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The HOLY ENCOUNTER



November / December 2022

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 as accurate and simply stop examining it. Therefore, because they think it is true,



"The stories of Helen's struggle with God are legendary and, frankly, do not diminish my faith in the Course but rather strengthen it."

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 a professor of religion at Boston University, Stephen Prothero.

I find these surveys interesting in what they show us about ourselves. When I heard of this survey's results, they made tremendous sense. 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 mainline 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

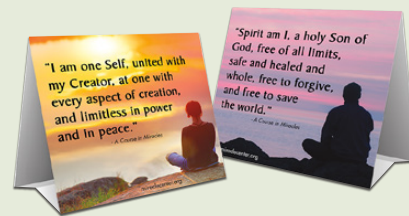
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Beverly is the co-founder and president of MDC, one of the longest-running organizations based on *A Course in Miracles*. As a student, lecturer and author on the Course since 1977, her streamed weekly commentaries on Course principles have become an inspirational study and spiritual family for many around the world. View her free weekly livestream meetings at miraclecenter.org

Let's Keep it Going

Your responses to our 2022 fundraising appeal began arriving last month. 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 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 pop-up prayer



card that features two poignant quotations from *A Course in Miracles*. We hope you have already "built" your card and have been comforted by its message.

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

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

For more information go to
miraclecenter.org or call **714-632-9005**

● **Over 5 million!** Well, 5,191,347, to be exact. That's the number of daily lesson emails MDC has sent since the service debuted nearly eight years ago. This free application allows you to receive your Course workbook lesson by email each morning at a time you select. You can begin at any lesson number you choose. Find it under "Services" in the menu bar of our website.

● **Retreat Experience Made Easy** – Now is the perfect time to reserve your place at our next **Holy Encounter Retreat** on **August 18-20, 2023**. These retreats give students time to go deeper into the experience of *A Course in Miracles* while enjoying the peaceful setting of the incredible ranch property. Space is limited, and some room types will sell out. Our convenient payment plan offers low monthly payments throughout the year to complete your registration.

● **On October 5, 2022, our friend Gloria Wapnick took the next step in eternal life.** After marrying in 1981, Gloria and Ken Wapnick founded the **Foundation for A Course**

in Miracles in 1983. At her passing she was surrounded by her family, and they will hold a private service. We are honored to have known Ken, who passed in 2013, and Gloria, and had the privilege of hosting her at our 2016 conference. We send you on your way on angels' wings, dear one.



● **Giving a meaningful gift** – There are so many ways to help our work on behalf of *A Course in Miracles*. You can send a donation, a gift in memory of a loved one, or to celebrate a special occasion – each gift will be acknowledged by a letter and in **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**. Other ways are to add the Center as a beneficiary in your will, establish a charitable gift annuity with us, or authorize an IRA Rollover contribution as Elaine in New York recently did, telling us, "Today I am sending a letter to the financial company that holds my IRA, to have them withdraw a tax-deductible donation to MDC." We are so

honored by Elaine's support! For details and even more options, visit our Legacy page under "About Us" on our website. As you support the Center, you become part of its life, and we are truly grateful!

● **On-demand ACIM Seminars** – Continue your studies of the Course at your convenience, in your own home, with these on-demand Seminars! We currently have three seminars on the principles of *A Course in Miracles* with **Beverly McNeff** for immediate viewing. Each seminar is six hours long, each having a unique focus. View details at our website. Beverly has a unique ability to cut through the complexity of the Course and put it in terms that will inspire your mind and touch your heart. Let's begin healing together!



● **"I could see peace instead of this."** (W-34)
The promise of peace to prevail and transcend the limitations of the world is inevitable, for, in truth, only peace is possible because that is the Will of God. It's time we join with our real power instead of our diminished thinking. Join with us daily at **4:30pm (Pacific Time)**, as we unite with you, your loved ones, and those in the **Miracle Prayer Ministry**. The gift you give is the gift you will receive! If you have a request, please send it to MDC.

Thoughts for:
November: *The peace of God is shining in me now.* (Lesson 188)

December: *I am spirit.* (Lesson 97)

A Holiday Blessing

from Your Friends at Miracle Distribution Center

"Each little gift you offer to your brother lights up the world." (T-22.VI.9)

It all begins with you! Please join with us as together we nurture and extend the light of love that is within us this holiday season. Remember, that "light" is the translation of this world into Heaven.

"I am the light of the world. That is my only function. That is why I am here." (W-61)



*"If there is light in the soul,
There will be beauty in the person;
If there is beauty in the person,
There will be harmony in the home;
If there is harmony in the home,
There will be order in the nation;
If there is order in the nation,
There will be peace in the world."*
Chinese proverb

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

Labels keep us safe?

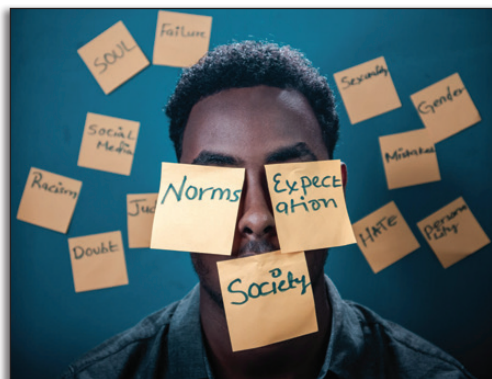
I remember my experience with our son, Jeffrey, when he was in 6th grade, and he could not find his science workbook at school. He put it in his cubbyhole, but evidently, another child had mistaken Jeff’s cubby for his own and taken it. Because of school budget cuts, the kids couldn’t put their names on their books, so confusion was common. Jeff needed this book for his homework, so after school, we scoured the classroom thoroughly before admitting 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 that we would put a “removable” name label on every one of his

actually find our true strengths.

How do we do it?

First, we should decide at the outset what we want to accomplish in our interactions. On the Center’s website, you can find our **Pledge for Peace**. The goal of this service is to make us aware of the choice we can make daily for a better way. If you decide to join us, we will not only join you in this commitment, but we will put a marker on our global map to represent you. What is our pledge? To make the peace of God our only goal today (and every day). If the peace of God is our goal today,

“We have labeled this idea as bad, that one as good, people of this ethnicity as dangerous, and people of another persuasion as acceptable.”



then it must also be our goal in every interaction. That certainly simplifies our goal setting, doesn’t it? We can follow the path that brings us peace or choose again. But we need to be honest with ourselves and not just fall back into old patterns. Can excluding others or judging them because of their different behavior or religion bring us peace? If we do so, we are really the ones that are excluded in our minds and hearts. This does not mean that we have to believe, like, or agree

set, then we need also to 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 in achieving the way to do this.

The Help We Want

The first step is *wanting* peace. This is the little willingness to turn to the constant help of God’s Love through the Holy Spirit that 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.” (W-134) 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 on to



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 and make them *removable* so that a new awareness might come to us. We won’t be lost without our divisive natures; we’ll

with things they say or do, but we cannot exclude them from our hearts. Or allow their actions to rob us of our peace and place in the Mind of God.

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. This willingness says that a peaceful day comes to us when WE don’t get in the way. So if we want peace, if this is the goal we have

“If you decide to join us, we will not only join you in this commitment, but we will put a marker on our global map to represent you.”



Miracle Musings...

Born Again?

by Paul McNeff

"I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'" (John 3:3)

"To be born again is to let the past go, and look without condemnation upon the present." (T-13.VI.3)

Hey man, are you born again?" asked the guy as he rushed toward me with more of a confronting look in his eye than one of loving concern. Knowing the backstory to this type of fundamental Christian inquiry – having to "witness" to everyone you meet – I responded with, "Hallelujah - You betcha! I know Jesus, and he's my savior." That seemed to satisfy my good brother, and we both went on our way. This kind of encounter was more common in my younger years, but it wasn't until I found *A Course in Miracles* that this phrase finally made sense.

So, what does the term "born again" really mean? Could it be one of Christianity's most misunderstood concepts? As a fundamentalist Christian,

I was taught that being born again meant that one had to believe in Jesus Christ and his saving work on the cross to take away all your sins. And just like your physical birthday, my fundamentalist brother's definition of born again was a one-and-done deal that would assure you a one-way ticket to Heaven.

In the Bible, Jesus explained to Nicodemus, a great religious leader of the Jews, that being born again has nothing to do with the body. Instead, it has everything to do with recognizing that it is something beyond the body that you can't see with your physical eyes or experience with a physical body. Spirituality is of the mind. Being born again was more of an attitude of synchronizing our

inner spirit with the Spirit of Christ.

As we see in our above two quotes, Jesus was essentially saying the same thing, though one could be dated some 2,000 years ago, and the other, much more recently, as recorded in *A Course in Miracles*.

As a student of the Course, I believe Jesus gives us a more straightforward explanation of what it means to be born again. It

"In the Bible, Jesus explained to Nicodemus, a great religious leader of the Jews, that being born again has nothing to do with the body."



is not a one-and-done deal but rather an

every-moment by every-moment accounting of what our mind is focused on. You could say it is an eternal "now" instant of letting past experiences go so as not to project them into the future. The transformative – born again zone – is of the present.

Because of the Covid pandemic, KidSingers, our inner-city chorus for underserved youth, which my wife Beverly and I founded 25 years ago, had not been able to meet in person for two years. We finally resumed our first full season in September of this year. The kids in this community have suffered from the isolation this pandemic wrought, so it has been a slow process to help these children to socialize after only remote learning. Last week

during our snack break, one of our directors ushered a boy to my side, who had had several behavioral issues, and the director asked him to explain to me what he had done.

The boy, in his tweens, told me he had thrown a cheese snack over the second-story patio balcony outside of the church, where we rehearse, onto the parking lot below. When I asked why he had done that, he said, "I don't know. I guess I just wanted to see how far I could throw it." It was an honest answer, but I explained to him that this behavior was inappropriate for many reasons. I took time to talk to him about his actions

and what people will assume about someone from these types of actions. For many of our kids, both parents work and are not around as much as they would like. Having an adult around their

kids who will lovingly address behavior issues and talk about the importance of being kind, respectful, and accountable to each other is something these kids don't often experience. As I looked into his eyes, which were tearing up, he seemed to understand why his actions were inappropriate, and he affirmed that he would not do it again.

Children will make mistakes, and helping them to learn from these mistakes and not make the child bad or label them as a troublemaker, is how we help them to stop destructive patterns that don't have to negatively predict their future. The same is true for all of us. When we bring the darkness of a behavior that can create a source of guilt to the light,

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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, afterschool children's chorus. The program has won many awards and been featured on *Good Morning America*. Learn more at: kidsingers.org



Change Your Mind Change Your Life

"All That I Give, I Give to Myself"

by Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky, Ph.D.

An old friend, Rachel, called me several months ago to offer condolences for my beloved husband Jerry's passing. As we spoke to catch up with our lives, she shared that she was having a really challenging time because one of her closest friends, Elana, recently became very ill and had little chance of surviving her current illness for more than a few weeks or months.

Rachel said she was very busy doing things for her friend, like doctor's appointments, shopping, and the like, because it helped her feel comfortable and safe. Her pain was that she was finding

not prepare us for overtly facing the end of life but instead offers many distractions so we do not have to think about it. Thus, at times the denial around death can be palpable. It's as if we don't think that we're actually going to die, but our fear of death creates hidden anxieties that permeate our lives and unconsciously influence our choices.

A Course in Miracles teaches us that

"In general, society does not prepare us for overtly facing the end of life but instead offers many distractions so we do not have to think about it."

"There is no death." It emphasizes freedom from the body and is deeply comforting. However, when wanting to be of service to another in need, it's important to understand where they are coming from and not impose

our own beliefs or fears on them.

One of the most important components of friendship is listening with an attitude of acceptance without any conditions, judgments, or expectations of results. Upon her request, I suggested to Rachel that when her friend asks questions, realize that *you do not need to know the answers*. Just be honest and remember that it's okay to say, "I don't know!" Honor her trust by being as honest

as you can in all your communications with her. For example, if she asks you what you are feeling about death or what you think happens after you die, keep your integrity by telling her that death is a difficult subject for you because you have your own fears about it. In this way, you communicate your willingness to be an honest and vulnerable friend. This can often open the door to deep-

er conversations on the subject... or not!

If she happens to be depressed or in pain, don't see it as your job to fix her. If she is worse when you leave her, resist the temptation to think you caused it. Rather than looking and concentrating on the condition of her body or even her state of mind, choose to look and see the light within her. Your peace is the best gift you can give her or anyone.

In my experience with many dying people, I have found that those who are seriously ill don't want their visitors to create a "pity party." They don't want to be treated differently just because they're ill. They want to have meaningful communication and connection in the safest environment of vulnerability. We can bring that environment into the room if we ourselves remember that, "I am not a body. I am free. For I am still as God created me. I want the peace of God. The peace of

God is everything I want. The peace of God is my one goal; the aim of all my living here, the end I seek, my purpose and my function and my life, while

I abide where I am not at home." (W-205)

Being close to someone whose time is nearing its end can allow us to take a new, deeper look at our life. I shared with Rachel that it can be an invaluable wake-up call and

a great privilege to be with someone near the

"Being close to someone whose time is nearing its end can allow us to take a new, deeper look at our life... it can be an invaluable wake-up call and a great privilege to be with someone near the end of their life."



it extremely difficult to simply "be" with her friend and not always "be doing." Even though Elana encouraged her to stay with her and was trying to ask questions, Rachel was afraid she could not answer them. Time was passing, and Rachel was feeling more and more anxious that they would not deeply connect before Elana passed, and she would live with guilt and deep regret.

The feelings Rachel had are common, especially in these times when people of all ages are passing earlier in life. Often those closest to them are completely unprepared for the sudden experience of the impending loss of a loved one. In general, society does



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Diane Cirincione-Jampolsky, Ph.D., is the Founder and Executive Director of Attitudinal Healing International. She is also a therapist in private practice, a businesswoman, author, and international lecturer.



Recognizing Spirit Remembering vs. Change

by Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

It's a psychologist's job to help people change, right? Not necessarily.

Drawing from *A Course in Miracles*, the focus of Inspirational Psychology is to help people remove the blocks to love so they can notice their divine nature. Thus, I am less an agent of change and more a facilitator of remembering and noticing who we are and why we're here. In my writing and teaching, I find helping people listen to the wisdom within is far more helpful than assisting people in changing. Our time is better spent hearing an ancient whisper of love not entirely forgotten than only focusing on changing some aspect of our lives. I am not suggesting change is never needed, but without remembering who we are, all change offers is, at best, a brief upturn in our mood. With just a sliver of a memory of the magnificence of love that is you, the seeds of beauty and peace germinate and grow within you.

The memory of love may come most unexpectedly, perhaps in grief or other challenges. Alternatively, a conscious experience with another person through the "expression of the holy instant in living in this world" brings the transformative awareness of love, sometimes so profound we are forever awakened. But if you are not ready to listen and welcome the voice of love, you will continue to miss the call to rest in a deep peace you have longed for but have all but forgotten. A stunningly beautiful quote expands:

"Listen,—perhaps you catch a hint of an ancient state not quite forgotten; dim, perhaps, and yet not altogether unfamiliar, like a song whose name is long forgotten, and the circumstances in which you heard completely unremembered. Not the whole song has

stayed with you, but just a little wisp of melody, attached not to a person or a place or anything particular. But you remember, from just this little part, how lovely was the song, how wonderful the setting where you heard it, and how you loved those who were there and listened with you.

"The notes are nothing. Yet you have kept them with you, not for themselves, but as a soft reminder of what would



"The memory of love may come most unexpectedly, perhaps in grief or other challenges."

make you weep if you remembered how dear it was to you. You could remember, yet you are afraid, believing

you would lose the world you learned since then. And yet you know that nothing in the world you learned is half so dear as this. Listen, and see if you remember an ancient song you knew so long ago and held more dear than any melody you taught yourself to cherish since." (T-21.1.6)

Instead of listening to the forgotten song, in the modern world there is an emphasis on external change and endless decisions to be made, a distraction from remembering the ancient song calling us home. With most people, there is little or no consideration of how we are being led astray by the belief that endless choices and changing only external

conditions bring greater happiness. Even personal and spiritual growth has become an industry fueled by the promise of change.

Few people in pain or emotional upheaval walk into a therapist's office, a 12-step meeting, a place of worship, or the like, and say, "I am here because I want to remember who I am." On the contrary, they believe they are there to change, and they want help in doing so. You'll likely never see a magazine on the rack at the grocery checkout stand with a headline on the cover promising to help you to remember what's within rather than how to change your body, love life, or make more money. I suggest the core of our most fundamental problem in this world is that we have forgotten the power of love and believe that the solution is only through changing something in our life or the world. Consider that the lasting and effective solutions begin with the practice of noticing love and becoming increasingly aware of love's eternal presence in our lives.

Have You Noticed?

Have you noticed the gift of awakened love in us is so much larger than us? Such beautiful simplicity, the miracle of remembering God's love through this holy instant.

Have you noticed awakened love in us becomes even brighter as we see the light awaken in all?

Have you noticed your deepest longing is the call to this beautiful moment of remembering eternal belonging?

"What is a miracle but this remembering? And who is there in whom

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Dr. Lee Jampolsky is the founder of Inspirational Psychology and the author of ten books in fourteen languages. For free articles and free online courses visit drleejampolsky.com. He is a retired psychologist and currently offers online spiritual mentoring and coaching. He can be reached at lee@drleejampolsky.com



A Quickening

by Joseph Miller

“For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” The Gospel According to John

“Quicken our footsteps now, that we may walk more certainly and quickly unto You.” (W-r.V.in.3:5)

Some years ago, I had a dream. I was walking through the front doors of a hotel convention center into *A Course in Miracles* conference. Many people were noisily milling about in the lobby, and I stopped to look at a book display. I overheard a woman nearby ask her friend, “So what exactly is a ‘miracle?’” I instantly turned to her and blurted out, “A quickening!”

I awoke and was astonished by that answer. I couldn’t recall ever having heard that definition in waking life. Where did it come from? What did it mean? My dream self was absolutely certain that a *quicken*ing was the best possible synonym. My waking self was intrigued and now wanted to dig at that hint. The Course describes a miracle in all kinds of ways: a shift, a correction, an expression of love, an exchange, a teaching device—but “a quickening”?

In English today, “to quicken” means to speed up. But in Elizabethan English, the word was connected with *life* and meant to “vivify” or “vitalize.” There is a remnant of this usage in the phrase, “cut me to the quick,” having to do with the distress experienced from a sharp remark. “Quick,” in this old sense, refers to the interior, vital core of an organism. Old English Bible translations speak of “the quick and the dead”, referring to those who have awakened to new life and those who still sleep spiritually.

Equally suggestive, I think, is the old alchemical name for mercury – *quicksilver*. Here was a fluid and lively metal that need not be heated to 3,600 degrees, like iron or bronze. Unlike these seemingly dead met-

als, mercury was *animated*. My grandfather worked for a time in metallurgy and gave his grandchildren a wooden hinged case lined with rows of element samples, all sealed in little test tubes. There was a shaving of gold, a small nugget of bronze, a speck of platinum, and many



“My dream self was absolutely certain that a quickening was the best possible synonym. My waking self was intrigued and now wanted to dig at that hint.”

others. But my favorite was mercury. Its silver

reflective surface quivered when you held the vile. If you shook it, you felt the weight – much heavier than water – but you also felt a vibration for a split second, a little “boing!” And whereas water “wets” the container that holds it and clings to the sides, mercury left no residue and clung only to itself.

With its intriguing properties and supposed curative powers, quicksilver became associated with the Roman god Mercury (Hermes, for the Greeks) – the messenger of the gods. Divine messengers are the agents of quickening interventions – think of Gabriel’s visit to the teenage Mary! If Mary is a symbol for the miracle-ready mind, then every Word from the Holy Spirit is life-giving. “A true conversion, a true Christ, is now, as always, to be made,” wrote Emerson, “by the reception of beautiful sentiments.” The Course tells us that Christ inspires all miracles, which are really intercessions. “They intercede for your

holiness and make your perceptions holy.” (T-1.I.32) Miracles interrupt our egotism and release unsuspected vistas of thought and feeling within us.

I recall a pivotal moment in the career of Martin Luther King Jr., as described in his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*. It was midnight January 27, 1956, his nerves were jangled, and he was exhausted. He had just put down the phone after receiving an anonymous

death threat. His young family was asleep. He was looking for a way out, a graceful way to exit the Civil Rights movement, to leave the danger and the stress, to refuse the mantle of leadership being foisted upon him. He sat at the kitchen table,

an untouched cup of coffee before him, and prayed aloud.

“I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone.” At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: “Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.” Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.”

Dr. King experienced a quickening that would carry him through the next twelve

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Holy Encounter Retreat

with Beverly McNeff

A Recap of MDC's 2022 Retreat

After two years of shutdowns due to the pandemic, our transformational retreats are back! These powerful encounters allow attendees to deeply soak in the words, inspiration, and practical application of *A Course in Miracles* within an atmosphere of love, support, and beauty. We hope you enjoy the photos and comments from those who attended and will plan to join us next year, August 18-20, 2023.

I'm so extremely grateful that the Retreat was able to happen this year and that all of us perfectly imperfect Course students were able to join minds and create one supersonic light! I know in my heart that we will all carry this light into our daily lives and create a blanket of love the likes of which the world has yet to see and needs so desperately now. We cannot fail as we know the truth, we have the path, and as the Course states, we need only be willing. I was truly honored to be in the presence of so many amazing spirits.

Beverly, I hope you know what a force you are as a Teacher of the Course. You are exactly what this world needs right now! You have touched my Spirit as few have. You have helped me find my Source, my Strength, my Light, and most importantly, my Truth. There is no doubt that the Course is my path; I'm so grateful that I found my way to you and the family that MDC has created. You are the Holy Spirit's perfect instrument! Your light stands bright in this world, and I can assure you that it erases the darkness more than you may know for all of us around this world.

With each and every day, I find I'm more and more aware of the miracles; I'm more and more aware of situations whereby I can choose love instead of fear, peace instead of chaos, and forgiveness instead of grievances. I know my purpose is to heal so that I may heal others. My purpose is to extend to my brothers and sisters all that is good and loving, and the vehicle for this is forgiveness. I know pain doesn't have to be perceived as pain, but instead, I can look upon it and see joy. I know that I am not my body, that it is just my temporary home, and that my body will experience certain things while I remain in this world that is not my home. My body is not who I am, and it is healed the minute I ask for its healing. This journey is incredible and amazing, and I'm so very grateful to walk it with you.

Blessings, Love,
and Light,
Cindy in California



WOW! I loved every second of our retreat (even the rainy ones). Thank you to everyone! I'm already looking forward to our next gathering and hope to see you there. In the meantime, we have the wonderful Wednesday night livestream meetings to look forward to.
Love to you all, Linda in Florida

I want you all to know how much MDC means to me! The daily lesson email from MDC is the first thing I read each day! I have such confidence in the support that you at the Center offer all of us. The Retreat was absolutely transcendent! It amazes me how much work goes into making it run smoothly. I can't begin to tell you how much you all mean to me!
Thank you, Dona in California



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This retreat has, once again, opened a portal to lasting, exhaustless content. Thank you to the MDC staff for your commitment to this work. Thank you for being the human beings you are. This occasion attracted beautiful souls who re-enter their lives with greater strength, deeper assurance,

and renewed commitment. From our retreat group, the blessing continues to branch to the dozens of people we all now come in contact with in our daily lives, and the contact of those people in turn. "In a gentle way," wrote Gandhi, "you can shake the world."
With love, Joe in California

I want to start with my deepest gratitude to everyone for another PHENOMENAL retreat weekend. Beverly was more brilliant than ever. Her wisdom and radiant energy were captivating throughout the entire weekend. She imparted so much Course wisdom, reminding us again and again that we are tasked with a mighty function and purpose and that our goal is the Peace of God. Beverly teaches how I learn through narrative, experience, and practical application of simple spiritual principles. Truly the best Course teacher I have ever encountered.

Darin, Tess, and Paul worked so hard throughout the weekend to accommodate everyone and everything. And they did it all with so much Love and kindness, from check-in on Friday afternoon to saying farewell on Sunday afternoon. And when Bill showed up on Saturday morning, he dove right in to help to ensure we all had an incredible experience. This team is SIMPLY THE BEST!

I attended my first MDC retreat at the Ranch in February 2015, and every year they have had the retreat since (5x). Oh, how we dearly missed gatherings during the pandemic years! And oh, how much more we appreciated gathering this year! I am so grateful that I connected with many I met at past retreats and made new friends. I could go on and on, but I will let these two lessons wrap everything up for me: "Love truly is the way we walk in gratitude" and "The Peace of God is shining in me now!"
Love and Hugs for ALL, Sandy B in Washington



As a Course student since 1985, my big dream was to attend a Miracles Retreat and meet wonderful Beverly. I realized my dream this year, and it was as beautiful as I had imagined. I made a new friend from Arizona; it was joyous! Thank you for all your efforts on our behalf to help us awaken to Love's Presence now! Loved the "Arise in Glory" exercise on the patio, and now I begin my day with it. My gratitude to the entire MDC staff.
Danielle in California

Our 2023 retreat will be held August 18th - 20th



The Hammock in the Middle

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

On July 27, 2022, Norman Lear turned 100 years old. Many know him as the legendary creator, writer, and producer of such iconic television shows as *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons*, *Maude*, *The Golden Girls*, and so many others. I had the privilege of meeting Norman Lear in 1992 at Marianne Williamson's 40th birthday



"On July 27, 2022, Norman Lear turned 100 years old."

party. At that time, he was a spry 70 years young and crowned with his trademark poplin fabric fedora!

Norman Lear said recently that his motto for a long life could be summarized with these words: *over and next* and the *hammock in the middle*. What he meant was... well, let me explain that in a moment, but first, I want to share a little context from his life.

Lear was a member of what society has called the Greatest Generation, and he enlisted in World War II to protect freedom around the world as a member of the Army Air Corp. He flew 52 combat missions as a radio operator and gunner on B-17 bombers over Nazi Germany. His love of his country led him to share the stories of everyday people in the American family, not just the "Ozzie and Harriet" version of a family. The first airing of *All in the Family* in 1971 caused censors to put a disclaimer at the start of the show that read:

"The program you are about to see is *All in the Family*. It seeks to throw a humorous spotlight on our frailties, prejudices, and concerns. By making them a source of laughter, we hope to show – in a mature fashion – just how

absurd they are."

Using laughter to shine a light on our prejudices has been the hallmark of Lear's style of comedy. As *A Course in Miracles* says, we have to learn to laugh at what we have cried about, not to make fun of it or demean it but to make sense of it. When we look clearly at the ego's insane logic of making others "bad" so we can be good or justifying our need to separate others from us in order to be safe, we can't help but chuckle at the absurdity of such approaches. After all, as we see, treat, or

think of another, we see, treat, or think of ourselves. That is the essence of the Course's message of a holy encounter.

We either find ourselves in every encounter or lose ourselves; in each encounter, we are given another chance at salvation.

In the characters of Archie Bunker (a white man) and George Jefferson (a Black man), we see racism from both perspectives. Both are good men with flawed perspectives. As the world was changing in the tumultuous 1970s, racial tension, reproductive rights, and gender issues were brought to light through comedy, and people's minds began to change. Compassion and understanding of those who did not fit the traditional family values of America were a threatening concept to the status quo. Norman Lear was dubbed "the #1 threat to the American family" by televangelist and founder of the Moral Majority, Jerry Falwell. Even President Richard Nixon said, "*All in the Family will destroy us.*"

Lear not only used his talent in the media but also founded a non-profit organization

in 1980 called People for the American Way to emphasize the importance of keeping a division between government and religion. As he often said, a person's Christian religion or faith should not be determined by their political party. He wanted the public to understand what the Declaration of Independence actually said, so he purchased one of the original copies of the Declaration (there were 200 copies printed on July 4, 1776) and had it travel to 72 cities in the United States over a period of three and a half years resulting in 4 million new voter registrations.

In celebration of his 100 years, he said that his success was a "glorious collaboration." As he spoke about the many shows he had created in his career, tears came to his eyes when he talked about the importance of collaboration. In essence, he was saying that



"Norman Lear was dubbed 'the #1 threat to the American family' by televangelist and founder of the Moral Majority, Jerry Falwell. Even President Nixon said, 'All in the Family will destroy us.'"

when people come together to create something helpful, miracles occur. We move past our limitations and become mighty miracle workers. That is why the Course tells us, "Salvation is a collaborative venture." (T-4.VI.8) Nothing real or truly

helpful can be achieved in an atmosphere of isolation and anger.

And now we return to the words: *over and*

next and the hammock in the middle. Lear said these concepts were simple, valuable truths in his life. He explained that when dealing with life and its ups and downs, it is the *over and next* mentality that one needs to employ. When things happen, you can't dwell on the past; you have to get over it and move on to the next. But the sweet spot is living in the now; that is, *the hammock in the middle*.



A Course in Miracles tells us that now is the only time there is. All time that we experience, whether as the past or future, is really for our learning. It has no other purpose. Therefore, dwelling in the past achieves nothing unless we learn from it and move on to a more productive future. Inevitably the only true learning goal for time is the awareness of now, so what better way to describe the blessing of living in the now than being *the hammock in the middle* of our fascination with time? If we can stay resting in that place of peace and stillness that is here for us now, we will become the miracle workers that the Course was born to bring forth on this planet NOW. This experience in time is not one of inertia or inactivity, but finally, real productivity.

The Course's text contains a section entitled, "I need do nothing." It is one of those sections the ego likes to misunderstand to exemplify withdrawal from the world and not caring about anyone or anything since it is all an illusion. But clearly, the world does not seem like an illusion to those of us who still function here, so we are given direction to make our time on this planet, at the moment, as close to Heaven as possible.

"To do anything involves the body. And if you recognize you need do nothing,

you have withdrawn the body's value from your mind. Here is the quick and open door through which you slip past centuries of effort, and escape from time. This is the way in which sin loses all attraction right now. For here is time denied, and past and future gone. Who needs do nothing has no need for time. To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides. He will remain when you forget, and the body's activities return to occupy your conscious mind.

"Yet there will always be this place of rest to which you can return. And you will be more aware of this quiet center of the storm than all its raging activity.

"Inevitably the only true learning goal for time is the awareness of now, so what better way to describe the blessing of living in the now than being the hammock in the middle of our fascination with time?"

This quiet center, in which you do nothing, will remain with you, giving you rest in the midst of every busy doing on which you are sent. For from this center will you be directed how to use the body sinlessly. It is this center, from which

the body is absent, that will keep it so in your awareness of it." (T-18.VII.7-8)

In this passage, we are given wonderful guidelines for awakening to the power of now. It tells us the body (and the world of form) is a great distraction, but we can use anything in this ego framework of the world to awaken to Spirit's power. We take time each day to focus within: Doing our Course lesson, withdrawing thoughts of right and wrong toward ourselves and others, and becoming comfortable with the place of peace within us that is our power. We step back from the world and all its activities and refocus on the Presence within. But we are not done yet. For, we will then reenter this world, but we will reenter with "this quiet center" (Lear might call it *the hammock in the middle*) which will remain with us giving us rest in the midst of every busy doing "on which we are sent."

The Course goes on to tell us that this center will stay with us to keep us connected to our true power. From this center, we can move through the difficulties of the past not by ignoring them but by understanding them

and taking with us only the blessings and releasing the rest. By doing this, we allow our minds to move to a future that will support a new awareness where we see the importance of working together in harmony and collaboration, not separation and attack. We will experience the power that will be released in the now as we rest in *the hammock in the middle*. ❖

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The Hammock in the Middle



by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

On July 27, 2022, Norman Lear turned 100 years old. Many know him as the legendary creator, writer, and producer of such iconic television shows as *All in the Family*, *The Jeffersons*, *Maude*, *The Golden Girls*, and so many others. I had the privilege of meeting Norman Lear in 1992 at Marianne Williamson's 40th birthday party. At that time, he was a spry 70 years young and crowned with his trademark poplin fabric fedora!

Norman Lear said recently that his motto for a long life could be summarized with these words...

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MDC has been a significant part of my success in learning and living *A Course in Miracles*. Through your store resources, seminars & workshops, website, livestreams, and of course, THE HOLY ENCOUNTER, you have been my 'church' for the Course. Until I wrote this, I was unaware of how much the Center has helped and means to me. Thank you all very, very much for your dedication.

—Nancy in Diamond Bar, California

A Quickening

Continued from page 7

years. The Holy Spirit reminded him that he was *not* a fearful ego, facing it alone. He was being called, in fact, to a mighty purpose, and as the Course tells us, "Purpose is meaning" (W-25.1), and meaning is life in love. The end of Dr. King's power was really the beginning of God's Power within him.

The first reference to "life" in the Course is Principle 4: "All miracles mean life, and God is the Giver of life. His Voice will direct you



"Dr. King experienced a quickening that would carry him through the next twelve years. The Holy Spirit reminded him that he was not a fearful ego, facing it alone."

very specifically. You will be told all you need to know." I am startled, in the light of these present considerations, that this principle articulates *both* the quickening and the messenger themes. But isn't that how it works with the inner life? The life-giving Word, from the Course or another inspired source, speaks to our core, re-kindles our strength, and meets our deepest need.

When the Bible speaks of the resurrection as a *quickness*, people typically think of bodies coming back to life. That is the legacy of centuries of literalism. But that is not the real, spiritual meaning. The "dead" are not those who have left the body but those who are ignorant of their real nature and purpose. They are the living dead — asleep to true life and meaning. To be born in a human body does not, in itself, constitute true life. According to John's Gospel, one must be *born again* of the spirit. "To all who received him... he gave the power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God" (Jn.1.9). In the Word was Life, and that Life was the Light of men. Death is just an idea—the false idea that separation can be real and permanent.

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"Your resurrection is your reawakening. I am the model for rebirth, but rebirth itself is merely the dawning on your mind of what is already in it." (T-6.1.7)

Many of us owe a debt of gratitude to someone who looked past our insecurity, weakness, or fallenness, and called forth the Lazarus within. This miracle worker over-looked appearances and appealed to our latent strength and vision. In so doing, they exercised the power of a child of God, and met our deepest need. "A miracle is a service. It is the maximal service you can render to another." (T-1.1.18) Each of us is quickened so that we, in turn, can become quickening spirits to others. ❖

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All That I Give...

Continued from page 5

end of their life. Be grateful for the experience she has brought to you. Choose to see your friend as a teacher to help you discover new ways of looking at your own life, death, and renewed spiritual awareness and meaning. At this point, there must be something in you that is ready to learn new lessons from these visits with your dying friend. If you begin to raise some of her questions with yourself, you might find your own fear of death changing.

Always remember that you can offer to bring in someone with whom you could both talk who is experienced in this area and certainly accept your friend's decision to do so or not.

Recently, Rachel shared that by having *peace of mind as her only goal*, she could sit with, and be with, Elana in the comfort of their own vulnerabilities. She was there when her friend passed, and the experience was profoundly moving for her. She said that instead of having the right answer or even making sure she did everything "right," her new intention has become having peace of mind in all she thinks, says, and does. In the end, she realized that it was not only the gift of her honest self and her own inner peace that she gave to Elana but the treasured gift of being truly present at her friend's peaceful transition that was given to her. ❖

Remembering....

Continued from page 6

this memory lies not? The light in one awakens it in all. And when you see it in your brother, you are remembering for everyone." (T-21.1.10)

The daily news cycle in our modern times is chock-full of problems, and there is much pain caused by negative behaviors such as violence, oppression, and division. Of course, changes in the world or our behavior are sometimes much needed. Yet, even when creating positive changes in the world, remember that we don't need change nearly as much as we need remembrance. Simply put, "Offer the Holy Spirit only your willingness to remember, for He retains the knowledge of God and of yourself for you, waiting for your acceptance. Give up gladly everything that would stand in the way of your remembering..." (T-10.11.2)



The combination of your willingness to remember and acceptance of who you are serves as the foundation of true transformation rather than an endless loop of meaningless change. You begin to heal all suffering and damage created by fear when you "Let nothing in this world delay your remembering of Him, for in this remembering is the knowledge of yourself." (ibid)

Look closely, more closely than ever before, and you will see that the history of loneliness, despair, empty searching, and meaningless accumulation are all rooted in the history of forgetting who we are. Our deepest existential longing is to remember love and the eternal comfort it offers. There is only one true antidote to forgetting our essence is love, and that is forgiveness. Therefore, the Course emphasizes forgive-

ness so that we may experience the miraculous freedom born of love.

The obstacle is that such freedom scares us, so we come up with endless reasons not to forgive. Deliverance from the compulsion to see the world through fear-based games is not easily embraced when we listen to the fearful voice of the ego. Through forgiveness, we develop the capacity to see all life in a way reflective of the gentleness of love rather than a perception learned through fear. You may find forgiveness challenging to apply or even naive; This is because most people have forgotten the loving beings they are. The recovery of the awareness of love is central to the Course and Inspirational Psychology; that is, the awareness of love is how we rise above the patterns and fear-based programming of the past.

As alluring as this is, to the unprepared, such a pursuit is met by our ego as frightening. In short, the ability to embrace freedom by choosing to express one's true loving nature freaks us out.

True intimacy and vulnerability mean we consciously decide to enter the present moment, willing to be open, honest, authentic, and spontaneous. The result is a Holy Instant where the memory of your loving essence restores your mind to sanity.

The Course does its best to assist us in experiencing and extending the holy instant, leading to living more consistently in a state of continual and dynamic communication with God. The hallmark of the holy instant is we are so enlivened with love that there is no past guilt or fears of the future, and we remember what has always been.

"To remember is merely to restore to your mind what is already there. You do not make what you remember; you merely accept again what is already there, but was rejected." (T-10.11.3) ❖

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the solution God is holding out to us.

Replace, Refocus, Live

Throughout the Course, we are instructed to replace the lies of the ego with the truth of God. We are given a great thought in the fifth review section in the Course's workbook. It says that whenever we are tempted to be distracted from our lesson, we



“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...”

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**). Doing so allows 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 books based on his character, Percy Jackson – a teenage boy who never seemed to fit into school or life. Percy was 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 know 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 accustomed 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 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 many 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; that is what God's Voice, the Holy Spirit, is here to help us do.



“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...”

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, 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 some 2,000 years ago but is born each moment we lay down our need to be right and embrace peace on earth and goodwill 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.” (W-60) ❖

we can be released to a future of a healed mind. Similarly, this young boy was able to look at his past and be allowed to learn from it. In essence, he could be born again by releasing guilt and allowing learning and understanding to lead him to a harmonious end to the rehearsal.



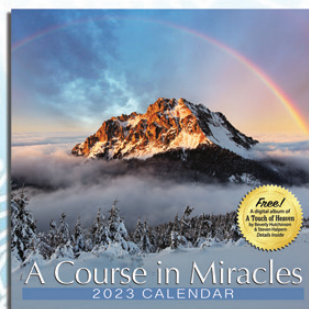
“Children will make mistakes, and helping them to learn from these mistakes and not make the child bad or label them as a troublemaker, is how we help them to stop destructive patterns that don't have to negatively predict their future.”

It's a simple lesson, but some of the most profound lessons are learned in simple situations. Apply this equation to any negative experience you may have. The Course says,

“The cloud that obscures God's Son to you is the past, and if you would have it past and gone, you must not see it now. ...You would anticipate the future on the basis of your past experience, and plan for it accordingly. Yet by doing so you are aligning past and future, and not allowing the miracle, which could intervene between them, to free you to be born again.” (T-13.VI.3.4)

“Hey man, are you born again?” I respond, “Yes, I am born again!” Because every present moment that I seize the opportunity to see myself freed from the past, I can be reborn in that instant, ready to move freely into the light of love. ❖

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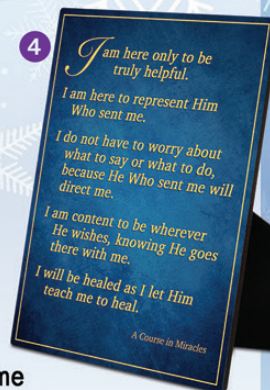


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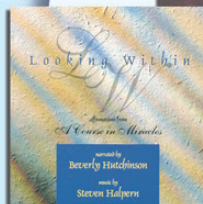
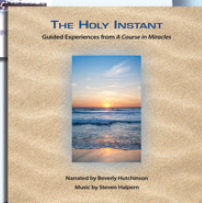
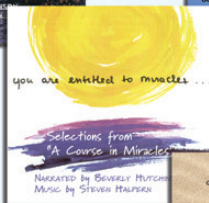
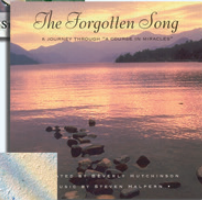


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The HOLY ENCOUNTER

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2022

In This Issue...

- Walking Steadily Toward Truth
- Born Again?
- "All That I Give, I Give to Myself"
- Remembering vs. Change
- A Quickening
- The Hammock in the Middle

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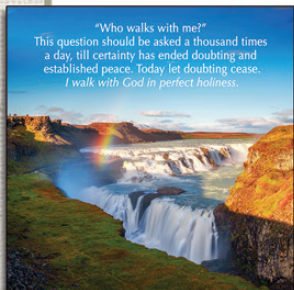
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Each time that you take your rest today, a tired mind is suddenly made glad, a bird with broken wings begins to sing, a stream long dry begins to flow again. With each moment that you rest today, the world is nearer waking.

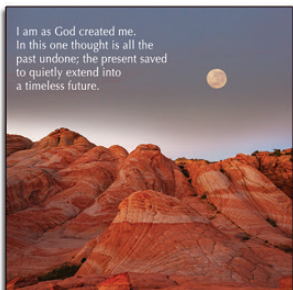


Inspirational quotes from the renowned spiritual teaching *A Course in Miracles* unite with the beauty of nature to create a year of peace and healing.

"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. I walk with God in perfect holiness.



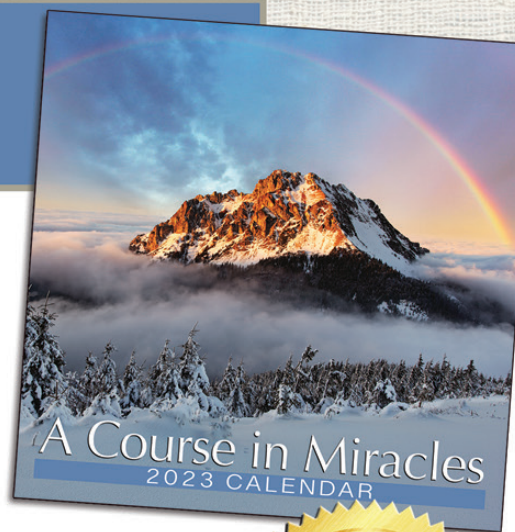
I am as God created me. In this one thought is all the past undone: the present saved to quietly extend into a timeless future.



Through every opened door God's Love shines outward from its home within, and lightens up the world in innocence.



August



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