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Your gift supports all of Miracle Distribution Center's services for *A Course in Miracles* students . . . and for U.S. residents, it's tax-deductible.

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The HOLY ENCOUNTER



November / December 2014
A Miracle Distribution Center Publication

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



Lay Down Your Arms

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

As the season of gratitude and peace approaches, it is often difficult for us to believe God is present in the painful, confusing situations of life, or that anything "good" can come of a tragic circumstance. And yet, this is our guarantee, for as we read in the Course, "All things work together for good. There are no exceptions except in the ego's judgment." (T-4.V.1:1)

The face of God is in that person who judged me unjustly, the hand of God is working in the internal political struggle our country is going through, and the peace of God is the final outcome for that battle between those warring countries. Yes, God is present, not because He caused the problems in our lives or seeming pains and conflicts in the world.

God is present because He can never be absent from our minds. God is in our minds as the reminder that there is a better way, that love is our strength, that forgiveness is the key, and that joining with my brother past the seeming circumstances of life is the way that Christ is recognized. In that recognition is salvation accomplished. "Salvation of the world depends on you who can forgive. Such is your function here." (W-pl.186.14.5)

So, it becomes plain to us that wherever we may find ourselves is exactly where we should be, for we are there to bring salvation to the world through our forgiveness of the situation, or rather through our willingness to let the Holy Spirit's perception be ours. This healing in thought may not always bring change in the way we think it should appear or come as quickly as we think it should happen, but "healing

is always certain."
(M-6.1:1)

"The face of God is in that person who judged me unjustly, the hand of God is working in the internal political struggle our country is going through, and the peace of God is the final outcome for that battle between those warring countries."

sorrow can give birth to peace if we are willing to look through the eyes of the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit, as always, takes what you have made and translates it into a learning device. Again as always, He reinterprets what the ego uses as an argument for separation into a demonstration against it." (T-6.V.A.2:4)

The following story, by the Editors

Continued on page 15

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.

Let's Keep it Going!

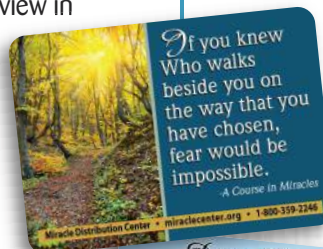
Your responses to our 2014 fundraising appeal have just begun coming in as we go to press on this issue of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**. As always, we at the Center are grateful not just for your support during this annual appeal, but for those of you who generously and loyally support MDC's work all year long.

Our monthly **Holy Helpers**, along with all our consistent donors, keep the Center functioning year-round, serving Course students and reaching out around the globe. While we do our utmost to see that each and every individual donation is gratefully acknowledged, it's important for us to remind you just how essential you and your support are to MDC's mission.

If you have yet to respond to this year's appeal, please consider joining the ranks of those who keep MDC's doors open and the Course's teachings going out into the world.

We also included in the mailing a Miracle card that can be carried with you. It's a little different

this year; not only is there a powerful quote from the Course on one side, but on the other side you'll find a barcode



Continued on page 13

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

● **She is not a body, she is free!** On August 6, 2014, our dear friend and member of Miracle Distribution Center's Board of Directors, Connie Rief, gently laid her body down. She was at home in hospice care with her husband Jerry lovingly at her side for the last few months. Now it's time for her "to rest a while from labor gladly done and gladly ended." She and Jerry, who is still a board member, were always the first to lend a hand in support and service. We will miss Connie's sweet smile and physical presence, but she will always live on through the life of the Center. To paraphrase *The Song of Prayer* when it describes what we experience at death: "Now Connie goes in peace to freer air and gentler climate, where it is not hard to see the gifts she gave were saved for her. For Christ is clearer now; His vision more sustained in her; His Voice, the Word of God, more certainly her own." We celebrate your liberation, Connie, and we are grateful to have you surrounding us with your love. We send our continued prayers to Jerry and the family during this healing time.



● **Welcome Trinidad** We recently welcomed a new group in the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago to our map of A Course in Miracles Study Groups. Anata hosts a group in the country's capital city,

Port of Spain. Search our world map to find one of the 2,000 groups nearest you. Just go to www.miraclecenter.org

● **Conference Memories** Our 2014 Conference was a transformational experience for those who attended. After you've read our wrap-up commentary and enjoyed some photos from the weekend on page 8 & 9, we invite you to view a video of highlights from the weekend. Our talented videographer Bill Kasal has assembled an inspiring collage of conference memories. Go to our website www.miraclecenter.org and find a link to the video in the right column.

● **Lend your voice to our conference song** We created a song for our 2014 Conference based on the conference theme, "The Light Has Come." Sung to the tune of the English folk song, "The Water is Wide," the song was performed throughout the weekend. We invite you to watch the video on our website. You'll see the words, along with beautiful photos, but it will require your voice to complete the arrangement, so try out your karaoke skills today. Go to www.miraclecenter.org and click on "Blog" in the menu bar.

● **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...** Natsu Ugehara, "my dear friend" from Mitsue Hugel in Pennsylvania. ... **Mel Mitchell** from Dawn Ahart in California.... **Bill** in "loving memory" from Martha Hallcroft in Florida.

● **Legacy Community** The Center's Legacy Community recognizes individuals who make one of the deepest, most personal commitments to our Center through planned gifts. When including a charitable interest to us in an estate plan, it means including Miracle Distribution Center among those people and places you value most. Bequests, charitable trusts, naming Miracle Distribution Center as beneficiary of an IRA and charitable gift annuities are among the many gift vehicles that qualify as planned gifts. We invite you to call us at 1-800-359-2246 or visit our website for more information.

● **The Course reminds us that God does not hear our words** but the prayer of our hearts. Perfect words in prayer no matter how lovely they may be are not the way to get God's attention. A heart focused on healing and willingness, however, opens a gentle path to God. Let us use this intent as we turn to God in prayer... that we may let the distractions of the world cease so we might be willing to experience His healing and guidance. We invite you to stop and join us each day at 4:30 pm (Pacific Time) for a moment of prayerful support for yourself, your loved ones, and everyone in the prayer ministry.

Thoughts for:

November: The peace of God is shining in me now. (L188)

December: I am as God created me. (L162)

January: I am Spirit. (L97)

Thoughts in the Miracle Prayer Ministry 2015

Each day at 4:30 p.m. (Pacific Time) we stop for a moment of prayer as we join our minds with God for the healing of all His children. We hope these lessons from the Workbook of A Course in Miracles will serve as a guide for your prayerful joining.

January: I am Spirit. (L97)

February: God is my strength. Vision is His gift. (L42)

March: God is the Love in which I forgive. (L40)

April: I am sustained by the Love of God. (L50)

May: Love created me like Itself. (L67)

June: I have a function God would have me fill. (L192)

July: Above all else I want to see. (L27)

August: I will step back and let Him lead the way. (L155)

September: Let me remember I am one with God. (L124)

October: Your grace is given me. I claim it now. (L168)

November: Love is the way I walk in gratitude. (L195)

December: I rest in God. (L109)

If you have a prayer need you would like to include in the Prayer Ministry, please send it to the Center and include a postal address so we may send a personalized letter.

Request your free, full-color 2015 bookmark today which lists all the thoughts in the prayer ministry & join us each day at 4:30 pm (PT) as we unite in a moment of prayerful support for one another.

Call 1-800-359-ACIM(2246) or at miraclecenter.org



FEBRUARY 13-15, 2015 ◇ LUCERNE VALLEY, CALIFORNIA

If you are ready for an experience of the peace and healing that *A Course in Miracles* promises... we invite you to Miracle Distribution Center's

Holy Encounter Retreat



International lecturer, author, and founder of the Center, Beverly Hutchinson McNeff, brings her 37 years of Course study to this weekend that will leave you with the tools and understanding you'll need to experience miracles in your life.

Known for her ability to take seemingly complex lessons and reveal their truth and simplicity, Beverly will help you open up to the worth and beauty inside you now.



This retreat is designed to help students to not just talk about the Course but to deeply experience its healing power. Through lectures, meditation, group sharing, music, and laughter, you will be helped to see, and look beyond, the limitations of this world and experience the possibility of God in every aspect of your life.

The Holy Encounter Retreat will be held at the spacious RW Ranch spiritual retreat center in Lucerne Valley, California. Sessions will be conducted in spacious meeting rooms and time for reflection and meditation may be experienced in various landscaped parks, intimate flower gardens, beside a



tumbling stream, or beside ponds... each offering privacy, seclusion, and a distinctive setting.

Everything is included, the weekend retreat activities, well-appointed lodging, and six organic, chef-prepared meals. Our caring and experienced staff, coupled with an oasis in the heart of Southern California, will provide you a safe and wonderful atmosphere for learning and sharing - a weekend where you can truly spend time on your own internal healing.

Please join us as we take a "journey without distance" to find that even in a world of chaos, our goal of peace and forgiveness has never changed.



Registration begins at \$495 and includes all retreat activities, six organic meals, and lodging.



To register visit www.miraclecenter.org or call 1-800-359-2246



Change Your Mind, Change Your Life

Spiritual Vision

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



A *Course in Miracles* has been a life saver for me, enabling me to look beyond my body and to experience the Light and Love of God within me. And I do my best to shine my Light and to see the Light in others, regardless of their behavior. I do my best to remember that Love is letting go of form and letting go of my attachment to my ego script for experiencing my life. I remind myself often that I am not a victim of the world I see, but a creator, producer, and director of all my own illusions.

Part of spiritual vision is to see past other's illusions. To choose to see the Light in them and to know it is but a reflection of the Light in me. Diane and I love using our friend, Fred

Matser's wonderful motto, "Let us go through life with miles and miles of smiles" to inspire each other and to feel better about ourselves and our lives.

Spiritual vision is choosing to look through the eyes of Love and not fear as we go through life. It is to stay on course by asking ourselves, "Is this thought a God thought or is it from my ego?" and then "choosing once again." We know from the Course that "our meaningless thoughts create a meaningless world" of fear and that what we perceive in the world is a direct reflection of the thoughts in our minds.

Spiritual vision is experiencing the world through Love's eyes and not through our body's ego eyes of fear. More and more we are remembering the only thing that is real and that never changes is our united connection with our Source. We believe

our spiritual vision has a DNA of happiness, unconditional love, kindness, tenderness, and gentleness. It is celebrating the Light and Love we know we are and seeing only Love wherever we go... for that is what we are. It is celebrating freedom from our self-imposed ego prisons.

For me, utilizing spiritual vision is remembering I am blind when I make interpretations followed by judgments of other's behaviors based on what I see

"Spiritual vision is choosing to look through the eyes of Love and not fear as we go through life. It is to stay on course by asking ourselves, 'Is this thought a God thought or is it from my ego?' and then 'choosing once again.'"

through my physical eyes. And I am sighted when I remind myself I am not my past or my glaucoma, nor am I my body. I am the essence of the Peace of God. Spiritual vision is to see everything through the eyes of a loving and gentle God; through our hearts and not our heads.

I have been blessed by having Diane as my spiritual partner who is completely committed to choosing her spiritual path daily. Diane has been an amazing teacher not only to me, but to so many others of unconditional love, gentleness, kindness and compassion. There are times I forget completely that I have a choice in how I see the world and everything seems so real and deserving of my judgments. Mother Teresa once told Diane and me that no one is in higher consciousness all the time, but that it is our "intentionality" of going in the right direction that counts. At this moment, I am determined to see everything through kind, loving, and not judgmental eyes.

I find most people see me as happy and smiling most of the time. I will be ninety years young this coming February and am blessed with excellent health. The only

medicine I take is eye drops for my glaucoma. I feel fortunate to have hearing aids to help with my hearing. I have been blind in my left eye for several years and legally blind in my right eye for the last six months. I do not choose to be a victim of my blindness, and continue to remind myself that true seeing is spiritual vision. When people ask me how my eyes are doing, I often reply, "My spiritual vision is getting better all the time!"

Diane and I like to be playful in the gym to make our exercises less boring. On occasion I will come up behind Diane when she is on a stationary bike and kiss her on the cheek. And there are times she will do the same with me. Well, one day I came up behind Diane to give her a kiss on the cheek and all of a sudden I realized I was kissing the wrong woman! So there is some humor here because at the gym I have been nicknamed the "blind kisser!"

We know how blessed we are. We try to go through life with the goal of dissolving any thoughts of loss or separation in our lives by enhancing love, forgiveness, compassion, kindness and humor. ✨

Divine Divining!

Dip into the pool of the divine whenever you need inspiration!

Scan the barcode or go to www.miraclecenter.org/quotes and a thought will be selected for you at that exact moment.

As *A Course in Miracles* reminds us, "... no one is where he is by accident, and chance plays no part in God's plan."

Whichever thought is selected, it's a message for you!





Miracle Musings...

Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

by Paul McNeff

"And they came into the house and saw the Child with Mary His mother; and they fell down and worshiped him; and opening their treasures they presented to Him gifts of gold and frankincense and myrrh." (Bible: Matthew 2:11)

"My birth in you is your awakening to grandeur. Welcome me not into a manger, but into the altar to holiness, where holiness abides in perfect peace." (T-15.III.9:5)

What are your best memories of the Holiday season as a child? Some of mine have to be the annual Christmas parties thrown by my Dad's employer, Detroit Mobile Homes. What was truly amazing though, was that their gifts did not require any gifts from us in exchange. I guess our gift to them was our dad's hard work. One year at this highly anticipated annual event I remember receiving a beautiful, bronze-colored, mighty Tonka Truck made of one-hundred-percent steel to guarantee its magnificent strength! To an eight-year-old, small-town Kansas boy, there was nothing cooler. This was big!

Where did the idea of exchanging gifts during the year-end holidays get started? Probably in no small part, it came from the Biblical account of the Magi bearing gifts as they came from afar to visit the newborn Christ child. Not that baby Jesus was old enough to remember, but I always wondered if Mary and Joseph were as blown away that night with the wondrous gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh, as was that wide-eyed, eight-year-old boy that night in Kansas.

As we have come to appreciate from this story, whether literally true or not, the gifts of the Magi represented gifts of grandeur and great value which were given to someone who was worthy of such

magnitude, the Christ child. There was nothing little about that.

In *A Course in Miracles'* text section, "Littleness versus Magnitude" it teaches: *"In this season (Christmas) which celebrates the birth of holiness into this world, join with me who decided for holiness for you... It is beyond all your littleness to give the gift of God, but not beyond you. For God would give Himself through you."*

(T-15.III.7:1)

"Where did the idea of exchanging gifts during the year-end holidays get started? Probably in no small part, it came from the biblical account of the Magi bearing gifts as they came from afar to visit the newborn Christ child."

Like those Magi of yore, we too can give gifts of great magnitude to the Christ-child. Only the Christ-child we seek can be found in anyone and everyone, friend or foe. This section of the Course not only speaks to us about magnitude but also about littleness. Littleness can best be understood as the idea that worldly things can never satisfy our true needs. The Course also instructs us in our seeking to find true peace, describing how to transcend littleness by choosing the magnitude that is already inherent within us. Is this easy? Not always. Just as the Magi had to undertake a long and arduous journey to finally find the Christ child, we too, must strive to find the magnitude within us and protect it from the littleness of the world. "All your striving must be directed against littleness, for it does require vigilance to protect your magnitude in this world." (ibid.4)

Beautifully, the Course does not

endorse any one religion or philosophy. It does however, embrace the basic tenets of all great wisdom teachings — love and forgiveness — and wraps them up in a gift that says: Within you is God's gift of magnitude; you are worthy, you are limitless, you are holy. These gifts are exchangeable. In fact, the more you exchange them, the more they multiply. As you learn to see, experience, and reveal them within yourself as truth, you can then give the gift of God to others.

Whether you celebrate Christmas, Chanukah, Kwanza or no religious holiday at all, we all have the potential within us to celebrate this Holiday season by giving the gift of God. "Call forth in everyone only the remembrance of God, and the Heaven that is in him. For where you would have your brother be, there will you think you are. Hear not his appeal to hell and littleness, but only his call for Heaven and greatness. Forget not his call is yours, and answer him with me." (ibid.12)

So go forth and get all that regular holiday shopping done this season. But as you do, join me in birthing the true gifts of the heart and of God. And, there is a big discount on these gifts. In fact, they won't cost you a dime, for you already have them in the treasure house within you. Think of it as a spiritual Amazon.com. Except the God-gift always fits, never spoils, and will always arrive on time. Give the gift of a smile, a forgiving thought, a helping hand, or a prayer — all the real gifts that bring us the grandeur of peace on earth. Happy Holidays!



Did You Know??

Our caring staff is available to help you during our regular office hours of
Mon. – Fri. from 9am to 4pm.

Just call **800-359-2246** or
714-632-9005

We look forward to assisting you!

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



Recognizing Spirit

Finding the Light: Inspirational Psychology on Observing the Mind

by Dr. Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

You may be reading this article close to the holiday season – a time that can be devoted to light – or at another time. Whenever you may read it, may you see the foundational importance of finding the light within all beings. Prior to, during, or following any interaction, remind yourself of these three truths:

1) *When you see the light in others rather than their faults, you are finding your own freedom from the pain and misery that your judgments and resentments have brought to you.*

2) *In your lifetime, your mind can come up with thousands of reasons not to forgive, but there is only one reason to forgive – to be free.*

3) *You may run out of, or feel deprived of, what you have believed is valuable and important, but you will never run out of what truly is – the ability to have a tender heart and loving presence.*

The above reminders are difficult to find if we do not practice stilling our

mind. Though some of my daily spiritual practice consists of meditation and a quieting of my thoughts, trying to force or manufacture stillness within never works well, especially if you are already upset or preoccupied about something. If you have a busy mind or are repeatedly thinking about something upsetting, it is far more effective to just observe your thoughts, not demand that they stop. What I do is to observe my thoughts as though I am sitting on my favorite beach watching waves roll in and out – I don't try and stop the waves, for that would only be frustrating. This practice of inner observation approaches our mind as the ocean, the waves as our

thoughts. Without such a practice of quietly observing, about all we ever do is jump on the back of a thought like mounting a wild horse, being bucked and thrown every which way throughout the day.

The goal is to observe and become aware of our thoughts. In this way we eventually become able to reverse any habitual ways of thinking that are based in fear and do not actually serve us.

The most powerful reversals in thinking I have experienced have not come from ideal situations with other people in my life, nor from a leader, therapist, or trusted teacher who has acted wisely or given advice. The most powerful reversals – the holder of the greatest lessons on where and how to find freedom and peace – have been found in observing my thoughts and wondering, “who is the thinker?” As I

begin to shift my focus from observing my thoughts to observing the thinker, a much broader awareness and consciousness is entered.

When we begin to see there is a level of consciousness, an awareness and intelli-

gence that is much larger than our individual thoughts, we see the things that are valuable and important. The three reminders at the start of this writing help with this realization – that forgiveness, love, and tenderness arise not from our thinking, but from something that is beyond our thinking. *A Course in Miracles* is concerned with helping to change our thoughts and beliefs that limit us, but it also works on going beyond thoughts to a deeper wisdom.

Some of our greatest opportunities for growth come from the individuals we have held complaints against, the people along the way we most readily judged, or were

most reluctant to forgive. You will always find that if you can see the light within a person you are tempted to judge harshly, to see the love within them that is concealed by behavior you don't like, if you can hear a call for love beyond your reasons to judge, then you have truly made progress toward peace and awakening.

With this, every person can become a messenger of light, a reminder of the importance and value of love. When you have seen their light and goodness beyond their behavior and what your hurt feelings want you to believe about them, then you have begun to see the difference between freedom and imprisonment, between what is real and what is not, between what is valuable and important, and what doesn't matter. This is part of what is meant by “love your enemy.” In other words, when you see the light in others rather than their faults or defensive/attacking behavior, paradoxically you are finding your own freedom from the pain and misery that your judgments and resentments have brought you.

I am not perfect at all at this, nor do I expect you will be. However, I will say that I know this is the best use of our time here, to not hold onto grievances, to not value anger in any form or believe it is where we will find solace or safety. This is not to say that if we experience anger or upset we should never communicate our feelings, but we should also not accept or be complacent with it. If you allow them to, your hurt feelings and the thoughts that bring them will become like weeds in your mind, taking over and causing pain.

After many years of practice, I seldom hold a grievance for very long. However, if I look honestly at the thoughts in my mind, I will discover that if I am anything other than free from all suffering, totally peaceful and joyous, I will find some form of grievance there. The ego wants to hide these small grievances in the corners of my

“When you see the light in others rather than their faults, you are finding your own freedom from the pain and misery that your judgments and resentments have brought to you.”

mind, or disguise them as something else — opinions, preferences, beliefs, moral, good/bad, and so on — so it is easy to be deceived, to refuse to recognize grievances for what they are. Herein lies the need for quiet mind observing time each day, time devoted for watching the thinker, and for real and completely honest self-assessment of my thoughts. Without this, I cannot possibly hope to recognize the barriers to peace of mind, to my grievances, to the shields within my consciousness that I have made to block the light from my vision.

During these times of quiet observation — a turning over of the rocks to see what grievances remain beneath — there is one thought, one directive that is always helpful to employ when any grievance is found:

Let me behold my teacher of freedom in this person. They are here as the one for me to see my own innocence within, and to lead me to the light of love. I won't abandon their soul, nor mine.

I fully understand that to most people in the world, this approach sounds insane, especially if a horrible behavior has occurred or we anticipate somebody being angry or unreasonable. To the ego mind, it certainly makes more sense to be more interested in building a case against certain people than to see one's own freedom within that person. But Inspirational Psychology, along with *A Course in Miracles*, sees such a reversal as the only path to real and lasting happiness. It also recognizes we cannot do this without turning within to our Inner Wisdom which is beyond our thoughts and opinions. If we pay attention only to our thoughts and opinions, and never begin to watch the thinker, we are listening to habitual fear that will continue to deceive and imprison us. Even if we turn to well-meaning people for help and ask for their opinions or thoughts, we will continue to be deceived; we will only be adding others to join us in our delusion of not seeing beyond our thoughts, not asking who is the thinker of our thoughts, and what wisdom is beneath and beyond it all. I am not suggesting nobody has a valuable opinion or helpful advice, however, ultimately we do well to respond to an upset that a grievance brings

Continued on page 13

Experience Inner Peace through these Recordings

"Your CDs (and now mp3s) with Steven Halpern have helped me reduce stress and illness!"

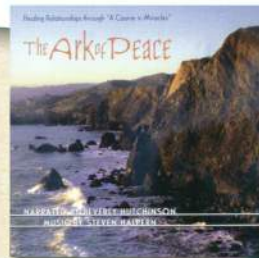
That's what Marge Thornton in Arizona shared with us after reading Beverly's last article in The Holy Encounter. She writes...

Dear Beverly,

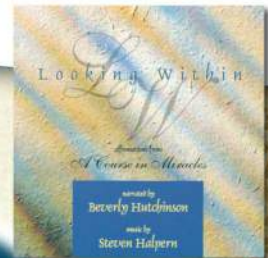
I have just read your recent article in *THE HOLY ENCOUNTER* (Sept./Oct.), "Meditation for Health," in which you stated that scientists have agreed that meditation reduces stress and illness. In your discussion of meditation I was surprised you did not mention the CDs (and now mp3s) you and Steven Halpern produced years ago, that have helped me reduce stress and illness! I have been a student of the Course since it was first published and have all of your CDs, which are wonderful guided meditations. At this moment, after all these years, I have *The Invitation to Healing* on CD and *Looking Within* on cassette in the radio combo by my bed. Whenever I wake up at night and my monkey-mind is trying to handle all my own and the world's problems, I click on one of these and find peace. I am a Christian Scientist and find the principles of it and the Course in total harmony. I have the Course flip calendar on my vanity to help me focus on the lesson each day.

I want you to know that I am now 83 years old and have never needed a doctor or medicine to maintain my health. To share how the Course has helped, my mother died of heart trouble when I was 7 years old. My dad and brothers all had similar problems in their life. Every time the thought came that I might be experiencing such a problem, I repeated and knew, My heart is beating in the peace of God." I also use often, "I am not a body, I am free, I am as God created me."

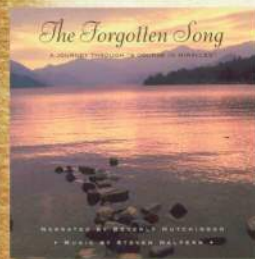
In gratitude for the Course and for you, Beverly,
Marge



THE ARK OF PEACE



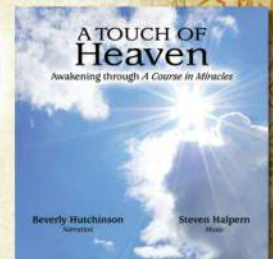
LOOKING WITHIN



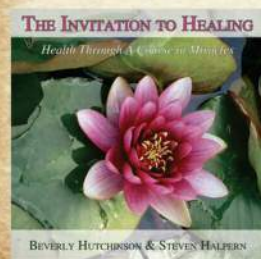
THE FORGOTTEN SONG

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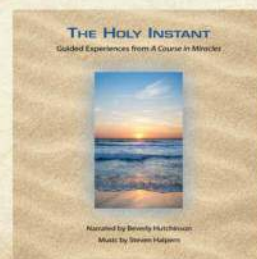
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A TOUCH OF HEAVEN



THE INVITATION TO HEALING



THE HOLY INSTANT



YOU ARE ENTITLED TO MIRACLES



Heart Prints from The Light has Come

by Karen Scopetski

On August 9th and 10th, I attended Miracle Distribution Center's International Conference in Irvine, California. Previously



I had been to two East Coast conferences and those were amazing encounters. Coming to the West Coast was extra special because I was able to meet with local study group participants, the MDC team, and a dear friend Bobbi, who I got to know through the listener board. Over the years, I already felt a connection with each of the presenters since they are all regular writers of *THE HOLY ENCOUNTER*.

The theme for the conference was "The Light Has Come!" based on *A Course in Miracle's* Lesson 75. Paul McNeff introduced a song that we sang throughout the conference reminding us of the lesson's key points. The words and music became a touchstone for peace. Beverly gave an inspiring opening talk using the simple, yet highly spiritual song: "Row, Row, Row Your Boat!" Using audience participation, she presented useful ideas on how to enhance your spiritual practice. What struck me most about all of the speakers was that each presentation was like an intimate discussion amongst friends. Jerry and Diane set this tone nicely by sharing many personal stories. They called moments that had touched their lives "heart prints" and encouraged us all to reach out to each other. After listening, I felt so inspired to live a life of love!

Lee Jampolsky talked about how to see the light and what to do when obstacles block our awareness of love's presence. He demonstrated that physical limitations are an illusion. Lee viewed the silence gained from his recent deafness as a gift that has allowed him to truly hear the voice from within. He advised, "Everyday, find an unexpected teacher." Next, Karen Casey honestly described her own personal struggles with addiction and offered us ways to heal our past and live in the present moment.

After breaking for a special listeners' (our worldwide family who listen/view the Center's weekly meetings) dinner with fellow Course students, we returned to a heartfelt presentation by Dick Gayton and Michele Molina. Eleven years ago, Dick relayed his forgiveness story at MDC's International Conference and asked for prayers for Michele's release from prison. One year ago, Michele was granted parole after serving 25 years in prison. For the first time ever, the two were able to join together to talk about their complicated past. Each gave a sincere sharing about what had happened throughout the years and how the gift of forgiveness transformed their lives. The light does come, even to the darkest of places.

The conference closed with two amazing speakers. Bob Rosenthal had fascinating stories to tell about the early days of the Course. As a long time Course student and psychiatrist, Bob described reasons why a person's mind becomes fractured. He discussed many ways to heal a split mind and emphasized the importance of seeing the wholeness (oneness) in everyone. Jacob Glass was the perfect person to present last to ensure that we remember to laugh! Jacob began his talk by saying that he really is only talking to himself and we can listen in. He said, "We are all crazy, but we recognize this more in other people than ourselves. So, once a week, look in the mirror and say: I'm on to you."

All the conference speakers offered much more wisdom than I could possibly summarize here. I will be purchasing the MP3s so I can listen to them all again! So many heart prints!

Our Attendees Share...



Paul, your voice reflects your own deep faith and authenticity and inspires me as well as others. You can switch from very lighthearted to much depth in a heartbeat which makes you especially inspirational.



I am just so grateful to you, the speakers, your staff, and everyone who had a hand in presenting such a wonderful gathering of like minds. For me the conferences get better and more meaningful every year!



This was my first conference on the Course and I would highly recommend it to anyone wanting to connect with the spirit and light within, and with others. I would like to attend more events so please keep me informed. I am a newbie with the Course, but it's like coming home.

The theme, "I am the light of the world" was perfect for the weekend. I believe the participants, including myself, left the conference feeling more enlightened. It was like getting a booster shot of miracles!



Beverly, your insights and discussion on "The light has come" expanded my awareness and receptivity to the light within me. His light became bigger inside me. Thank you. I am so happy that I came to the conference.



Thank you all so much for the wonderful conference! I felt so blessed to be there!



The quality of all the presentations merely reflects the quality of the presenters - such dedicated, sincere, grounded, loving presences. That MDC can continue to attract such people says a lot about the tone Beverly has set all these years, and the behind-the-scenes skills of their staff.

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I felt the speakers were particularly good this year, and I was riveted by Michele and Dick's story of forgiveness Saturday night.

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• Beverly Hutchinson McNeff
• Jerry and Diane Jampolsky
• Lee Jampolsky
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The End

by Jacob Glass

The real world is the symbol that the dream of sin and guilt is over, and God's Son no longer sleeps. His waking eyes perceive the sure reflection of his Father's Love; the certain promise that he is redeemed. (W-p11.8.4:1)

On Christmas Day my favorite musical, "Into the Woods" is being released as a film. I've been recommending the PBS stage version to people for years now, because it is such a lesson in the ways the ego seeks to steal our joy by seducing us into believing stories of special love and fairy tales of searching for things outside of us. Much of the musical is about what happens AFTER the "and they lived happily ever after" part comes. For instance, what if Prince Charming has a wandering eye and finds marriage boring?

Of course, this dismantling of the various fairy tales makes way for learning and understanding what real love is and how life actually works. We see how possessive love almost guarantees we will lose the one we love – how "nice is different than good," and how "no one is alone."

There is a lyric in the show that the witch sings warning us to be careful of that tale we tell because "that is the spell." The words we speak are forever weaving the spell of the world we perceive. The story that each of us tells about our own world is what we will see the evidence of, even if it is flimsy and circumstantial at best. Our words are the spell we cast on ourselves, which is why the Course is always asking us to be more and more diligent about seeing with love, speaking with love, being led by love. It is also why the Course tells us not to seek to change the world, but to change our minds about the world since projection makes perception. Our story causes the way we will experience our world.

At this time in history, there are many who are telling the story that things are worse than they've ever been. Others are telling the story that things are better than

they've ever been. Many go back and forth between the two. Yet they are all stories, stories, stories – woven by the thoughts we entertain and the words we speak. We project our own world into being through some inner version of "Once upon a time..." in which we are the "hero of the dream." Then, the mind goes about gathering up evidence that proves it is right about whatever story it is telling.

For me, the Course is a mystical teaching that reminds us we are all under a very insidious spell. Some of the metaphysicians of the last century taught of the "hypnotism" of the world, and the Course

***"We awaken others only by
BEING AWAKE ourselves."***

simply says we are asleep, caught in what is often experienced as a kind of nightmare. Sleep is a huge theme in fairy tales and fables. Sleeping Beauty, Snow White, even Dorothy in Oz had a spell of sleep cast over her. And what awakens us from this spell is spiritual love – not the "special" kiss of a hunky prince but rather the oceanic impersonal non-attached love that comes through us, but is not of us. It is "love without conflict" that brings us up out of the spell into an awakened moment. And this is the journey – to see how many awakened moments we can experience and then connect together until we spend more and more time in a state where we are not under the spell of the worldly thought system.

And it is our task to awaken one another through love. But what is extremely important to remember is that the way we awaken others is not through our teaching or preaching, not through our good advice

and spiritual ideas, not through our changing them and fixing them and healing them. We awaken others only by BEING AWAKE ourselves. When we are awake and not under the spell, it begins to awaken those around us who are ready to be awakened. This is why when the Buddha was asked if he was a god, or an angel, or a messiah, he simply replied, "No, I am awake."

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus says, "The Kingdom of Heaven is spread out upon the Earth and men do not see it." That is the spell of the ego thought system – hiding the Kingdom in plain sight. The real world is right here, obscured by the spell which keeps us looking for love when there is already love all around us. As we wake up from the spell, we begin to see the Kingdom spread before us, seeing God in everything, for God is now foremost in our minds.

A very efficient way I've found of waking up when I find myself getting caught up in the nightmare again is simply to say, "The End." This realization came when I had reflected on how many times I did not end a "story" when it could have been ended. Perhaps someone said or did some loveless thing – whether it was truly unloving or I just perceived it that way doesn't matter. The realization was that very often I'd continued the story in my mind for many years to come, carrying it around as baggage that was not serving me. Now, I'm learning to catch these things much more quickly so I can stay awake instead of falling back under the spell of separation and specialness. I've come to see that even if someone walks up to me and says, "You are stupid and talentless and have nothing to offer, and besides that, you've gotten old and fat" – I can simply say, "The End" and walk away without ever giving it another thought. Rather than calling everyone I know to repeat the story, and going over it in my head for a

Continued on page 13



May the Past Be Transformed

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

"We can't change the past, but we can transform it. God was there when it happened, and adding this Truth to the memory heals the source of pain. Never again think of any mistake you made without remembering the loving presence of the One Who was there and Who has never judged you."

As I was flipping through Hugh Prather's perpetual flip calendar (see page 14), I was struck by the above thought. It was just what I needed to hear and so I know it will bless you, as well. It gave me such peace to be reminded once again that God is with me always – loving me, not judging me.

As we approach the end of another year, perhaps there were things we wish we had done or handled differently. If we are sitting in anger, guilt, or resentment over the past, maybe it's time for us to allow it to be transformed. Do you really think you were alone in the painful situation or the hurtful act?

God was there. Adding that awareness to our painful memories helps us heal because now we are healing the real source of our hurt: the feeling that we could be separate from God.

The presence of God is like a good friend. We feel so much better when we are able to sit down with a good friend and

talk. The friend doesn't have to say anything – in fact it is probably better when they don't. The fact that they are there listening tells us they love us and care much more than any words.

God is always with us. I have seen that first hand over this past year. There were moments that I felt His presence so strongly. And, other times

when I felt alone. But, was I alone? Or was I just unwilling to experience His love? I can be willing now, though. I can know that God is with me everywhere I go. He is not distant just because I have chosen to distance myself from His love. He simply waits for me to change my mind.

So as we walk through the rest of this holiday season and enter into the New Year, let us remind ourselves who walks with us ... "I walk with God in perfect holiness." As workbook lesson 156 from *A Course in Miracles* tells us:

"Who walks with me?" This question should be asked a thousand times a day, till certainty has ended doubting and established peace. Today let doubting cease. God speaks for you in answering your question with these words: I walk with God in perfect holiness. I light the world, I light my mind and all the minds which God created one with me."

May you feel God's love. And, if you ever doubt, please know that we at the Center are here in loving gratitude for your presence in our lives.



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Emotional Healing

The Echoes of Love

by Richard Gayton, Ph.D.

All day my nose has been snaffled, releasing unmentionables, so I reach for a Kleenex which is a roll of toilet paper in Thailand. This is dual purpose since the end of my digestive tract has signaled changes of a suspicious nature. Yet as a soldier in the campaign against the ego, I press on. I have been studying special love/hate these past few months and last **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** issue I touched on romantic special love. My ego likes special love: it makes me excited, happy, expectant and at one with the universe – for a moment. I would like special love all the time; the right food, the best sex, the perfect sleep, an attractive body, because enough special love adds up to happy satisfaction, right?

When the flagship store of Krispy Kreme was in easy reach of my sugar craving fingers, I bought their hot glazed donuts when the “hot” sign was switched on at the side of the store. I knew it was authentic love when my mouth took the first bite and the second. When I was through five donuts and looking for number six, I made myself stop. After those two minutes of pleasant sensual experience, I always noticed something was missing: enduring, contented joy. If I ate the seventh donut, I would not feel the joy I longed for, and if I ate a dozen, I would become numb to joy. Yet those two minutes were somehow worth it until I discovered that donuts led to double-fried apple fritters at the Cambodian guy’s place and middle-age spread around my waist. Now with senior-citizen spread, even thinking of donuts makes my pants stop fitting.

Sugary food, sex, drugs, and alcohol, and just about any producer of pleasant sensation in the body can give off a faint echo of love – the promise of joy that’s not quite fulfilled. Mistaking the echo of love can lead to addiction for some. Even obsessive thinking can produce the semblance of hope for love’s presence as we have the fantasy of controlling others with thoughts and plans. The grandiosity of God-like thinking can be very pleasant. Who hasn’t felt the satisfaction and exhilaration of seeing everything going right in their lives and feeling “on top of the world”

“Who hasn’t felt the satisfaction and exhilaration of seeing everything going right in their lives and feeling ‘on top of the world’ as plans work out for some important goal if only for a moment?”

as plans work out for some important goal if only for a moment? We feel the echo but after two minutes of faint echo, beats no joy at all – so we must be compassionate for ourselves and others when we show special love attachment to particular sensory experiences – even grandiose thinking. It’s nice to think and make plans but the world has a way of foiling our plans if we are not thinking with God.

I rode to my spiritual meeting today on my bicycle feeling not even a mini echo of love. Several days of amoebic bubonic jungle rot of the lower tract and hanta rat virus/M1A1 infection of the upper one had me “thinking,” and not in a happy way. Mild diarrhea and a common cold were being escalated into a general foreboding and prediction of doom. I knew human contact was perilous when I feel rotten, so I asked Spirit to guide all aspects of my reaction to the meeting. I sat down without major coughing or snarfling and listened to a large, burly, youngish man share. I soon found myself repelled by his not talking with the proper form of “I” statements. After all, I have a well-trained psychological ego. As I relaxed, I could see the young

guy was being fearlessly honest and revealing his struggle to love himself. I was overwhelmed with love for him. My nose and stomach instantly felt better. For many hours after I felt that love – a joy far beyond donuts, and not dependent on everything going well in my body.

That evening my boyfriend made my favorite dish, Thai chili chicken salad, and he had even substituted soy chicken to accommodate my vegetarian leanings. Eating vegetarian will make me live forever. I have this on good authority from the Internet. Sure enough the chicken salad was refreshing and delicious and made by someone I love. Eating with him made it totally satisfying. When I told him of the mild rumblings of my stomach, he gave me that gentle inquiring look that said, “Are you sure eating the chili chicken is a good idea?” I continued to march; after all, I’d served in the Army and I have a very militant ego. No little green vegetable can touch me, after all, veggies will save me from cancer, hemorrhoids and toe fungus. Storm warnings of little gurgles continued. I was winning the nose battle with sprays, pills, quarts of water and even a few minutes of mild aerobics. The Army ego likes the exercise part so it can think we are in control of this illness thing. Yet why did I feel so uneasy?

I tried to meditate. I had been redoing *A Course in Miracles* Workbook in preparation for a film project. The lesson was “God is in everything I see because God is in my mind,” so I began slowly repeating the sentence. I know I cannot do a major film project without God. Without seeing God/love in everything and everyone, I would never complete the project or harm my health and wellbeing trying. Yet I have been out of the big book, big speaking, big TV appearance, big anything business. Nevertheless, I accepted the film assignment, and I choose to radically love whoever I am going to run into and look to

God with every step. This is a universe away from loving donuts, so I will need to get in top spiritual "shape." Can I realize I am only love and nothing else? Can I make no exceptions in loving? I tend to seek God when I run into trouble and reserve Spirit for emergencies. The gravitational pull of my ego's judgment is strong in everyday life.

Suddenly the gurgle has moved from my stomach to lower and small intestine warnings signal an approaching gastrointestinal hurricane. I grab a new roll of TP and trot for the bathroom — as my boyfriend waves. How can I make a feature film? How can I be peaceful with diarrhea? Spirit answers, "You can do anything if you see only love." ✨

Let's Keep It Going

Continued from page 1

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Finding the Light

Continued from page 6

by saying to ourselves:

"I will be very quiet now, and look upon this person as my teacher. Allow the miracle of who I am, Love, to replace my grievances about this person." ✨

The End

Continued from page 10

couple of decades while carefully maintaining a grievance against someone who may have just been having the worst day of his life and didn't really mean a word of it, I can go in the exact opposite direction and say to myself, *"The End, and I lived happily ever after."* ✨

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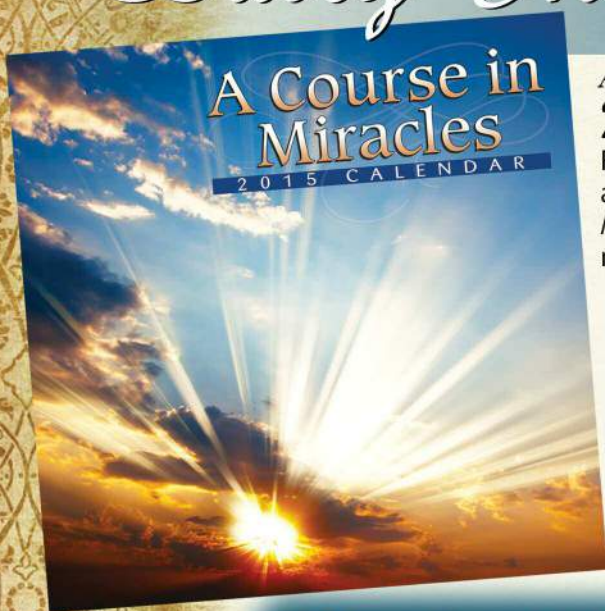
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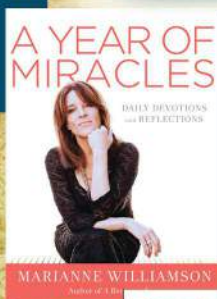
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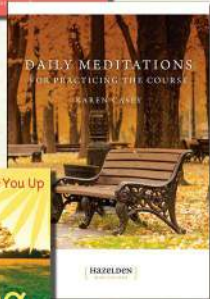
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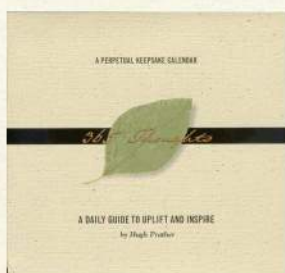
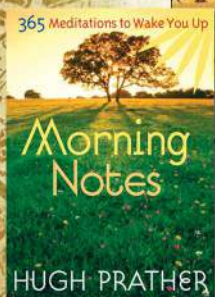


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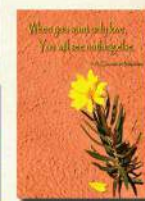


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of *Guideposts Magazine*, beautifully exemplifies, with a holiday theme, the idea that God is always working in our lives even in the face of what seems to be terrible conflict and pain. As you read the following true piece of history, keep in mind this thought from *A Course in Miracles*:

"So do the parts of God's Son gradually join in time, and with each joining is the end of time brought near. Each miracle of joining is a mighty herald of eternity."

(T-20.V.1:5)

Christmas, 1914

The Great War was only a few months old, but already the two sides were deadlocked in the grisly new pattern of trench warfare. Both the British and Germans had learned to shovel miles-long ditches in the rocky French farmland, ditches from which men blasted at one another with machine guns and mortars. In these muddy, rat-infested trenches, British soldiers opened soggy Christmas greetings from their King while a few hundred yards away German troops read a message from the Kaiser.

Between the rows of trenches, where shivering men thought about families at home, lay a barren no-man's-land, a zone of craters and shattered trees where anything that moved was instantly fired at. So narrow was this strip that whenever there was a lull in the roar of the guns, each side could hear the clink of cooking gear from the other.

Late on Christmas Eve, with the sleet tapering off and the temperature dropping, a British Tommy on guard with the Fifth Scottish Rifles heard a different sound drifting across no-man's-land. In the German trenches a man was singing.

"Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht..."

It was a tune the British soldier recognized as "Silent Night, Holy Night." The sentry began to hum along with the melody. Then, louder, he chimed in with the English words, singing an odd duet with his enemy beyond the barbed wire.

"...heilige Nacht...holy night..."

A second British soldier crawled to the sentry station and joined in. Little by little others on both sides picked up the song,

blending their rough voices across the shell-pocked landscape. The Germans broke out with a second carol, "O Tannenbaum," and the British replied with "God Rest You Merry, Gentlemen." On and on the antiphonal singing went. A British soldier with binoculars reported that the Germans had hoisted a ragged evergreen with lighted candles in the branches to the top of the sandbag barrier. As dawn of Christmas day broke, signs appeared on both sides, in two languages: "Merry Christmas."

Pulled by a force stronger than fear, one by one the soldiers started laying down their arms, creeping beneath barbed wire and around mortar holes into no-man's-land. At first it was just a few men, then more and more, until scores of British and German troops met together in the first light of Christmas day. The boys brought out photographs of mothers and wives, exchanged gifts of candy and cigarettes. Someone produced a soccer ball and the men played on a few yards of crater-free ground.

Then the Soldier's truce was over.

By mid-morning Christmas day, horrified officers had summoned their men back to the trenches; firing had recom-

menced. Within hours the Fifth Scottish Rifles issued an order forbidding such contact: "We are here to fight, not to fraternize."

And the soldiers obeyed. The war, as history tragically records, destroyed almost that entire generation of young men on both sides. But there was an indelible memory in the minds of those who lived to recall that first Christmas at the front. The memory of a few hours when their master had been neither King nor Kaiser, but the Prince of Peace.*

No matter the conflict that may be raging in your life, take a moment to withdraw your loyalty from the ego's world and allow the Prince of Peace to be born into your awareness. Even if it is only for a moment, ask the Holy Spirit to be your eyes, your tongue, your hands, your feet, so that your one purpose may be to bless the world with miracles of peace. (Lesson 353 paraphrased)

God bless you, dear friends, on your journey of peace and joining this holiday season. ✨

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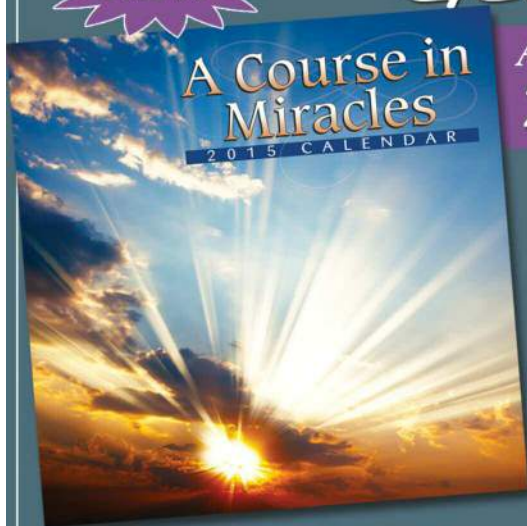
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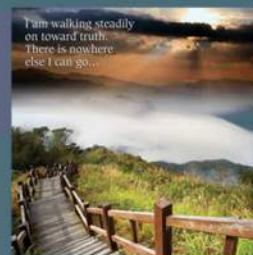
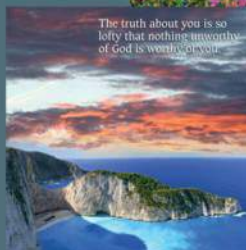
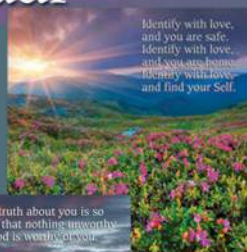
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