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The HOLY ENCOUNTER



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2015

A Miracle Distribution Center Publication

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



Walking Steadily on Toward Truth

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

I recently ran across a report by the prestigious Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life which found that it is not the so-called faithful who are better informed about faith, but rather the atheists and agnostics. Why, you may wonder? According to those findings, atheists and agnostics are not simply heretics and non-believers, but instead educated, thoughtful people who have probably had a religious tradition and consciously gave it up, often after a great deal of personal reflection. According to researchers, "These are people who have thought a lot about religion. They're not indifferent. They care about it."

On the flip side, the study found that in the case of Christians (who fared far worse in their knowledge), many accept their faith to be true and simply stop examining it. Therefore, because they think it is true, they don't examine other people's faiths or even their own. "That, I think, is not healthy for a person of any faith," said professor of religion at Boston University, Stephen Prothero.

I personally find these surveys to be interesting in what they show us about ourselves. When I heard of this survey's results, they made tremendous sense to me. I have had friends who have stated

that they were atheist or agnostic, and they are people who have struggled to understand God and explored many of the main-line religions, only to find them wanting.

The scribe of *A Course in Miracles*, Helen Schucman, was a self-proclaimed "militant" atheist, and yet her devotion to God and her service to the Course are self-evident. The stories of Helen's struggle

with God are legendary, and, frankly, do not diminish my faith in the Course, but rather strengthen it.

In the Course we don't find a jealous or vicious God who expects blind loyalty,

but a God "big enough" to be questioned and scrutinized because there is nothing to hide or protect. The Course states "In my defenselessness my safety lies", and the "God" of the Course is the personification of that truth.

The famous 18th century French philosopher Voltaire said, "If God created us in his own image, we have more than reciprocated." We have made God as limited, hateful and fearful as we see ourselves and yet, according to the

"The famous 18th century French philosopher Voltaire said, 'If God created us in his own image, we have more than reciprocated.'"



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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.

A Campaign that Counts!

Your responses to our 2015 fundraising appeal have just begun arriving 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. With that in mind, our recent letter included a hand-picked card from the new Insight from *A Course in Miracles* boxed set as a thank you.

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. You may use the special return envelope you received with this year's fundraiser, the envelope bound inside every issue of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**, or the donation link at www.miraclecenter.org. We are deeply grateful for your support. ✧

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

● **Thank you, Steve!** This past September a longtime, behind-the-scenes helper of Miracle Distribution Center retired. Steve Doolittle had been a part of the Center's life since the late 1980s, serving at times as a volunteer, board member, consultant, and always a friend. In the early 1990s Steve donated his time to create a custom database for our work. In the late '90's he designed our first website, at a time when many major corporations had yet to venture into the new thing known as the "World Wide Web." In 1998 he live-blogged our first International Conference and presented audio clips to more than 20,000 people around the world, live! Over the past twenty-five years, Steve has been a part of all of the Center's technological advances up to and including the live streaming of this year's conference. We are grateful to Steve for his loving service, and we wish him and his husband Joe the best as they begin their journey of retirement.



● **FREE Holiday ACIM** e-Cards – Share a thought from the Course electronically with friends and family this holiday season! We have come up with a variety of beautiful, full color e-cards with poignant Course quotes for Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's. Try sending one out, it's **easy and FREE!** Simply go to www.miraclecenter.org and click on e-cards and start sending your miracles!

● **Daily Lesson Email** – is a great way to keep your Workbook Lesson from the Course by your side. Each day this email service sends you your Course lesson for the day, automatically. During the quick sign-up process, simply indicate the lesson on which you'd like to begin. On each succeeding day you will automatically receive the next lesson. The daily messages

can be read on your smartphone, tablet, or home computer. Each email includes the lesson title in an attractive graphic. Directly below it, a link will lead you to the entire lesson. You may start and stop at any time and even reset the number on which to begin. Go to www.miraclecenter.org to learn more and to sign up and start receiving your miracles!

● **"Thanks for all of your wonderful projects, and services like: the daily lesson e-mail, live streaming of your lessons, THE HOLY ENCOUNTER magazine, etc. We do not feel alone but know you as close friends, a union of minds so close and loving."** We want to thank Antoinette in Springdale, Arizona for her loving support. Since 1978, MDC has been here to help students in their journey with the Course... and we're still here! In the world of time, nearly 38 years is a long time. It's because of supporters like Antoinette and you that we are here to support your understanding and study of the Course. Make sure you check out all our services on our website www.miraclecenter.org. Things are always being added but you can also find favorites, like: our worldwide study group map, ACIM lookup, video archive samples, articles from **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**, and so much more!

● **Streaming to the world weekly!** Each week MDC's *A Course in Miracles* study group meeting is live streamed to the world, for free. During a recent month, we welcomed viewers from all 50 U.S. states and 36 countries. Were you one of them? Tune in Wednesday evenings at 7pm pacific time to study the Course with Beverly Hutchinson McNeff and our worldwide family of in-person attendees and viewers from afar as they share their successes and

their challenges applying Course principles to their lives. Find the broadcast link on our home page at www.miraclecenter.org

● **Join us in Florida** – Our next **Holy Encounter Weekend** is scheduled for **April 8-9, 2016** in **St. Petersburg, Florida**. These weekends are our opportunity to travel to other parts of the country to share the healing, practical message of the Course. MDC founder and student of the Course since 1977, Beverly Hutchinson McNeff, presents these weekend intensives that serve as a great introduction to new students, as well as a jumpstart for longtime students. Go to our website at www.miraclecenter.org or give the Center a call at **1-800-359-2246**. See page 14 for more details.

● **"This Christmas give the Holy Spirit everything that would hurt you. Let yourself be healed completely that you may join with Him in healing, and let us celebrate our release together by releasing everyone with us."** (T15.XI.3) Let us celebrate this holiday season by the true extension of love: release! Let us join in healing for all our brothers and the world by lifting the veil of judgment and guilt we have placed upon it. The world can be born anew, we can be born anew as we allow ourselves to be healed by extending that healing. We invite you to join with us each day at **4:30pm**

(Pacific Time) for a moment of prayerful support through our prayer ministry to extend this healing. We invite you to join with us for yourself and your loved ones. If you have a prayer request,

please send it to us. Affirmations for:

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

December: "I rest in God." (L109)

January: "I am the holy Son of God Himself." (L191)



Miracle Musings...

Piercing the Darkness

by Paul McNeff

Our son, Jeffrey, turned seventeen in September. I can't believe it! It seems like it was just yesterday I was holding his little hand as he crossed the street, and now his hands are bigger than mine! No matter how big he gets, he will still be the boy who filled and continues to fill me with unconditional love and new understanding.

As I was thinking about all that Jeff has brought to Beverly's and my life, I remembered an evening long ago when I was driving home from a video store — see how long ago that was! I recalled peering into the rear-facing mirror that gave me a panoramic view of the backseat of my van. It was so dark I could not see my little boy sitting in his car seat, but I knew Jeffrey was there. I remember the insight I got in that moment like it was yesterday. I knew he was there but not seen; I felt so much love for him; I knew in my heart there was nothing I would not do for him. It was an epiphany, a holy instant that brought me to tears. I thought of how we all feel in darkness at times — alone, frightened and unsure. And yet there is never a time or place when God is not all around us — protecting us and loving us. There is nothing God would not do for us, just as there is nothing I would not do for my little boy. God's love became so real to me in that instant. The "darkness" of life will never have the same touch on me again, for I have experienced the "light".

"The sign of Christmas is a star, a light in darkness. See it not outside yourself, but shining in the Heaven within, and accept it as the sign the time of Christ has come." (T-15.XI.2)

This awareness, this miracle has continued to touch me deeply and made me think of how *A Course in Miracles* talks about the meaning of Christmas as a light (an awareness in our minds) that pierces the darkness (the illusions of our lives) and reminds us Christ is here with us, "Christ has come." Christmas can be for us a symbolic time of embracing God's incredible love for us that goes beyond seasons, time or the seeming impenetrable darkness of life.

I began to think about what seems to be the impenetrable darkness of life. What situations seem impossible to solve? What illness seems beyond healing? What limitation have we evaluated as fact? These situations show us no hope or possibility only because we look at them from the world's perspective, a perspective of limit, lack, fear and loss. The world according to the Course was not made to support your healing or growth — the contrary. However, our experiences in the world can be transformed if we allow the "sign of Christmas... a star... a light in darkness" to come shining in.

When I think about the Christmas story from the Bible, I am reminded of how all the characters in the story felt like they were in darkness. Think of Mary. A young woman who found herself unmarried and pregnant telling her fiancé that her unborn baby was God's. Then there's Joseph. Imagine his quandary. He must have felt lost at times not knowing what to do. If Mary had been "fooling around" with some other guy, then Joseph was a real "sap" to be marrying her. But if this really was God's child that he was to raise, was he really ready for the responsibility? How was

he to be certain?

Then we have those wise men wandering through the world following — of all things — a star! Talk about walking in the darkness; they could only really find their way at night and they really weren't sure what they were going to find! And finally you have the shepherds. There they were, quietly minding their own business, maybe even sleeping, when an angel appears from out of the darkness announcing the birth of Jesus. Talk about a wake-up call!

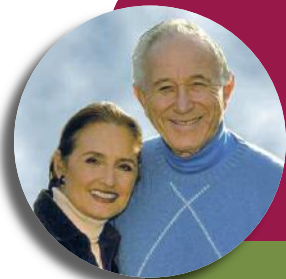
All of these characters in this story found themselves in the darkness of the world, and in each case, the light, the Christ, the awareness of God, pierced the darkness and transformed their lives with love. Did they welcome the light, the awareness? In the beginning, probably not. They were comfortable in their darkness, in their illusions. But there was a part of them, the part we all share; the presence of Christ that helped them to awaken to the truth and realize that whatever situation was before them, they were capable to handle. Capable to handle because they would not be handling it alone — God was with them.

How do we do it today? We feel lost at times in the darkness of a world that seems to be changing so fast we can hardly keep up. It may not seem like the "simple life" of the good old days, but the answer is still the same as in the good old days, the simple answer is love. Love for each other, love of God, just love.

Christmas time (whether you celebrate the holiday or not) is a time to remember love, to remember kindness, to extend peace on earth and in our lives. It is not hard to do because we do not do the "doing." We are only asked to let it be done through us. And, that is enough of a job for us. For us to be willing to let God's love come shining through us — to let Him into

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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



Change Your Mind Change Your Life

Children as Teachers of Love

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

We are all teachers and students to each other. Throughout our forty years of working with *A Course in Miracles*' principles and Attitudinal Healing, we have met many children who were our teachers and touched our hearts in a very deep way.

Paul Johansen was eleven years old when I, Jerry, first met him. A few months earlier he was critically ill in the hospital, dying of cancer. Everyone thought he would die within a day, as he was emaciated from not eating and in a very deep sleep. All of a sudden he awakened and seemed alert. Then, to everyone's surprise, he asked for a Big Mac from McDonald's.

He later told us about a vivid dream he had in which he was having a conversation with God. He told God

he knew he did not have much longer to live, but he had more people to help and would like a little more time to do just that. Paul told us God agreed to let him stay on earth a little while longer. He began to gain weight and feel better about himself.

It was about this time that I received a phone call from Paul's parents, Barbara and John. They had heard about our work with children with cancer and asked for our help. They lived in Connecticut. I told them I was going to give a lecture few days later in New York City at Columbia University Medical Center. My lecture was scheduled for the afternoon, but I could visit with Paul in the morning at a restaurant near their home.

Paul and I immediately clicked and developed a great relationship. I decided to ask him for his help. I asked him if he would be willing to help me by sharing his

story with the audience at my lecture at Columbia that afternoon. He said, "Sure Jerry. I am willing to help you." The officials at the Medical Center said Paul could not participate during the body of my talk, but he was welcome to say some words during the question-and-answer section at the end of the lecture.

One of the questions was from an oncologist who asked Paul, "How does it feel to know you will die in a short period of time?"

Paul was not upset by the question and with great calmness replied, "You need to know I have accepted I am here for just a short period of time.

I have accepted this, and I want to do my best to help other kids who are facing similar challenges — and that makes me happy. And by the way, doctor, you do not know when you

will die; you might be killed by a truck that runs into you. But I have had time to prepare."

I do not think those physicians had ever had an opportunity to hear an eleven-year-old speak directly from the heart about what he was going through at this stage near the end of his life. After the lecture, many people came up to thank Paul and me for being there. Nearly everyone said his presence was the best part of the program.

I continued to talk to Paul frequently and, inspired by his story of wanting to help other kids, I started a free telephone network so kids could speak to and help each other.

I remember pairing Paul with a boy about his age named Tony. He had serious cancer of the leg which later proved fatal. They spent a lot of time on the phone sharing corny jokes, and they laughed a lot. But most of all, they helped each other by listening with love and compassion and experiencing a sense of oneness in their common situation of facing the potential end of their lives at such a young age.

I remember a period of time when Paul got depressed. I told him I thought he needed to come out to California where he could help some of my friends, kids his age, who also had cancer. He agreed and flew out and met me in Los Angeles. He was amazing and very helpful as he openly shared some of his philosophy about living and possibly dying with this disease. He and his family then flew up to San Francisco. Paul was able to attend a couple of our support groups at the Center for Attitudinal Healing. He was happy to meet a lot of kids who also had cancer and no hair from chemotherapy, just like him.

That day, a man named John Robinson donated his limousine for the kids' use for the afternoon. They all chose to go to

McDonalds. It must have been some sight seeing several kids, most of whom were bald, hop out of the limo and order Big Macs to go! I never had so much fun as I did, cleaning up their mess in the limo after they left and feeling so good about the happiness they experienced that day.

Shortly thereafter, I received a call from Morley

Safer of CBS's *60 Minutes*. He wanted to talk to me about our work with children and adults with life-threatening illnesses at the Center. He decided the very next day to come out and film us.



Jerry on 60 Minutes in 1979

Gerald Jampolsky, M.D. and Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky, Ph.D., international lecturers and bestselling authors, share their insights and experiences in applying the principles of *A Course in Miracles* in our world. Diane's therapeutic counseling practice specializes in applying ACIM to all aspects and situations in life. Their books are available at www.miraclecenter.org

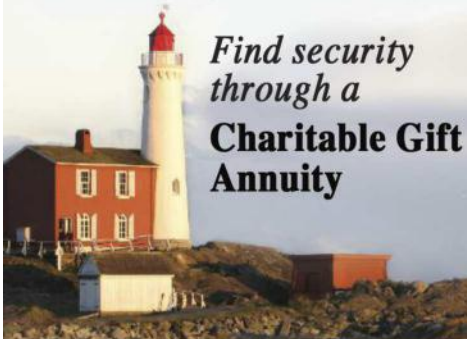
I mentioned to Morley that Paul and Tony were helping each other through our telephone network, and he might be interested in helping them. The program he produced included both boys helping each other.

I found it especially fascinating that this particular episode of *60 Minutes* was shown in Australia, Germany, and Russia. Millions of people were able to see Paul, to feel his heart and his courage. When Paul told God he wanted a little more time on earth to help others, he had no idea he would be on national television sharing his story with the world.

Paul died a short time later.

One of the joys of being involved with the various groups of Attitudinal Healing around the world is that we have been able to keep in close contact with many families after a loved one has passed on. Paul's family remains part of our own. ✧

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An Angle on Angels

A few years back *Time* magazine ran a cover story on angels proclaiming, "69% of Americans believe that angels exist. What in heaven is going on?" The article went on to share the growing interest people had in these celestial beings and related experiences people said they had with them.

We thought our readers might be interested in what *A Course in Miracles* has to say about angels, so we did a computer search to find the nine places where angels are referred to in a context that describes the Course's approach to them. They follow...

"Your newborn purpose is nursed by angels, cherished by the Holy Spirit and protected by God Himself." (T19.IV.9:4)

"Watch with me, angels, watch with me today. Let all God's holy Thoughts surround me, and be still with me while Heaven's Son is born." (W303.1:1)

"My treasure house is full, and angels watch its open doors that not one gift is lost, and only more are added." (W316.1:4)

"You do not walk alone. God's angels hover near and all about. His Love surrounds you, and of this be sure; that I will never leave you comfortless." (Epilogue to Workbook 6:6)



"Say His (God's) Name, and you invite the angels to surround the ground on which you stand, and sing to you as they spread out their wings to keep you safe, and shelter you from every worldly thought that would intrude upon your holiness." (W183.2:2)

"This do the body's eyes behold (a symbol of fear, justified to attack) in one (your brother) whom Heaven cherishes, the angels love and God created perfect." (W161.9:1)

"Angels light the way; so that all darkness vanishes, and you are standing in a light so bright and clear that you can understand all things you see." (W131.13:2)

"He will not leave you comfortless, nor fail to send His angels down to answer you in His Own Name." (The Song of Prayer 2.III.7:5)

"Around you angels hover lovingly, to keep away all darkened thoughts of sin, and keep the light where it has entered in." (T26.IX.7:1)

Although the Course's poetic and colorful description of angels gives them a form-like feel, it should never be forgotten that the Course emphasizes the content of our experiences and not the form. You can draw from the Course that angels really are the thoughts of God. In other words, the beautiful way the Course speaks of angels is another way of reminding us that God's love, help and care for us is infinite and is with us forever.



Recognizing Spirit

Finding the Silver Lining in Life's Toughest Health Challenges: *Eleven Principles to Help you Heal*

by Dr. Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

A *Course in Miracles* students may have confusion about how to deal with physical illness. Certainly it is much easier to see the body as an illusion when we are not in pain or facing tough physical challenges. It is important during challenging times to consider what you can do to bring yourself into a peaceful frame of mind and get in touch with your true identity, your inner wisdom, God.

My development of Inspirational Psychology has within it a *Saying Yes to Life* approach with key principles, based on the Course, that bring healing (i.e. letting go of fear) to people struggling with even the most catastrophic of situations. Some of the principles may not make immediate sense, or may even challenge your present thinking. On the other hand, some of the principles may ring true for you, calling to your inner wisdom. Even if you currently find yourself confused, anxious, and afraid, there is a part of you that is ripe for healing and for growing from what is happening in your life today.

The Principles of the *Saying Yes to Life* Approach

1. You may not have consciously chosen what is happening to your body, but you can choose how you respond.

One of the most important things we can ever learn is the connection between our thinking and our health. Think of health as not only referring to the state of the body, but also the state of the mind, which affects the body. Instead of ruining our lives, it is possible that health challenges may actually enhance our days, no matter how many or how few days we have left.

We each have the choice between only suffering through a health challenge and growing into a better person because of it. Remember this: In life only two things can happen each day and one of them will:

- a) One day you will wake up knowing it is your last day.
- b) One day you will wake up *not* knowing it is your last day.

If you assume "b" will happen, but live each day as if "a" is today, your life will be much richer.

2. Becoming less focused on the past and future is how to overcome fear, physical pain, stress, and all suffering.

There is a deep connection between our health and how much stress and upset we have in our lives, or, put more positively, how much we choose to experience the calming effects of love in our lives. What

keeps us from saying yes to life when our body says no is always fear. It comes in many forms, disguises, and textures – fear of loss, fear of pain, fear of how our situation will affect our loved ones. Today a quieter realization can come, one that says; "This does not have to mean the end or lead only to a difficult existence. I can become a better person from this." Remember, health can be defined as an extension of inner peace, and healing is about letting go of fear and returning to the core of who you are – nothing more and nothing less.

3. You can learn to direct yourself to be peaceful inside regardless of what is happening with your body or life situation.

Your power to heal yourself is really the ability to develop a state of mind in which

you can let go of fear and discover love more fully. Fear keeps us from our inner wisdom during a health challenge, telling us we are nothing more than our bodies and that full healing is unreachable to us. You may not have chosen what is happening to your body, but you can choose what attitude and beliefs you respond with. Learning to love more deeply, becoming kinder, and finding inner peace is possible no matter how horrific the situation. Remember, no matter how sick your body is, extending love – that power greater than ourselves – as well as compassion and empathy, to ourselves and others, will reduce your suffering and aid in healing.

4. You can learn from your health challenge and become a better human being.

You likely have more information about what to do with your car or dishwasher when it breaks than how to deal psychologically, spiritually, and emotionally with a health challenge and all its implications. You may have not consciously chosen your physical situation, but you can choose how you respond, what you learn, how you are with other people, and how you live each day. Do not make the mistake of thinking physical health is all you need in order to be happy, or that without physical health, you cannot have the outlook and attitude vibrant love can bring. A miracle has occurred when something that was causing us upset and conflict is transformed into something that deepens our experience of growth, healing, love, and meaning. This miracle can happen today.

5. You can learn to focus on the whole of life rather than the symptoms of your physical condition.

If we watch our mind and emotions, we'll see what makes us afraid and ineffective is not our physical condition or our emotions themselves, but the commentary our inner critic (the part of our mind that

"One of the most important things we can ever learn is the connection between our thinking and our health."

always tells us what you should be doing) adds to the situation. Most suffering is caused not by the situation, but by resistance to what is happening and the over-focus on the symptoms. Regardless of what change is occurring, we can focus on the whole of life and love more deeply than ever. Regardless of your situation, level of pain, or worries, consider making this statement: I am committed to saying calmly, no matter what my physical situation, "Thank you for today and the opportunity to love more deeply." If you find yourself suffering at all, remember this: When we focus less on our own symptoms and condition and surrender to the act of selflessly giving to another being, our suffering is greatly reduced and replaced by a sense of peace of mind.

6. Your health challenge is not the source of your upset; your thoughts and beliefs about it are.

If left to its own devices during a health challenge, your mind will default to fear-based thinking. It is always this way. It would be nice if human consciousness were not this way, and that during a health challenge your mind would automatically abandon fear-based thinking for only healing thoughts, but in fact, the opposite is the case, unless we very consciously and consistently choose otherwise. Despite what many self-help books may say, employing only a program of positive thinking never really works in a lasting way. The truth is that we need to learn how to observe and be aware of all of our thoughts and decide if they are true or not, which is much different from trying to have only positive thoughts. During a health challenge, questions are not bad, and many are very important to ask. But if all we do is ask questions, we are probably, to some degree, resisting what is happening to us. Resistance always creates an internal conflict. There are times that a statement to yourself such as "This is happening and I accept that it is," is more important than an endless series of questions.

7. You are free to choose how you feel and react, and you have the ability to respond in a growth-oriented direction.

We have the tendency to fight the current of our life – to curse it, to try to change the course of it, to panic in it, fear

it, and to try to avoid it. There is another way of being. The earlier we begin to realize our inner peace has nothing to do with outer circumstances or even the condition of our body, the sooner we will begin healing instead of suffering. Many people wait for religion, a new teacher, minister, guru, or a trip to a sacred place to

have spiritual awakening. But if we are ready to awaken to who we are, the tube of the CT scan, or the room where we receive chemotherapy, or the place we are at this very moment, can become the altar where we discover the core of who we are. It would be tragic to have your health

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Share a Miracle Let Me Remember

by Lyn Alais

This column shares the everyday "miracles" or, as *A Course in Miracles* says, the "shifts in our perception" that are constantly taking place in our lives to remind us of our unity and love. We invite readers to share their "miracles" with us.

I hadn't intended to ask for a miracle when I called Miracle Distribution Center (MDC), but that's exactly what I experienced. I had called to tell them I had just started a new job as a barber I couldn't make it to this year's *Let Me Remember* conference, but I'd like to sign up to watch it via live stream.

As Tess (who is MDC's secretary) was taking my credit card information and we're casually chatting, I suddenly blurted out the truth. I'm at this new job as we're speaking and I'm having horrible panic and fear. I haven't worked in seven years (I've been at home raising my two daughters) and now I'm feeling totally incompetent and having a confidence crisis. Quite frankly, I'm ready to give them my whole paycheck, if they will just let me run home and never come back before I really mess up!

Well, long story short, I find out Tess is also a licensed hair dresser and, like me, has been out of the business for some years, while raising her two daughters.

She relates with great empathy to being a "Nervous Nelly" about this, and she had some practical and spiritual advice for me.

As you might imagine, by the time I was off the phone, I felt as though I had just received a miracle. And indeed I had! My mind had shifted from despair to great relief. Most importantly, I didn't

feel alone.

The fact that MDC makes it possible for Tess to have a job where she answers the phone and can be of service to students of the Course is a

blessing. I couldn't have received a miracle like this from an answering machine with a menu of options.

God bless you, Tess, and everyone at MDC, and all the Course students around the world who support MDC so the Center can continue to be such a valuable service for all of us!

By the way, things are going well at the new job. I may never be a powerhouse of self confidence, but sometimes I'm open to miracles, and that's as good as it gets.



"As Tess was taking my credit card information and we're casually chatting, I suddenly blurted out the truth."

In 1999, *A Course in Miracles* thankfully appeared in Lyn's life, when she was in the midst and among the chaos of raising two little girls! Shortly after she discovered Miracle Distribution and has been a heavy user and supporter of the Center ever since. She lives in Seattle, WA with her family, works as a barber, and is an under-cover miracle worker!



Monica Pelayo joins us from Spain

MDC's International Conference on A Course in Miracles

This year's international conference on A Course in Miracles, "Let me remember I am one with God," created an environment for students to celebrate and commemorate the 50th anniversary of the birth of the Course and to see how this powerful story and message are transforming our lives today.

The weekend began with a video from MDC's archives of the Course's co-scribe, Bill Thetford, inviting us to join him in remembering how the Course came about. This was followed by MDC's co-founder Beverly Hutchinson McNeff sharing stories and insights into those early days and how that brought about the establishing of Miracle Distribution Center. Within her presentation was a moving video of Bill Thetford reading the well-known introduction to the Course's Text. Another touching moment was the introduction of Beverly's brother (and co-founder of MDC) Richard Hutchinson and his wife, Ann.

The day continued with the sharings of Jon Mundy, Carol Howe, Richard Smoley, and lunch, during which MDC's world-wide study group family members were able to break bread together.

Marianne Williamson ended the day on a perfect note, bringing together history and the healing power of the Course to touch our lives in a meaningful way.

The next day, Tamara Morgan (daughter of Judith Skutch Whitson and Vice President of Communications of the Foundation for Inner Peace) introduced a video produced exclusively for this event consisting of archival images accompanied by one of Bill Thetford's favorite pieces of music from Mozart's, "The Magic Flute." Tam (wearing Helen Schucman's skirt), sharing her personal reflections on the Course's influence in the early days, mesmerized the audience. Her presentation made us feel the human side of those significant players in the Course's history.

Finally, it was appropriate to end the conference with Jacob Glass who gave us a chance to heal the world through laughter.

This historic event was an important landmark and well worth experiencing. These types of events inspire us to make the commitment for healing, but we must make the dedication to use this material daily, in the most challenging of times, if this history is to mean anything. It's exciting to see that many are ready to do just that after experiencing these gatherings, as you will find from these comments.

Dear Beverly and MDC Family,

I just want to extend my appreciation for the recent MDC "Let Me Remember" international conference. I am so grateful that I was able to attend in person. Live streaming and listening are great, but there is nothing like connecting in person.

I enjoyed all of the presenters and learned something from each of them. Listening to favorite authors and teachers Jon Mundy, Marianne Williamson, Jacob Glass and all of the others was amazing, inspiring. Tamara's presentation with some of the history of the past 50 years of ACIM was great. I also very much enjoyed connecting with people in the conference room, the lobby and around the hotel. Each conversation was enlightening and fun. Connecting with Sandy who I met at the retreat last February was wonderful.

A friend who attends my new local A Course in Miracles study group asked me what I thought was my highlight of the weekend. There was no hesitation when I told her the HIGHLIGHT of my weekend was being present with Beverly and Paul all of the MDC staff and, ESPECIALLY, meeting the people who attend the weekly Wednesday MDC study group. Sharing hugs and conversations with each of you made my spirit soar - Holy Encounters, Miracles, and WOW!

It was so good to be able to share with each of you that your showing up and sharing in the group has helped me so much in my understanding of ACIM and in my spiritual growth. So here's to each and every one of you - Paul, Terri, Connie, Bud, Ron, Marilyn, Holly, Karen, Taraneh, Chris, Bobby, Frank, Holly, Daniella, Frank, Tess, Maria, Darin, Sandy, Jeffrey, and anyone I might have missed, and, of course, our wonderful Beverly ---- THANK YOU.

Please know that as I watch the live stream each week, I send love and prayers and gratitude to you and all the others who show up or stream or listen. See you Wednesday night!

Love and Blessings for all,
Sandy, Bellingham, Washington

Marianne joins Beverly & her brother, Richard and his wife Ann



It's not too late!
Presentations of all of this year's conference speakers are available on CD or Mp3! See the back page or our website for details.

Hi Beverly,

Thank you to YOU and MDC for presenting a most wonderful 50th Anniversary of ACIM and MDC Conference!!! Beverly, you are incredible in your knowledge and interpretation of the Course. Paul did a wonderful job of taking care of all of us and creating beautiful music. Jeffrey did a terrific job at sound and lighting.

It was terrific to meet the Wednesday night study group, as I've only heard their voices on CD for years in my car and to finally put faces to the voices. What a great group of people!

All the speakers were terrific and brought home the importance of staying true to one's true Self, forgiveness and finding strength through the Holy Spirit. Tamara Morgan's stories, with photos of the beginning of the Course with the original group with Helen, Bill, Ken and Carol was fascinating. I had no idea they were just regular people with issues like us. I loved how she shared the history with a wonderful sense of humor.

All the speakers were incredible. It was perfect to finish the weekend with Jacob Glass, and his Crabby Angels, with loads of laughter - reminding us to remember to laugh, to stay in joy and to remain in Lightness. The End.

With lots of Love and gratefulness,
Jennifer, Hillsborough, California

Tam Morgan shares insights wearing Helen Schucman's skirt



Dear Beverly, Paul and everyone at MDC,

I had to write to tell you how much I appreciated the wonderful Conference you all put together. The speakers were terrific and inspiring (and, of course, Jacob was as funny as ever), the hotel was great, and I met some of the most wonderful people. New people and also it was like a reunion for me to meet all the people I see weekly -- especially to see Chris and Taraneh again. I am very grateful I listened to that still small voice that said "Go". I didn't think that financially I could afford to go when I booked the trip, but I just felt that Holy Spirit was saying it was okay and, what do you know?? The week before the conference, money came to me that covered the cost of the conference. Always, amazing blessings!!

On the 50th anniversary of the Course, it was really powerful to hear the history and meet some of the people who were there to witness the beginning of something so life-changing for so many people. It makes one feel like we are really the second generation to help carry the message and be a teacher for God.... a light into the world. I am so happy to have met you and Paul and I am grateful for all the work you do to bring us A Course in Miracles each week and for the daily support with the lessons and prayer ministry... Thanks and gratitude goes to your brother, too!!

Blessings to you all...
Kay, Scottsdale, Arizona



Linda, Beverly, Chris & Taraneh share a smile



Jacob Glass and Tam Morgan.



Beverly and Carol Howe



Jennifer, part of MDC's worldwide family shares at Listeners' Lunch.

MDC's Study Group listeners... Sandy from Washington, and Kay from Arizona along with Beverly





Share a Miracle

The Power of Joining

by Greta Cowie

Editor's Note: The following post appeared on MDC's study group message board. This board is available for those who subscribe to our weekly meetings via CD, mp3 and live streaming. I have found this board to be a wonderful support and extension of the principles of *A Course in Miracles*. It's a safe place to share miracles and challenges and to see how others respond with such love and support. I hope you will enjoy the following message from Greta who listens in Australia. It brought me to tears of joy.

"This Christmas give the Holy Spirit everything that would hurt you. Let yourself be healed completely that you may join with Him in healing, and let us celebrate our release together by releasing everyone with us." (T-15.XI.3)

MDC meetings have helped even more as we go through the text and the lessons.

This year I shall enjoy Christmas, the New Year, and Australia Day on 26th January. My heart is lighter as I realize he is

not really dead, even though his beautiful body is gone forever.

I love you one and all, and especially Jesus who gave us his Course.



Dear MDC Family,
I was reflecting on what Deb and Doris said on the listener board, and I realized that this is my first Christmas as an ACIM student. It sure has made a big difference to my life.

Each year up until now I have been miserable inside during the whole Christmas and New Year season right up until 27th January when the load inside became lighter. Each year I remembered that my youngest son Damion was always the one who loved to decorate the Christmas tree with me when he was a child, and all the love and merriment he gave us through his effervescent personality. Each New Year before 1992 I eagerly anticipated the coming year and every Australia Day my heart was happy because it was also Damion's birthday.

In June 1992, along with four ship-mates, he was lost at sea in shark-filled waters and each Christmas since has been a time of mourning for me. I made Christmas dinner and exchanged gifts for the sake of my other children. But, I've never put up a Christmas tree or decorated the house or put up Christmas lights outside because my heart felt dead. Every Australia Day, I wept inside for my lost son.

But the Course has changed all that. I've realized that although Damion's body is gone, his real Self is still as God created him. His essence is still alive. The recent

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"Bev's knowledge of the Course and all of her explanations are wonderful. I'm so glad you have the archives available of the classes, as seeing her when she teaches is so much more effective and enjoyable for me. And I can watch the class when it's convenient for me, too."

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A Year of Unlearning

by Sharon Head

"You are not at peace because you are not fulfilling your function." (T-4.1.9:4)

What does that mean? I have been asking that question a lot since the beginning of the current school year when I recommitted myself to a daily practice of reading the lessons from *A Course in Miracles*, attempting to practice what I found there. I did not know how quickly and radically this practice would bring about a shift in my teaching/ learning life.

I am a second-career teacher who entered the field with a love for working with children and an illusion I could "fix" school so it worked better for all students. My practice of *A Course in Miracles* is helping me to clear away this illusion and all of the other illusions that prevent me from being present and truly helpful. The Course reminds me of the moment-by-moment choice I get to make. Do I want to express love or block it? Do I choose reason or insanity, timelessness or drudgery?

The Course tells me I am the Kingdom of Heaven. Where is this Heaven? It's within every single conversation and interaction. It's in the moment I step in to provide direct assistance to a student. It's in the often more-important moment when I choose attentive inaction to allow a child to learn from a mistake. When I am tired and overwhelmed and school is the last place on earth I want to be, Heaven is in the hallway. Heaven is in every mindful step toward my toughest group – math class with 5th grade boys who hate math and who will try any/every behavior to avoid the work. Heaven is in my gentle, solid hand on the back of a first grader who needs a quick reminder to help her quiet her body and brain. Heaven is in the spark of "got

it!" when practicing multiplication facts. Heaven is in the tears or head down on the desk when my words/actions have failed to connect. Heaven is in the writing of these words that help me to reflect and rest. And Heaven will be in the steps I, one day, take away from students, away from public schools, once and for all.

I didn't know it when I decided to become a teacher, but I now believe I have had to "work out" my own early experiences in schools. I have gone from being a first grader with deep-seated, nail-biting

anxiety and no voice to being a teacher with, sometimes, too many words and too loud of a voice or presence. I often felt powerless as a young student and I have, at times, unfairly wielded my power as a teacher. Is this a karmic

activity (a karmic knot, as a dear advisor suggests)? If so, am I finished yet? (Please let me be finished!) I find these thoughts and questions very interesting, but less and less important. When I have finished with teaching, I will, no doubt, find new lessons as part of my "individualized curriculum." Could it really be true that the only thing of any meaning is my clear-as-possible being in this moment, regardless of with whom and where I am? Only Heaven exists, as *A Course in Miracles* insists. No way out but in? Everything under the nothing my ego would have me believe I am? No Heaven in or on earth? Only Heaven?

Since beginning my study of the Course, I have been thinking a lot about the shared illusions of school. There is an agreement among all involved to have the chaos; to be awash in it. There is an agreement about lack of resources, doing without, and feeling needed (and harried)

within the illusion. One of my "favorite" illusions is that I am going to figure everything out ahead of time so I can be all things to everyone I encounter in my professional life. I have spent, and continue to spend, much time trying to work out my schedule as a resource room teacher. I am supposed to be serving so many students for so many minutes in areas such as reading, writing, math, social/behavior skills, and adaptive skills. Each student has individual goals so I cannot necessarily see students in groupings unless they have similar services and goals. Also, this schedule never accounts for the many hours of before-and-after-school time for planning and paperwork. My pulse begins to race as I write this. This is an equation for insanity, and I have been treating it as though it is a puzzle I can solve if I give it enough time, energy, sleeplessness and worry, etc. This is another ego trick to keep me distracted from the one Truth. "I am the light of the world. That is my only function. That is why I am here" (Lesson 61). I know how to be a light in the lives of children, to reflect their innate brightness back to them. So often, though, I choose the insane definitions of what I think a teacher should be. So often I choose my ego over Light, perfectionism over Light, I-am-the-adult-and-need-to-maintain-the-illusion-of-complete-control-in-this-insane-agreement over Light.

"I am awakening from the dream of separation." One recent evening, I heard these words (as if spoken within my mind) as I walked home from my bus stop. Where did they come from? Am I awakening? All I know is that it is the smallest, truest voice I have ever heard. ✧

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Course, at any instant we can awaken to the true image of love that created us. To do this, however, we must lift the cloud of guilt we have cast on everyone and everything.

Labels keep us safe?

I remember an experience I had with our son, Jeffrey, when he was in 6th grade and he could not find his science workbook at school. He put it in his cubbyhole, but evidently another child had mistaken Jeff's cubby for his own and taken it. Because of school budget cuts, the kids couldn't put their names on their books, so confusion was common. Jeff needed this book for his homework, so after school we scoured the classroom thoroughly before we admitted defeat. Finally, we found an absent student's book and made copies of the pages so Jeffrey could complete his homework. I vowed from that moment on we would put a "removable" name label on every one of his books, so this would not happen again!

We have labeled a lot in our lives so things don't happen to us again. We have labeled this idea as bad, that one as good, people of this ethnicity as dangerous and people of another persuasion as acceptable. The Course is not asking us to be foolish or unsafe in life, but to simply be willing to lift the labels, make them *removable*, so a new awareness might come to us. We won't be lost without our divisive natures; we will actually find our true strengths.

How do we do it?

First off, we should decide at the outset what we want to accomplish in our interactions. At the Center we have our **Pledge for Peace...** to make the peace of God our one goal today. If the peace of God is our goal today, then it must also be our goal in every interaction. That certainly simplifies our goal setting, doesn't it? We follow the path that brings us peace or we choose again. But we need to be honest with ourselves and not just fall back into old patterns. Can excluding another or judging them because of their different behavior or religion really bring us peace?

In the section from the Course's text entitled *Rules for Decision*, we are offered

a way to have the kind of day we want by making no decisions by ourselves. What this willingness says is that a peaceful day really comes to us when WE don't get in the way. So if we want peace, if this is the goal we have set, then we need to also realize that our old habits and patterns are not serving us. We have to be willing to want what will heal us (peace) and then realize we need help.

The Help We Want

The first step is *wanting* peace. That is the little willingness the Course speaks of. We want or are willing to value what will bring us our goal of healing. First, though, we must realize we don't know how to do it ourselves. The Course tells us we need help from outside of our problems because we believe in the reality of our problems from our current perspective.

We will always be able to rationalize why peace can't work here or why this person is unworthy of forgiveness (including ourselves), but love looks through different eyes. It does not look through the eyes of an ego that sees some sin or guilt beyond help, rather it looks with gentle eyes of love saying, "My brother, what you think is not the truth." The lie we have looked at has become so real to us that we have forgotten it is a lie, but the Voice for God is here to show us the way and lead us home.

Look but don't dwell

With all this said, the Course does tell

us we must *look*. What we have made "real" must be looked at and passed by. The anger, fear, hurt, depression, etc., cannot be ignored, but instead clearly seen as not of value when the peace of God is so near.

Have you ever seen a car wreck on the side of a road? It usually slows down traffic for miles. When you finally come up next to it, there is a weird desire to stare, but if you dwell on the sight, you cause more problems than help. Likewise, let us look quickly at the seeming problems in life and then move onto the solution God is holding out to us.

Replace, Refocus, Live

All through the Course, we are instructed to replace the lies of the ego with the truth of God. In the fifth review section in the Course's workbook, we are given a great thought. It says that whenever we are tempted to be distracted from our lesson we should proclaim our freedom as we say, "This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____" (insert your daily workbook lesson or the **Pledge for Peace: the peace of God is my one goal**). By doing so, we allow this thought to take the place of what we thought before. By replacing the pain and suffering of our lives and this world with the truth, we can refocus our minds on the love of God and thereby finally live the life we are intended to live instead of a parody of life.

One of Jeff's favorite authors growing up was Rick Riordan who wrote a series of

Join Us in Taking the Pledge for Peace

In our hectic lives, we want peace; we want to know God's will, but we are just so busy, or we forget. But what if we had the support and encouragement of others ... what if we realized that we were accountable to each other ... what if we realized that we truly were entitled to the peace that we are searching for?

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books based on his character, Percy Jackson — a teenage boy who never seemed to fit into school or life. Percy was being raised by a single mom, was dyslexic, had a terrible time in school, and felt like an outcast. In reality, Percy was actually the son of Neptune, the Olympian God of the sea. All of his handicaps in *this* world were his greatest assets in the world of the gods, but he didn't know it until his mind was refocused on the truth of who he was. He was the son of a god... sound familiar?

Living it

Once we have the knowledge of the truth of who we are, it should be easy, right? Yes, but perhaps not at first. In the case of Percy Jackson, it took him some time to get used to his new truth, and so it is with us. Because we have become used to a life of pain, fear, and suffering, we must practice living from the truth that we are entitled to peace and healing. Similarly, when you are driving at a high speed and you stop suddenly, it takes a while to come to a complete stop. You may hit the brakes but still continue to slide along in a forward motion before you can actually stop.

We are getting there. We are slowing down. Let us be patient as we begin again, and again, and again. I know it seems as if there are a lot of things in your life and the life of this world that need to be fixed, but we are not capable of doing the fixing. As the Course tells us, we made the problem and because we did, we believe in it. Therefore, we need help from outside of the problem and that is what God's Voice, the Holy Spirit is here to help us do.

Only that Voice can lift the cloud of guilt we feel we and others deserve. God's loving guidance can begin to show us a light beyond the darkness and hope where no possible solution seems to be. It is not a voice of religion and yet it is found in every religion. It is not a voice of separation and yet it is the potential of joining in every separating thought. It is the voice of love and sanity in every thought of fear or confusion. It was not only born 2,000 years ago but is born each moment when we lay down our need to be right and embrace peace on earth and good will toward all. *"There is not a moment in which His Voice fails to direct my thoughts, guide my actions and lead my feet. I am walking steadily on toward truth."* (Lesson 60) ✨

Eleven Principles

Continued from page 7

challenge, be in pain, and learn nothing about yourself. Choose otherwise.

8. Your emotions, attitudes, and thoughts affect your health, and you can utilize this knowledge in your healing.

The components of meaning, purpose, and love are essential to healing. These are lost when we cease to remain in the present moment with whatever is happening to us. Instead, we make up a reality in our minds and project that reality into our future. This projected reality always includes some fear, obsession, and worry; otherwise lack of peace seems to be part of the list. Lack of peace of mind is the result. A paradox to remember: a complete obsession with getting physically better can actually make you worse. Freedom from suffering involves recognizing your fearful mind, your attitudes, your thoughts, and that you have a choice in how you respond to the pain of a given situation.

9. Health is an extension of inner peace, and healing is letting go of fear.

Prescribed and available medical treatments are certainly important, but where you direct your mind and what your goals are during this time is equally important. We can choose to love regardless of the state of our body, and when we accept love, we are not suffering. All that is necessary right now is the slightest thought that maybe, just maybe, any health challenge, now or in the future, has a purpose: to let go of old fears and bring you closer to Spirit and to those you love, to raise your consciousness, and to redirect your life to what is most important. A fearful mind creates a lack of trust in ourselves and life, which then limits healing by increasing stress and anxiety, robbing us of vital energy during a time when we need it most.

10. The core of who you are, your true nature, is Love.

Health challenges bring us opportunities to release layers of who we think we are so that we can find who we really are and what is most important to us. A common misconception is that trust is

something we can feel only when "good" things happen. Fear-based thinking during a health challenge takes you away from your true nature and always sees situations as either/or, as black or white. When we realize we are engaging in such thinking, we can pause and realize there are other options, other ways of seeing the situation. A fearful mind and the negative emotions it creates contribute to illness and reduce the ability to recover fully. Any approach to healing that fails to reduce fear, anger, guilt, hostility, and stress is never going to lead to full health.

11. Forgiveness is essential to health, growth, and healing. Excessive worry about the future and being angry or guilty about the past limit healing and can be overcome.

A healthy mind has ceased to worry because it knows the outcome can always include love and forgiveness. Healing always includes an increased awareness of our connection with others and with life itself. We can approach our health challenges in two very different ways: as a victim or as a learner. Which we choose determines whether we increase fear or increase healing. We often see events as happening randomly, and at best, we can be a passive and fearful participant in them. This view is the victim approach. There is another way of seeing your health challenge. There is another way to go through an illness besides feeling constantly sucker-punched in the gut by life and believing there is not a damn thing you can do about it. Decide if, in all situations from now on, what you are going through can bring you something, some meaning, and then commit to finding it. ✨

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Piercing the Darkness

Continued from page 3

our darkness – is the true purpose of every situation in which we find ourselves. Once we have done that, the “star” the “light in darkness” will be all there is to see, for the darkness of life will no longer have an attraction for us. Love will truly be our function.

For the longest time, Jeffrey would not say Mama. He would say Dada just fine. As a matter of fact, he would call both Beverly and me, Dada. Bev really didn't care; it was fine with her, since she knew what he meant. The term Dada meant love, help, support, and safety. But one day he called her Mama. She really didn't think it would matter that much, but she told me the feeling of joy she had every time her little boy said Mama was beyond words.

It made me think of the purpose of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit (or whatever terms you use for the presence of Love) is in our lives. Their purpose is to

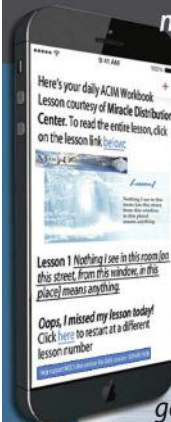
help us learn, grow, and heal. And They don't care what you call Them, only that you do call on Them. They can pierce the darkness of life for that is all They are there to do. And as much joy as Bev experienced when her little boy called on Mama for help, I can only imagine is but a glimmering of the joy in Heaven when we call upon God for help, when we see the “light in darkness.”

We are never alone. Although darkness may seem to be all around, a light has come and we are no longer alone. Christ has come.

“Your Friend goes with you. You are not alone. No one who calls on Him can call in vain. Whatever troubles you, be certain that He has the answer, and will gladly give it to you, if you simply turn to Him and ask it of Him. He will not withhold all answers that you need for anything that seems to trouble you. He knows the way to solve all problems, and resolve all doubts. His certainty is yours. You need but ask it of Him, and it will be given you.” (Workbook Epilogue) ✧

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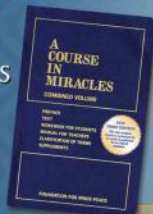


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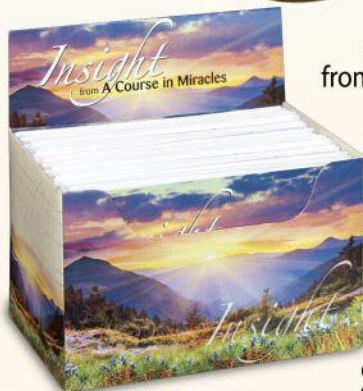
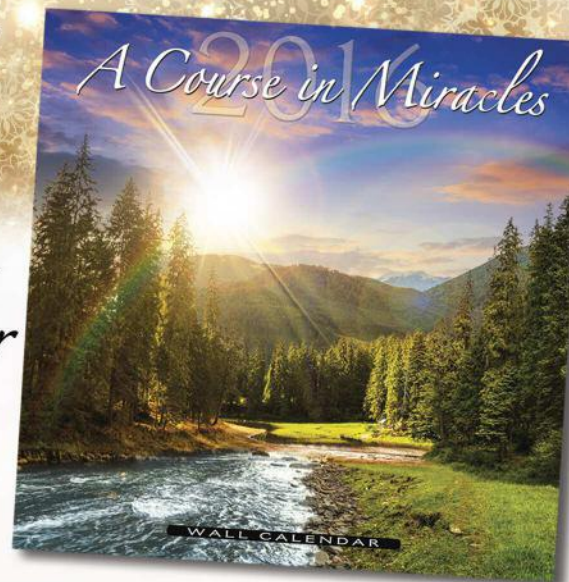
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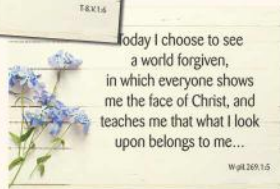


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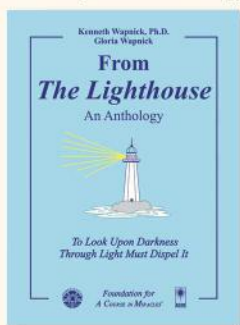
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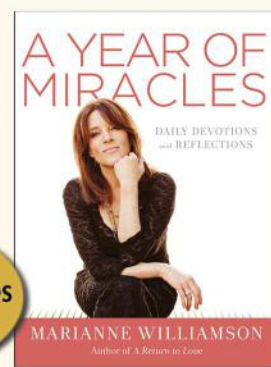
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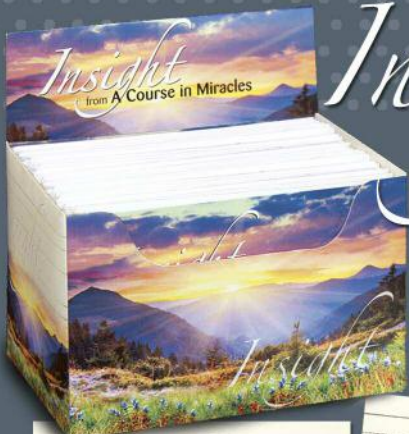
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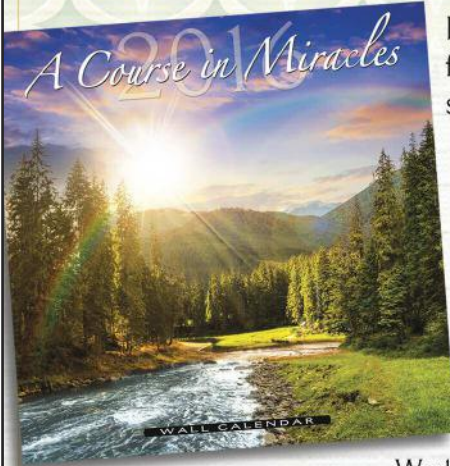
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