend a lot of time talking about how we could have possibly separated from our reality in God. The Course tells us we are a thought in the mind of God. We cannot be un-thought but we can choose not to remember. Our amnesia, though, cannot separate us from our Source.

Parents and children are a good analogy of this idea. Even though there might be estrangement in a family, the parent and child will always be connected. Healing our “estrangement” with God becomes the focus, therefore, of every unforgiving thought we experience. This means we don’t have to go back in our minds to find everyone we have not forgiven; we can use the experience that stands before us now, knowing that each one represents all the others. Much like a domino effect, when you tap over the first one in a series, all the others fall as well.

Allowing forgiveness to rest on any angry, judgmental or fearful thoughts starts the process of releasing us from all our past mistakes. It’s sort of like cooking with a crock pot. You put your food in, turn it on, and in about ten hours you have a delicious meal. The slow cooking process is what makes the food delicious. But if you don’t put the food in and turn it on, noth-

ing happens. For us to reap the benefits of our perpetual connection with God, we must become aware of it, turn to the love that is our reality, and allow the process to take place. Any unforgiving thought that stands before us represents our opportunity to be released from hell now.

“Forgiveness is acquired. It is not inherent in the mind, which cannot sin. As sin is an idea you taught yourself, forgiveness must be learned by you as well, but from a Teacher other than yourself, Who represents the other Self in you. Through Him you learn how to forgive the self you think you made, and let it disappear. Thus you return your mind as one to Him Who is your Self, and Who can never sin.” (L121)

This passage from Lesson 121 in the workbook helps us to understand what forgiveness is. As the Course tells us, forgiveness is an illusion because nothing can separate us from the mind of God and that is the basis of every unforgiving thought whether we are aware of it or not. Just as sin was a thought we taught ourselves (as guilt for the fact that we thought we could be separate from God), forgiveness become an acquired thought, as well, but one directed by the Holy Spirit to release us from our self-made prison of guilt.

For this reason, the Course teaches us that forgiveness is not of God, but love is. God cannot forgive because He has never condemned, but His love becomes the basis of our forgiveness. Just the same way a boat needs water to float, forgiveness needs love to carry out its healing mission. When anger, fear, doubt, etc., enter our minds, let us affirm, “God is the love in which I forgive (this person, idea or fear).” You may wonder if this makes any difference at all, but we are assured in the Course that it does. Just as you may not see a crock pot cooking, fingernails growing, or a cut healing under a scab, we know the process is taking place. So it is with forgiveness. Forgiveness is taking place the moment we are willing to allow our minds to be released from the fear and pain of the illusory past and focus on the power of love. Forgiveness works because love works. And, love works because our collective history of fear is powerless in the face of God.



Admissions

Continued from page 1

voice for the teachings on forgiveness – so beautifully articulated in *A Course in Miracles* – I hoped to demonstrate that by simply changing our thinking, we could create peace in any situation.

During the film, “The Clerk” sums up this change of mind when he says, “The ones who find it hardest to love need love the most.” This healing perspective is derived from the powerful Course principle that there is only one of two things that is ever happening in our world - people are either expressing love or crying out for love. This means the perfect response every time, in every situation, is to be loving, even on a geopolitical, nation-state level.

As Course students know, when life is viewed from this perspective, our journey becomes much more rewarding because we get to be an agent of healing, rather than an agent of separation. When this perspective is applied to the Middle East conflict, it becomes much easier to see that both sides have suffered tremendously and are simply crying out for love. Therefore, both need love and understanding in return - not only from each other, but also from the world at large.

Another Course teaching *Admissions* demonstrates is that the attainment of lasting peace in our world requires the establishment of shared interests. Contrary to popular opinion, the real evolution of life on earth is not from single cell organisms to the complex creatures roaming the planet today. True evolution is the journey from separate interests to shared interests, and one of my goals for *Admissions* was to illustrate this spiritual process.

For example, when the characters first enter the Admissions Room, they appear to have nothing in common because they are from different religions and are on opposing sides of a seemingly never-ending conflict. But through the telling of their stories and the dialogue they enter into because they have been brought face to face, they eventually discover the other side’s suffering. The sense of loss they share over their loved ones forms a bridge that they can now cross to reach common ground.

The common ground that all humans share is that we are loving beings. Unconditional love is clearly our natural state

because it is what’s most healing and sustaining. Therefore, when people are attacking others, it just means they have strayed from their loving essence. This doesn’t make them bad people. They just need to be gently redirected back to what they truly are.

When people’s actions are looked at from this point of view, it becomes obvious that the oppressed are not the only ones who are suffering in this world. The oppressors are suffering as well because they have strayed far from love. Once we are able to shift our perception in this manner, we quickly realize that to truly heal the world, everyone must be forgiven and offered the hand of unconditional love, without exception.

When we leave even one person out of our circle of love, we have created a hellish state of separation for ourselves. In this sense, we create heaven and hell with every thought. Thankfully though, forgiveness provides a direct route past the conflict in the world to the common ground and everlasting peace that is our birthright.

The next step for *Admissions* is a college presentation tour in the United States and abroad. The idea is to screen the film at selected universities. After each screening, I will lead a discussion with the goal of facilitating a healing conversation centered around the teachings in the film.

Though *Admissions* is set in the after-life, its message is meant to be applicable to the here and now. Ultimately it is designed to create a psychological structure for attaining inner peace. With this in mind, my biggest hope for *Admissions* is that it removes some suffering from the world. If the film does that for even one person, I will consider it a success.



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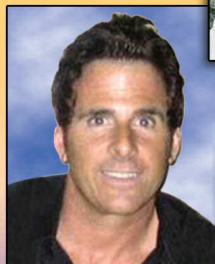
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