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The HOLY ENCOUNTER



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024
A Miracle Distribution Center Publication

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



"The Overcoming of It"

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

"All the world is very full of suffering; it is also full of the overcoming of it." —Hellen Keller

As a deafblind person, Helen Keller knew how prejudice and injustice felt. Born in 1880, Keller lost sight and hearing after an illness when she was 19 months old. Her parents tried to help her, but at the age of seven, when Keller met her first teacher and life-long companion, Anne Sullivan, the world of language, reading, and writing was opened to her.

Keller acquired an education at both specialist and main-stream schools. Attending Radcliffe College of Harvard University, Keller became the first deafblind person in the United States to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. She was the author of 14 books and hundreds of essays and speeches and campaigned for people with disabilities, women's suffrage, labor rights, and world peace.

In 1961, at 80, Helen Keller met with

President John F. Kennedy in the Oval Office of the White House. At that point in her life, she had met every president since Grover Cleveland and used her platform to advocate for equal rights for people with disabilities.



Helen Keller meeting with President Kennedy in 1961.

"... Keller became the first deafblind person in the United States to earn a Bachelor of Arts degree. She was the author of 14 books and hundreds of essays and speeches ..."

Helen Keller knew what it was like to be different, yet she used her challenges to touch the lives of millions of people and show them that the blind and the deaf could not only function in a world of sight and sound but could excel.

A Course in Miracles says the same thing; it is only our own thoughts of limitation that imprison us ...

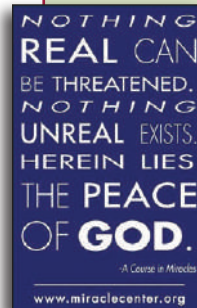
"You have taught yourself how to imprison the Son of God, a lesson so unthinkable that only the insane, in deepest sleep, could even dream of it. Can God learn how not to be God? And

Continued on page 13

A Campaign That Counts

Your responses to our 2024 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 blue vinyl cling that features a powerful quotation from the introduction of *A Course in Miracles*.



We hope you have already affixed it to your refrigerator, mirror, or kitchen window and have been comforted by its message. Send us a photo of where you place your cling!

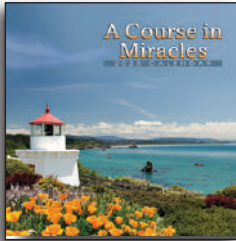
If you have yet to respond to this year's appeal, please consider joining the ranks of those who keep MDC's doors open and the Course's teachings going out into the world. You may use the return envelope you received with this year's fundraiser, the envelope bound inside every issue of **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER**, or the donation link at miraclecenter.org. We are deeply grateful for your support.

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

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

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

● **Looking forward to a Miraculous New Year!** Our 2025 *A Course in Miracles* Wall Calendar is now available to give and receive as the perfect holiday gift! This calendar features stunning full-color photos and inspiring quotes from the Course for each month. It will keep the Course's message of peace and healing in the forefront of your mind all year long. It's a meaningful gift to give your family, friends, and yourself! And the more calendars you purchase, the lower the price! See back page for details.



● **Retreat Experience Made Easy** — Now is the perfect time to reserve your place at our next **Holy Encounter Retreat** on **April 25- 27, 2025**. 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.

● **"I love Beverly's approach to the season of Advent.** I look forward to this every year!" This is how DebR in Oregon is feeling about our livestream Advent meetings. Join us as we birth the awareness of Christ in our minds and hearts again this year. Our first livestream meeting for Advent is December 4 at 7 pm (Pacific Time) and will proceed for four weeks. Join us for free every Wednesday on our site at miraclecenter.org, or become a subscriber and watch at your convenience. Whichever way you watch, we hope you will make this time a truly miraculous one in your life! Sharyn, a subscriber in New Hampshire, shared her manger (pictured). Go to **page 8** to see and read more.



● **On-demand ACIM Seminars** — We currently have three seminars by Beverly McNeff on the principles of *A Course in Miracles* available for immediate viewing.

The seminars are six hours long, each with a unique focus. **"Above the Battle Ground: Finding Peace in Turbulent Times"** offers insights to refocus our minds on the truth in challenging times. **"Getting God's Guidance"** shares the Course's perspective on experiencing God's Will and guidance for us. **"The Fundamentals of Forgiveness"** addresses the Course's approach to its chosen path for our awakening. Beverly has a unique ability to cut through the complexity of the Course in a way that will inspire your mind and touch your heart.

● **Miracle Milestones (MM)** — Celebrate your loved ones or yourself with a gift to the Center! Many have chosen to celebrate MMs with a donation. Whether it's a birthday, anniversary, or remembering a loved one, making a gift to the Center (and inviting others to) is a way to keep the love and joy flowing. **Delores in New York** donated \$70.00 for her **68th birthday** and shared how grateful she is to be 68 years young! We appreciate the many who celebrate with us and will acknowledge your MM in **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER!**



● **"The memory of God comes to the quiet mind,"** says *A Course in Miracles*. When we take those quiet moments during the day to have faith that God can and will settle every problem now, we call upon the power of the universe, the power of love, to work miracles in our lives. We invite you to stop and join us each day at **4:30 pm (Pacific Time)** for a moment of prayerful support for yourself, your loved ones, and everyone in the prayer ministry. Thoughts for:

November: "My Holiness blesses the world." (Lesson 37)

December: "Your peace is with me, Father. I am safe." (Lesson 245)

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

APRIL 25-27, 2025

Holy Encounter Retreat

This retreat is designed to help students not just talk about A Course in Miracles but to experience deeply its healing power.

Through lectures, meditation, group sharing, music, and laughter, you will be helped to see, and look beyond, the limitations of this world and experience the possibility of God in every aspect of your life.



"I came away with down-to-earth principles that helped me make sense of things in terms of forgiveness, judgment, etc. The environment and food were great...I just had a great time overall!"



"Beverly made the Course so easy to understand. I'm always getting this message that the Course is so hard and she makes it so simple."

The **Holy Encounter Retreat** will be held at the majestic RW Ranch Spiritual Retreat Center in Lucerne Valley, California. Sessions will be conducted in comfortable meeting rooms and time for reflection and meditation may be experienced in various landscaped parks, intimate flower gardens, beside a tumbling stream, or peaceful ponds ... each offering privacy, seclusion, and a distinctive setting.



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

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



Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

is an international lecturer, author, and founder of the Center. She brings over forty years of Course study to this weekend that will leave you

with the tools and understanding you'll need to experience miracles in your life.

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



**Register Today!
Space is Limited**



Register now, space is limited. Price includes all retreat activities, six organic meals, and lodging.



To register visit miraclecenter.org or call 800-359-ACIM (2246)





Miracle Musings ...

Homeward Bound

by Paul McNeff

"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And where I go you know, and the way you know." (John 14:1-4)

"This world you seem to live in is not home to you. And somewhere in your mind you know that this is true. A memory of home keeps haunting you, as if there were a place that called you to return, although you do not recognize the voice, nor what it is the voice reminds you of. Yet still you feel an alien here, from somewhere all unknown. Nothing so definite that you could say with certainty you are an exile here. Just a persistent feeling, sometimes not more than a tiny throb, at other times hardly remembered, actively dismissed, but surely to return to mind again." (W-182.1)

The President of the United States,
To: Paul A. McNeff

"Greetings:

You are hereby ordered for induction into the Armed Forces of the United States, and to report at 1030 W. Eighth St., Santa Ana, California on 11 August 1970."

And so those few words changed my life in an instant. In the 1970s, under the Nixon administration, the Vietnam War-era draft transitioned into a lottery system. This was the first time the lottery system was to be used since the WWII draft lottery of 1942. The United States Selective Service assigned a random number to your birthdate. When they drew that number from the draft lottery, you received the infamous "Greetings" letter ... infamous, in that all draftees never felt too good about that salutation as it meant only one thing—you belong to Uncle Sam now. For the next two years, the minimum time served for draftees, the only orders I'd be obliged to obey were Uncle Sam's.

I remember getting up early on 11 August 1970 and leaving the love and comfort of my Anaheim, California, family home, a home that I shared with ten siblings, a mother, father, and grandmother. As we approached our destination, an eerie feeling came over me—this was no vacation, and my return home would no longer be commonplace.

Depending on your individual experience, the concept of "home" might conjure up different feelings, some good, perhaps some not so good. However, the idea of home to me had always provided me with a sense of security and comfort, a shelter I could rely upon to keep me safe. And now, courtesy of the U.S. government, my home would be whatever and wherever they determined. Out of the blue, an excessive amount of fear



"For the next two years, the minimum time served for draftees, the only orders I'd be obliged to obey were Uncle Sam's."

came over me as I attempted to process it all.

A similar fear gripped the disciples when Jesus brought up the subject that he might not be with them much longer on this earthly plane as he knew his crucifixion was on the horizon. Knowing this, he tells them that they would not be left alone. In John 14:26, Jesus informs them, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all the things." They would never be truly separated from him and would find shelter in their spiritual home. In this Biblical promise, as well as in Course teaching, we, too, are assured that Spirit will never leave us regardless of our physical home experience.

In an even more specific teaching, *A Course in Miracles* also instructs us that this world is not our home. Even though we wake every day to a world full of suffering and need, down deep we still sense that this is not the reality God wants for us.

"This world you seem to live in is not home to you. And somewhere in your mind you know that this is true ...

"We speak today for everyone who walks this world, for he is not at home. He goes uncertainly about in endless search, seeking in darkness what he cannot find; not recognizing what it is he seeks. A thousand homes he makes, yet none contents his restless mind. He does not understand he builds in vain. The home he seeks can not be made by him. There is no substitute for Heaven. All he ever made was hell." (W-182.1-3)

So how do we get back to that home that resonates in the deep confines of our soul but has been shrouded by the years of the hell of a "thousand homes" we have mistakenly made for ourselves? The Course teaches we need to go back to not just the innocence of our childhood, but to

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: www.kidsingers.org

the knowledge of our true innocence.

"Perhaps you think it is your childhood home that you would find again. The childhood of your body, and its place of shelter, are a memory now so distorted that you merely hold a picture of a past that never happened. Yet there is a Child in you Who seeks His Father's house, and knows that He is alien here. This childhood is eternal, with an innocence that will endure forever. Where this Child shall go is holy ground. It is His Holiness that lights up Heaven, and that brings to earth the pure reflection of the light above, wherein are earth and Heaven joined as one." (W-182.4)



"The Course teaches we need to go back to not just the innocence of our childhood, but to the knowledge of our true innocence."

Like the Course, Jesus indicates this same state of mind in the Bible when he says in Matthew 18:3, "Unless you change and become like little children [again, using the example of a child to explain true innocence], you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

From that big parking lot in Santa Ana, as I was bused away to boot camp at Ft. Ord, California, some 400 miles from my home, I had the hope that I would be able to return home again someday. To my great delight, we were granted a weekend leave three months after our platoon had completed basic training. I had worked out a ride share with a buddy who drove me halfway, and then my parents would travel up to take me the rest of the way home. What a thrill that reunion was when I returned home to the warmth of my family.

Having a plan for returning to our spiritual home is also a good idea. The Course goes on to help us chart our path.

"This Child needs your protection. He is far from home. He is so little that He seems so easily shut out, His tiny voice so readily obscured, His call for help almost unheard amid the grating

sounds and harsh and rasping noises of the world. Yet does He know that in you still abides His sure protection. You will fail Him not. He will go home, and you along with Him.

"This Child is your defenselessness; your strength. He trusts in you. He came because He knew you would not fail. He whispers of His home unceasingly to you. For He would bring you back with Him, that He Himself might stay, and not return again where He does not belong, and where He lives an outcast in a world of alien thoughts.

His patience has no limits. He will wait until you hear

His gentle Voice within you, calling you to let Him go in peace, along with you, to where He is at home and you with Him." (W-182.6-7)

What a reassuring message, clear and substantive. So, how do we hear His gentle Voice within? Like most spiritual practices, the Course teaches that we must quiet our minds to tune in to that soft whispering voice within. Workbook lesson 182 provides the answer: "I will be still an instant and go home."

"When you are still an instant, when the world recedes from you, when valueless ideas cease to have value in your restless mind, then will you hear His Voice. So poignantly He calls to you that you will not resist Him longer. In that instant He will take you to His home, and you will stay with Him in perfect stillness, silent and at peace, beyond all words, untouched by fear and doubt, sublimely certain that you are at home." (W-182.8)

The Course consistently reminds us that when we stop and find peace within our minds, we can also bring that same stillness and comfort to others' minds. The

next time you feel the chaos and pain of this world or feel the urge to strike out at a brother, just remember there is a better way. Take a beat and wait to hear that little child within.

"Take time today to lay aside your shield which profits nothing, and lay down the spear and sword you raised against an enemy without existence. Christ has called you friend and brother. He has even come to ask your help in letting Him go home today, completed and completely. He has come as does a little child, who must beseech his father for protection and for love. He rules the universe, and yet He asks unceasingly that you return with Him, and take illusions as your gods no more.

"You have not lost your innocence. It is for this you yearn. This is your heart's desire. This is the voice you hear, and this the call which cannot be denied. The holy Child remains with you. His home is yours. Today He gives you His defenselessness, and you accept it in exchange for all the toys of battle you have made. And now the way is open, and the journey has an end in sight at

last. Be still an instant and go home with Him, and be at peace a while."

(W-182.11-12)

Just as I went back home so many years ago to the love and comfort of my family, so too can we go back to our spiritual home any time we quiet our mind and listen to our holy child's voice gently calling us to the

warm embrace of home.

Simon & Garfunkel said it this way in their 60s hit song, "Homeward Bound" —

*"I wish I was
Homeward bound
Home where my thought's escapin'
Home where my music's playin'
Home where my love lies waitin'
Silently for me"*



"... at Ft. Ord, California, some 400 miles from my home, I had the hope that I would be able to return home again someday."



Recognizing Spirit

Inspirational Psychology on Mind as a Net for Light (pt2)

by Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

"Child of peace, the light has come to you. The light you bring you do not recognize, and yet you will remember." (T-22.VI.6)

In this article, I will continue with the theme of our minds being a net for light. When learning something new, we often focus on what we believe needs to be mastered and what needs to be done.

In so doing, we overlook the intrinsic value of stillness and presence in the now, which is essential to discovering light. Whether you are working on being more peaceful, improving your relationships, or changing your environment, there is one essential foundational practice: To realize the Self and the eternal nature of love, you must be still. Even with the

best tools and sharp intellect, you won't find your way with a busy mind full of worry and endless lists of things to do or learn. Devote time to develop stillness, and love will find your heart and mind. Learn to trust being open-hearted and vulnerable, and the essence of love within you will blossom. Without stillness within, any external environmental changes will make little difference. In other words, the state of mind from which you make changes in your environment or other life decisions is most important. Stillness and presence are the bedrock of peace.

"Behind every image I have made, the truth remains unchanged. Behind every veil I have drawn across the face

of love, its light remains undimmed." (W-56.4)

You have arrived at a time when you are ready to be the light in your relationships and relinquish any value in judging others.



"Without stillness within, any external environmental changes will make little difference."

Imagine the peace that comes with fully becoming a love finder rather than a fault finder; you will leave a trail of light behind you, blossoming beneath every step, bringing light to darkness, healing too old wounds and fears of the future. When you are fully present and centered in the stillness of spirit and people around you act in ways you may not like or agree with, you

won't feel the need to internally or externally react to it as you once did. More and more every day, choose to look beyond fear, and see

the light in all beings. Doing this is an extraordinary gift to yourself, because your peace becomes vaster, your caring deeper, and all that is not love increasingly vanishes as though it was never here. Our world, especially today, is where the cycle of action and reaction rules most lives. People trigger us, and we believe it is about them, and if they were different, we would be happier. Practicing forgiveness brings freedom from this cycle. It opens the door to living from love and tenderness rather than the fearful and thoughtless reactive cycle of blame, attack, and defense.

"Turn toward the light, for the little spark in you is part of a light so great that it can sweep you out of all dark-

ness forever." (T-11.III.5:6)

Many angry or disturbing words are spoken daily, but few hear the call of love beyond all words. We can always perceive others as either loving or fearful and making a call for help and love. In all words spoken and actions taken, let us turn to the voice of love within that will guide us, individually and collectively, to a place of peace and hope. Inspirational Psychology and the Course are a way to find the peace given to us and discover it together. Consider that you are here, right now, at this moment, because a loving presence calls to you. You may have only recently realized this; it's just a hunch that there is a better way. You recognize something profound within, a truth that makes peace no longer feel impossible or far off. Put more simply, as the author Hugh Prather said, you know there is a better way to go through life than being dragged kicking and screaming. Though I may not know you personally or the circumstances of your life, I know that love brought you to this moment in time to humbly live, to love, heal, and experience your healing.

"The light expands and covers everything, extending to infinity forever shining and with no break or limit anywhere. Within it everything is joined in perfect continuity. Nor is it possible to imagine that anything could be outside, for there is nowhere that this light is not." (T-21.I.8:4)

The beauty of love and life is always present, but we are not always present to it. Each person you encounter holds the way for you, the doorway to truth, love, and healing. Few see this, and fewer still practice it, but it is nonetheless true. Finding gentleness and care for another person or animal, no matter how annoying or challenging they may be, holds a

path to restore us to sanity, where we see how our thoughts and beliefs behind our reactions need healing. We see how our anger, grievances, and defensiveness harm us and that the foundation of all healing is letting go of fear.



"Each person you encounter holds the way for you, the doorway to truth, love, and healing."

"Grievances and light cannot go together, but light and vision must be joined for me to see. To see, I must lay grievances aside." (W-85.1:5)

The following morning and evening meditation reflects this.



I choose to make peace of mind my single goal, to bring love to my family and friends and those in need of someone seeing the light in them, however dim.

I choose to focus on the whole of life rather than the fragments, and no matter what problem or challenge I have, I trust love is the answer.

With increasing confidence, I know I can bring love to everything I do. I am here to be truly helpful, to behold innocence in myself and others, and to hear the call for love in all I meet.

I do not walk alone as I continue to look into each circumstance to discover the power of love and forgiveness that is always here. ❖

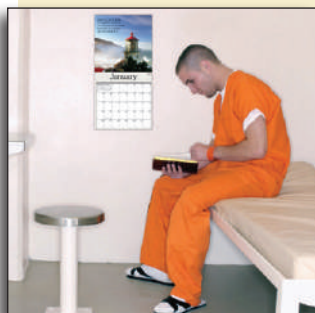


Update: Prison Project

The Prison Project of Miracle Distribution Center sends *A Course in Miracles* and other Course-based items to prison inmates. Through your generous donations, we have been able to supply many newly started spiritual libraries in prisons. In some cases, we have provided multiple copies of books so more inmates can read about the love that is their essence. These principles genuinely make a difference and quench a thirst for truth that those in prison have found no other place.



The following letter indicates the importance of our Prison Project in many inmates' lives. We are grateful that we are here to bring the truth and inspiration that *A Course Miracles* so beautifully offers.



Dear Friends at MDC,

For the last few years, your organization has been so gracious as to provide me with an *A Course in Miracles* wall calendar. I thank you so very much for this service. If possible, can you send me a calendar for next year?

As I am sure you are aware, other inmates and myself have such limited access, and every little thing, like the calendar and the support that you

offer, makes a big difference in our lives.

Thank you very much,

Forest Gill in Stafford Creek Corrections Center, WA

We are honored to be able to meet Forest's request and each request sent to us because of your generous support of the Prison Project and the Center.

If you know of an inmate who would like to receive books related to the Course or **THE HOLY ENCOUNTER** magazine, let us know. Because of strict rules for sending items into prisons and secured facilities, please check with the particular institution before you request items to be sent.

Together, we can experience healing by demonstrating healing through our willingness to be truly helpful to others. We invite your tax-deductible donations to support this project.

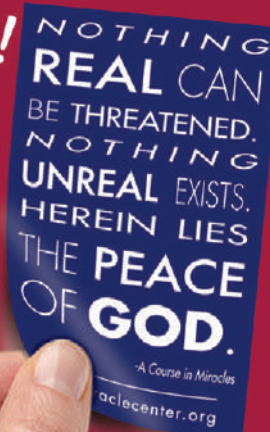
To read more click on "Prison Project" under "Services" at miraclecenter.org

A thought you can cling to!

"Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God."

Our vinyl "cling" features this powerful truth from the Course's introduction to the text and gives you a focus to meet your day. Adheres to smooth surfaces such as windows, mirrors, etc., by static electricity. This new cling is available for a donation of any amount. Use the envelope in this issue or donate at:

miraclecenter.org
and request the cling.





Releasing Together

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

"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. Leave nothing behind, for release is total, and when you have accepted it with me you will give it with me. All pain and sacrifice and littleness will disappear in our relationship, which is as innocent as our relationship with our Father, and as powerful. Pain will be brought to us and disappear in our presence, and without pain there can be no sacrifice. And without sacrifice there love must be." (T-15.XI.3)

I want to tell you a story of transformation. Years ago, as we here at Miracle Distribution Center would look at the Christmas season through the eyes of *A Course in Miracles*, we added a little fun symbolism by having all the participants at our celebration light individual candles. It was our way of signifying that the light of love is always shining in our lives, and as we join together and extend that light, our world of seeming darkness is no more.

Since this was at our old location, which had a large room that could seat around a hundred people, we had no restriction on lighting candles. As this celebration grew, we decided to go to a larger facility to handle the crowd. We contacted a local church that had a sanctuary that held 400 people. It was perfect, there was only one problem: They would not allow us to have people light small candles inside the building. It was understandable with fire restrictions, but it did put a slight damper on our service. At least, that is what I thought.

As I prayed about what we should do, the above passage from the Course seemed to leap out at me. Christmas is

about a birth, a new life, but how can we experience that birth if we are shackled by hurts or disappointments of the past? It also tells us that the "gift" the Holy Spirit wants from us is all of those hurts, pains, or disappointments. So, as far as wondering what to give the Holy Spirit this Christmas, that's it! He wants us to give Him everything that would hurt us! He wants to unburden us from our pain so we can be healed and healed completely. In that release, we release everyone together. It seems like quite a wonderful miracle to receive from the "gift" we give to Him. And yet, this is what He wants!



The original MDC manger was made in 1994 and is still used today.

"With that exciting awareness in my mind, I knew exactly how to make this experience come alive!"

With that exciting awareness in my mind, I knew exactly how to make this experience come alive! I asked my "handyman" Dad (before his passing) to make me a small, three-foot-tall wooden manger. We lined the manger with burlap and brought two bags of straw to the celebration. After the meditation and message, I invited each person to approach the manger.

As they came forward, they were asked to silently think of a hurt, disappointment, or worry in their lives and to let a piece of straw represent that issue. Then they were to simply put the straw into the manger and think of giving it to

the Holy Spirit so that they may be healed completely.

It was such a meaningful experience for everyone. Yet, it was born out of a situation that might have been perceived as a disappointment — as if we were being denied something, namely our candlelight service.

This new approach had a double blessing: it helped many to experience a release from their hurts and disappointments, and it helped me realize that there is no sacrifice. What may appear to me as a sacrifice at first is just an opportunity to choose another way of seeing and thus free myself and my world.

We no longer do large Christmas celebrations, but in our weekly livestream meetings before Christmas, we still have the manger present for our healing release. We start this focus for the Advent season, which is the four weeks before Christmas. This year's Advent begins on Sunday, December 1, and we will start our Advent meetings on Wednesday, December 4.

Since our subscribers and viewers are not physically with us, we suggest people make personal mangers. It can be made from popsicle sticks or something comparable or as simple as a bowl, a box, or a basket. The form is unimportant,

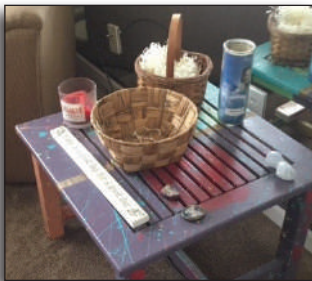
but many viewers have sent pictures of their mangers, and we have shared some with you in this article. They are truly holy



Bonnie's manger in Michigan

inspirations! We invite you to share your mangers as well.

And then, the practice begins. Each day (or as many times a day as you would like), take a piece of straw (or something similar like twigs or shredded paper), and as you pick it up, let it represent a hurt or painful situation in your life. As you place the piece in the manger, realize that the Holy Spirit wants to heal you of any hurt and pain, so be willing to give it to Him. "Let yourself be healed



Bobbi's manger in Nevada

"Since our subscribers and viewers are not physically with us, we suggest people make personal mangers. ... many viewers have sent pictures of their mangers ..."

completely that you may join with Him in healing." (ibid)

You can start this practice as soon as possible. Whenever you start, do your best to release the pain or hurt completely, if only for that day. If you choose to "pick it up again," don't feel guilty; simply try again.

When Christmas finally comes, notice how full the manger is and how ready it is for a birth. Remember that the home you have made for the Holy Spirit is not made because we want Him to suffer for our "sins," but so He can show us that in our relationship with Him, all our pain and suffering will disappear, and only love will remain. It is time to birth the Christ, the awareness of love and light in our lives and in our world.

May this holiday season be filled with love, light, and healing! ❖

Join us as we celebrate the Advent season!

- Free livestream meetings
- Starting on Wed., Dec. 4 at 7pm (PT)
- View at miraclecenter.org

FREE Livestream Wednesdays

Please join us for the broadcast of our weekly *A Course in Miracles* meetings with Beverly Hutchinson McNeff



Wednesday Evenings @ 7pm PT / 10pm ET

These free livestreams tackle real world challenges and view them through the healing power of *A Course in Miracles*. Each week we explore a workbook lesson and text section in the Course.

Sections are explained for their theory as well as their application into our daily lives. Bev brings knowledge, humor, and down-to-earth practicality to the Course's principles. Watch free or become a subscriber.

LESSON 125
In quiet I receive God's Word today.
1. Let this day be a day of stillness and of quiet listening. Your Father wills you hear His Word today. And so He calls from deep within your mind where He abides. Hear Him today. No peace is possible until His Word is heard around the world; until your mind, in quiet listening, accepts the message that the world must hear to usher in the quiet time of peace.



"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."

"I have been so inspired by Beverly's weekly meetings. I am so grateful to be able to watch her online."

"I love the livestreams. I understand the Course so much better, and Beverly is so darn fun! I love her sense of humor and great insights! I find myself thinking about what she says all the time."

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To Be Awake

by Joseph Miller

"Into Christ's Presence will we enter now, serenely unaware of everything except His shining face and perfect Love." (W-157.9)

In intimacy, we are unadorned by pretense, unburdened by memory, and absent of agenda. We are simply present. This is easily stated but hard to achieve. As *A Course in Miracles* makes clear, our tangled minds look for complex solutions to simple problems, and so we overlook simple solutions. Can we share intimacy with another person if we are not intimate with ourselves?

In *Walden*, Henry David Thoreau wrote, "To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?" I can relate to this. In my early 20s, I took a friend to an inspiring lecture. Afterward, we walked to the front to meet the speaker. When he finally turned to us, he said nothing but simply gazed intently and kindly into our faces. My friend returned the gaze in calm joy, but I was made very uncomfortable. It was as though all of my private thoughts and inner conflicts were on display, and all I wanted to do was shut down and hide. When communion is threatening, we choose to break communication.

"It is impossible to recognize perfect communication while breaking communication holds value to you." (T-15.IV.8)

A Course in Miracles speaks a great deal about the fear of love. Love is fearful, because it brings to light what is hidden. It threatens to expose the games and inadequacies



Mir and Radek in Yosemite.

"A 'leap' is a wonderful metaphor for the challenge of the present moment. I was thrilled with each boy's unencumbered poise."

and complacency, love is regarded as a menace. This is, of course, the true reason why *all* light-bringers are persecuted and why Jesus was executed. Jesus calls to the mind, "Come out from the shadows; stand with me in the present moment; and share my decision for God."

According to the Course, we are not only afraid of love, but afraid of the present moment. I've come to believe these fears are closely related: the *presence* of another is only truly known in the *present*.

"Hell is only what the ego has made of the present. The belief in hell is what prevents you from understanding the present, because you are afraid of it." (T-15.I.7)

This past summer I went to the mountains with Konstantin and his sons, Mir and Radek — three of the Ukrainian refugees living with Kim and me. We camped above Yosemite Valley but took day trips to the Merced River to swim. "Swinging Bridge," a footbridge, does not really swing, but it does present a 15-ft leap into the water. Mir, age 9, without a thought, climbed through the railing and jumped. And Radek, age 7, with a grin, soon followed his older brother. A "leap" is a



of the ego. But love is also fearful because of what it demands. Love requires nothing less than unending wakefulness and universal responsibility. From the ego's guarded and puny standpoint, within the bunker of prejudice

wonderful metaphor for the challenge of the present moment. I was thrilled with each boy's unencumbered poise. And as I watched a series of park visitors climb to position and push off, I observed how each one dealt with the present moment. You can hedge and overthink, but eventually you just have to shut up and jump.

A sweet Dutch girl named Emily, about ten years old, clung to the rail, fidgeting, bending her knees for a moment, and then letting out her breath, straightening up again. We all applauded loudly when she eventually leapt. But during the ten-minute buildup to that moment, you could see her torn between the simple desire to jump and a whirl of second guesses. We have all known that feeling of being frozen with fear. It hardly seems fair that all that energy spent equivocating does absolutely nothing. You still must face the same irreducible challenge, the same unadorned moment, the same naked act of will.

You may not be challenged to leap from a bridge, but what about the inward leap into the holy instant? The Course suggests we practice abstracting from all images and memories and bring the mind intensely into *this present moment*. We can just as easily hedge and overthink an inward leap as we would an outward one. The mind that is accustomed to anxious thoughts and guilty images may find the blank present a truly frightening prospect. We are told that our propensity to plan masks a fear of spontaneity and surrender, just as our compulsion to judge hinders the depth and meaning of our encounters with other human beings. And yet, "The holy instant is the miracle's abiding place." (T-27.V.3) The miracle, in other words, is accessible whenever we lift ourselves above the ticker-tape conditioning of time and memory.

"It is in the reality of 'now,' without past or future, that the beginning of the appreciation of eternity lies. For only 'now' is here, and only 'now' presents the opportunities for the holy encounters in which salvation can be found."

(T-13.IV.7:6)

My awakening to *A Course in Miracles* in the early 1980s coincided with a growing passion for jazz. The liberty and spontaneity exhibited by jazz musicians thrilled me, and I regarded this as a spiritual metaphor. These musicians suspend expectations and abide, trustingly, in the present moment. I was absolutely convinced this was a generalizable truth. If only I could attune myself to the key and cadence of Life itself, I, too, could let go and fly. On the ground, a bird wears its folded wings like armor; its movements are clumsy and encumbered. Only when we abide by an open, defenseless attitude do we find liberty and joy.



Grammy-winning jazz legend, pianist, and composer Chick Corea.

"I was so moved by two of Chick's albums that I wrote him a letter, and a few weeks later, to my utter astonishment, into my college mailbox, arrived a personal letter from Chick ..."

"Dear Joseph,
Thanks so much for your letter. I'm glad you took time to write. Musicians, I think, need a little bit

more brotherhood between us. We do work hard for very seemingly mysterious goals sometimes, but to us they're not so mysterious. You have all my best to all the kinds of ways you like to create.

Until next we meet.
Love, Chick"

That letter meant the world to me and still does. That great musician's simple gesture reassured me that I was not alone and that my dawning awareness of spiritual life was real. But it did something more. It cemented a lifelong quest to put down my guard, put away my spin, and welcome the next moment and the next person like the divinely appointed visitors they are.

"In any weather, at any hour of the day or night, I have been anxious to improve the nick of time, and notch it on my stick too; to stand on the meeting of two eternities, the past and future, which is precisely the present moment; to toe that line."

Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*

I saw hints of cosmic consciousness in a few of the greats: John Coltrane, Charles Lloyd, and Keith Jarrett. Chick Corea often emphasized the need for human brotherhood and penned a poem to reassure fellow "secret agents" that we were not

alone, and our efforts were not in vain. I was so moved by two of Chick's albums that I wrote him a letter, and a few weeks later, to my utter astonishment, into my college mailbox, arrived a personal letter from Chick, apparently typed on a manual typewriter (this was the early '80s, after all).

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With Miracles We Will Soar in 2024



By Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

I have been sharing the idea that with miracles we will soar in 2024 in our livestream meetings of this new year, and it seems to be taking hold. We must stop feeling defeated or limited by the world and our experience in this world; it is time we soar in 2024! And we have the tool to achieve this awareness with *A Course in Miracles*.

For many of you who have been traveling with the Course and the Center for a while, you might wonder what makes this new year any different. This year is different because...

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When the Ego Calls, Hang Up!

by Jacob Glass

"When the ego was made, God placed in the mind the Call to joy. This Call is so strong that the ego always dissolves at its sound. That is why you must choose to hear one of two voices within you. One you made yourself, and that one is not of God. But the other is given you by God, Who asks you only to listen to it." (T-5.II.3)

I was talking with a client recently, a young woman who was trying to make a decision about her future — where to go, what to do, and how to do it all. She had a tremendous amount of anxiety and confusion because the voices in her head seemed to be from everyone but herself. She left her last computer programming job because of problems with her eyesight and was putting a lot of pressure on herself about what her next moves should be. Should she sell her house, move, go to school, start a new job, return to her old career, and on and on. She was spinning in her head most of the time.

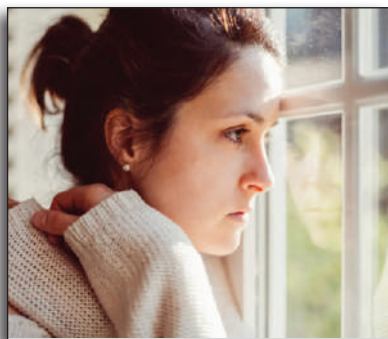
She is single, has no children, and is really quite free to do whatever she chooses, but the taskmaster living in her mind was not allowing her to enjoy a moment of her freedom. Most of our bondage is mental, caused by stories we tell ourselves based on whatever programming and brainwashing we've undergone in the past. This is why I tell people I am a "deprogrammer and demotivational speaker." Miracles UNDO the nonsense that ego is always spewing into our brains. She couldn't even enjoy going for a walk because "HOW WAS THAT GOING TO HELP HER MAKE A DECISION ABOUT THE WHOLE REST OF HER LIFE? HOW WAS THAT GOING TO GET HER

ANYWHERE OR ACCOMPLISH HER GOALS?" The ego takes everything very seriously — DEADLY SERIOUS.

These days, people cannot even enjoy going for a simple walk unless we can ACHIEVE our 10,000 steps that day! People seem to think joy is frivolous and only for those who are selfish, lazy, or not very smart. No wonder depression and anxiety have gone through the roof!

I used to get in trouble all the time for my joy. In fact, I've been punished for it! One of my high school teachers beat me because

I smiled in the study hall! People would say I was "having too much fun!" As if such a thing were possible. They thought I couldn't possibly be getting anything done if I was laughing and enjoying myself. Back in the 1980s, when I was working part-time at a plastic surgeon's office where I did insurance billing, filing, surgery report transcriptions, and was the receptionist, I got in trouble all the time for laughing and having "too much fun." But when I quit that "part-time" job, they had to hire two full-time people to replace me, because



"People seem to think joy is frivolous ... No wonder depression and anxiety have gone through the roof!"

I got so much done quickly and efficiently while having a very good time.

My client is now learning how to get off her own back and recognize that learning through joy is much more efficient than learning through pain. I taught her to talk to the little girl in herself as a happy, loving parent would — that playing for the simple JOY of playing is an end in itself. You don't have to be trying to "get somewhere" or to "accomplish" something. JOY has a fabulous purpose in and of itself. DO IT FOR THE JOY OF THE DOING.

Growing up, when we were going somewhere, my mother often said, "Let's go so we can get back!" Huh? Why are we going if it's so that we can come back here? We're ALREADY here. Constantly doing things just to check them off a list is the life of Sisyphus pushing a boulder up a hill every day just to watch it roll down the other side — endless effort and struggle that accomplishes nothing lasting.

There is the fear that if we are too joyous, people won't take us seriously or respect us. Who cares? So what? What others think of me is none of my business. People will judge us and project onto us no matter what we do, so why not live the life that YOU CHOOSE FOR YOURSELF instead of trying to please unhappy, anxious

people who hate seeing others enjoying themselves? The thinking of God is 180 degrees away from the thinking of the culture. When I wrote my book *A Course in Prosperity* a few years ago, it was to show



"There is the fear that if we are too joyous, people won't take us seriously or respect us. Who cares? ... What others think of me is none of my business."

people that there is nothing unspiritual about money — that it can be very FUN to play with and that “God is in everything I see” means even money, and plastic surgery, and making life decisions, and sex, and taking walks in the park, and napping, and working in a cubicle, and that we can literally LAUGH the ego away by hanging up when it phones. “I’m sorry, Jacob is only in for the Holy Spirit. Don’t call us, we’ll call you — NOT!” ❖

The Overcoming of It

Continued from page 1

can His Son, given all power by Him, learn to be powerless?” (T-14.XI.2)

No matter where in life we may find ourselves, whether it be with feelings of physical, mental, emotional, or financial limitations, the Course is telling us that we can be freed to experience our power as children of God and experience the gifts of God.

Workbook Lesson 320 from the Course says that God gives all power unto us. It states that our holy will can never be denied because God shines upon our minds and lays before them all the strength and love in earth and Heaven. So whenever we feel alone or limited by worldly conditions, the power of God is available to us to raise us out of our circumstances.

Many of us know the story of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* by Victor Hugo. The novel is a tale of prejudice and ignorance as Quasimodo, the Hunchback, is victimized by those who are afraid of his grotesque appearance. Kept in the bell tower of Notre Dame, Quasimodo rings the massive bells of the great cathedral, which bring joy and inspiration to all the people of Paris. Interestingly, these are the

same people who fear and hate him for his appearance.

This kind soul’s gentle and loving spirit is not limited by what the world says is his limitation. He may be persecuted by the world, which calls him a monster, but who is really the “monster,” he or his persecutors? And, who is imprisoned: Quasimodo, who has love and compassion for everyone, or those who choose, out of ignorance and prejudice, to attack him?

The Course tells us that,

“Whom you seek to imprison you do not love. Therefore, when you seek to imprison anyone, including yourself, you do not love him [or yourself] and you cannot identify with him. When you imprison yourself you are losing sight of your true identification with me and with the Father. Your identification is with the Father and with the Son. It cannot be with One and not the Other. If you are part of One you must be part of the Other, because They are One.”

(T-8.IV.8)



The Hunchback of Notre Dame, 1939 film version.

“Kept in the bell tower of Notre Dame, Quasimodo rings the massive bells of the great cathedral, which bring joy and inspiration to all the people of Paris.”

for He wants to lift us out of suffering and help us to heal. We can be raised out of our pain and limits, but we must be willing to release our attachment to the pain and limits. It seems impossible to think that

we might be emotionally attached to our pain, yet the Course tells us that we are, but only to an extent.

“Tolerance for pain may be high, but it is not without limit. Eventually everyone begins to recognize, however dimly, that there must be a better way.” (T-2.III.3)



And that better way can be found through prayer, as we are told in *The Song of Prayer*,

“You have chosen a newborn chance each time you pray. And would you stifle and imprison it in ancient prisons, when the chance

has come to free yourself from all of them at once?” (S-1.IV.4)

Therefore, let us use the power of prayer to release our own limiting thoughts about ourselves, others, and God. It is time for us to experience the power of God’s presence in our lives to heal and help.

Three Prayers of Release:

1. If we have been holding limiting or attacking thoughts about another, let’s affirm this prayer:

“I give you [insert name (s)] to the Holy Spirit as part of myself. I know that you will be released, unless I want to use you to imprison myself. In the name of freedom I choose your release, because I recognize that we will be released together.” (T-15.XI.10)

This does not mean we are condoning a person’s actions, but we don’t want to stay in our imprisoned thinking about them or us. We want release now, and the only way to access that release is by lifting our thinking to the power of love.

2. If we have been holding limiting thoughts about ourselves and the situations in which we find ourselves in life, let’s open up to God and say:

Continued on page 14

"I do not know what anything, including this, means. And so I do not know how to respond to it. And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now." (T-14.XI.6)

By this declaration, we are stepping aside from our attachments to our limiting thoughts and allowing God to take His rightful place in our minds. He will lift us out of our pain and into peace the moment we let go of our demands and control.

3. If we have been reluctant to turn to God, thinking we are not entitled to His help or that He is incapable of helping us with our problems, let us turn to Him now and affirm:

"Father, you are the One Who gave the plan for my salvation to

me. You have set the way I am to go, the role to take, and every step in my appointed path. I cannot lose the way. I can but choose to wander off a while, and then return. Your loving Voice will always call me back, and guide my feet aright. My brothers all can follow in the way I lead them. Yet I merely follow in the way to You, as You direct me and would have me go." (W-324.1)

Try using these prayers whenever you attempt to imprison yourself or another. God can and will step into our lives as we release our limiting thoughts and open up to His presence in prayer.

And finally, let me share this ...

I read a story many years ago about a boy born with a withered leg. From infancy, he had worn a brace on that leg. As he grew, the brace became a real challenge for him. He felt bound by it; he could not climb trees, run, or play games like the other boys. He got the impression that he

could not climb the "tree of life" with such a limitation.

His father told him not to worry about his leg, for he knew of a cathedral where a big pile of crutches and braces had been left by people who had gone there and been healed. His father told him that when



"His father told him not to worry about his leg, for he knew of a cathedral where a big pile of crutches and braces had been left by people who had gone there and been healed."

he was old enough, they would go to the cathedral and ask God for healing so that the boy could leave his brace at the altar. The boy was thrilled!

The day came when the father and son entered the great cathedral. They knelt at the altar, and the father told his son to pray and ask God to heal him. The boy prayed, and he felt a deep sense of peace. Then he opened his eyes and looked at his father. His father's face was filled with much love and faith. The boy was

so stirred by this vision that he stood up! But when he looked down, there was his withered leg, just as before.

Disappointed, the boy started back down the aisle with his father, his brace thumping as usual. When he approached the door of the great cathedral, something incredible happened. He said he felt a tremendous warmth in his heart. He felt like a great hand had passed across his head, and he was overwhelmed with joy. He cried out, "Father! You were right! I have been healed." As young as he was, the boy knew what had happened. The brace had not been taken off his leg, but it had been taken off his mind.

Let us not limit God in our lives. His healing power can help us take the "braces" off our minds the moment we are willing. We must be willing to release our imprisoning thoughts about ourselves, others, and God Himself. It is a chain reaction: we cannot know the power of God in our lives while we believe that attack

toward ourselves or toward others means anything. As the Course tells us,

"It [attack] is unjustified in any form, because it has no meaning. The only way it could be justified is if you and your brother were separate from the other, and all were separate from your Creator. For only then would it be possible to attack a part of creation without the whole, the Son without the Father; and to attack another without yourself, or hurt yourself without the other feeling pain ... Attack is neither safe nor dangerous. It is impossible. And this is so because the universe is one." (T-22.VI.12)

Let us not believe in the "impossible" anymore. Let us join with the answer God is offering us in our lives by joining with all of His children in release and love now.

We can experience "the overcoming of it," for God has the perfect answer for our feelings of limitation, hurt, pain, or unworthiness, but He cannot help us without our willingness to be released. Unite with God in your release by releasing everyone with you. Let us make this moment our time for "the overcoming of it." As the Course so beautifully expresses ...

"... 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)



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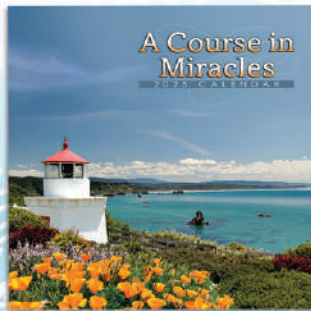
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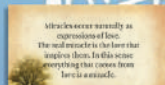
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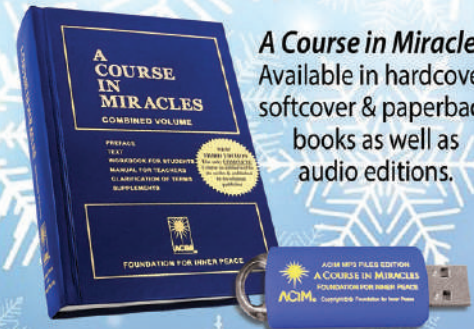
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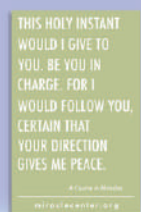
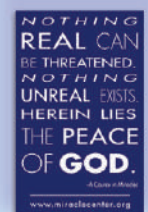
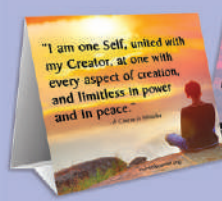
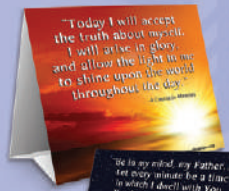
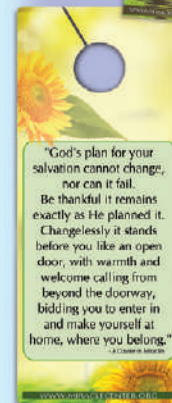
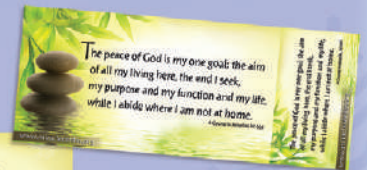
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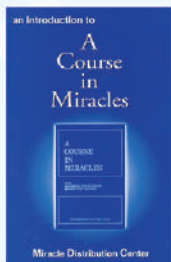


Teach Only Love Water Bottle

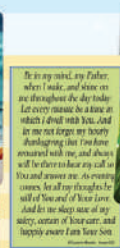
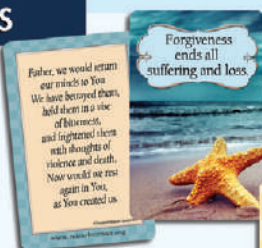


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NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2024

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- To Be Awake
- When the Ego Calls, Hang Up!

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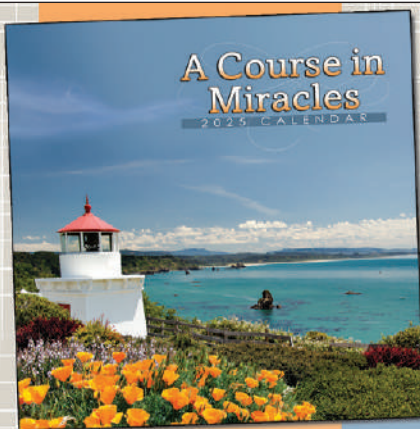
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A Course in Miracles

2025 WALL CALENDAR

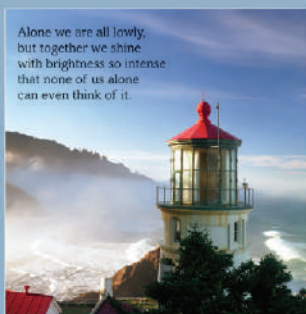


Proceeds from the
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help to support the
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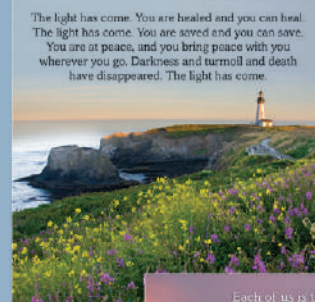
THE HOLY ENCOUNTER
Magazine
and our free
Wednesday
Livestreams

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

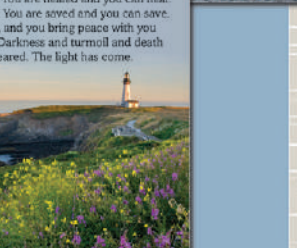
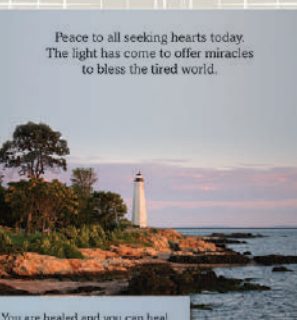
Large 12"x12"
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January



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beautiful
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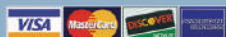


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"NEW AND FEATURED ITEMS"

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3-5	\$15.95 ^{ea}	10+	\$13.95 ^{ea}

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