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The HOLY ENCOUNTER



SEPTEMBER / OCTOBER 2017

A Miracle Distribution Center Publication

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



Traveling Lightly

by Beverly Hutchinson McNeff

Are you good at packing your suitcase for a trip? I swear I try to be. Every time I travel, I begin thinking through what I will need, and pack accordingly. Then when the suitcase is nice and light (only half full,) I begin thinking...what if I need this or that? All of a sudden, I'm sitting on my suitcase to zip it up! Luckily, I have those 360-degree wheels that make moving this behemoth easy to do.

Do you remember the old days when suitcases didn't have wheels? That was a terrible time for my obsessive-compulsive packing. How about when the cart-a-bag roller was invented? You would strap your wheel-less suitcase onto a collapsible cart so you could roll it along, while all the other people had to lug theirs. Then came wheels on suitcases, but they only worked if you rolled straight ahead and made wide turns, otherwise the bag could fall over. Then, finally, success! Wheels that turn in any direction — except up — so you occasionally do have to pick up the monstrosity.

Society is very adaptable to our obsessive nature, and we are very tolerant of it.

We all have issues we carry with us from our far-back or more recent past, and instead of looking at them and weighing their validity in our lives, we just continue to over-pack our mental suitcases and find ways to more conveniently travel with them.



"We judge and label and throw all of it into our mental suitcases and feel we are doing a good job stuffing it all in until we see that it is really weighing us down and not really making a difference in the world, nor teaching those 'others' the desired lessons."

and throw all of it into our mental suitcases and feel we are doing a good job stuffing it all in until we see that it is really weighing us down and not really making a difference in the world, nor teaching those "others" the desired lessons. We are left annoyed and stressed while those "others" seem to continue on their merry way. The truth is

You might think if you hold on to this grievance it will prevent you from being victimized again, or that your angry, judgmental thoughts about a person will teach them their gross intolerance is wrong. We judge and label

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

What Really Bugs Us

by Shelly Conley-Durkin



A few years back, I was in an older building in southern California. Now, if you've ever lived in southern California, you have probably come across a cockroach at some time. And, when we're talking cockroaches here, in the year-round, sunny climate, we mean business. These creatures are never frozen out or die; the nice weather allows them to get bigger than any bug should be.

I was in this building, and I needed to use the restroom. My five-year-old son agreed to come with me, while the other two (ages 7 and 9) showed no interest at all. When we walked into this bathroom, which had a light sensor, it took a few seconds for the lights to come on. Suddenly I saw two large cockroaches scurrying for shelter. Terror went through my mind, but I thought, no, you need to go to the bathroom, so get in there and take care of business.

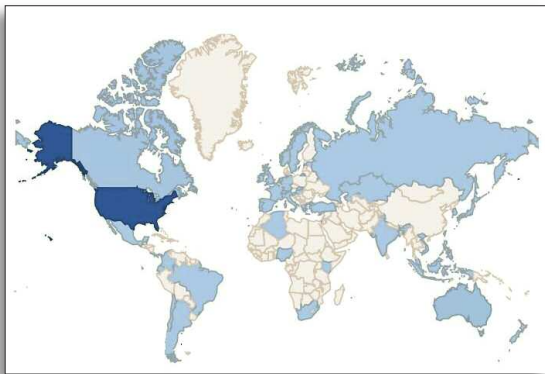
My five-year-old was on his way out the door. I called for him to come back, but he wanted nothing to do with these

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Shelly Conley-Durkin is a licensed Clinical Social Worker and has worked as an individual/family therapist for the past 20 years. She has been married for 22 years and is a long-time subscriber to the Center's weekly meetings.

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

● **Join with 50 countries** around the world! MDC's weekly live streaming video ACIM meeting with our founder Beverly Hutchinson McNeff welcomed viewers from fifty countries during the first half of this year. The above



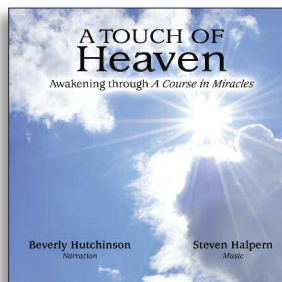
map shows international viewership in light blue and U.S. viewership in dark blue. We invite you to tune in Wednesdays at 7:00 pm Pacific Time to watch free, or become a subscriber to watch meetings at your convenience and participate in the meetings through our chat room. Find the details in the right hand column of our home page at www.miraclecenter.org

● **"I am a long time student of ACIM.**

*I purchased my book in your store in 1989. I have listened to my **A Touch of Heaven** CD literally hundreds of times in my car back and forth to work and when I can't fall asleep. It is my comfort and*

I am truly grateful for it!" We want to

thank Cheryl in Henrico, Virginia for letting us know how much she has benefitted from **A Touch of Heaven** recording by Beverly Hutchinson and Steven Halpern. This is just one of their series of seven recordings that blend the powerful words of the Course with healing, peaceful music. To get a copy or to hear samples, click on **"Store"** at www.miraclecenter.org or call: 1-800-359-ACIM (2246).



● **"I rest in God"** – This powerful lesson from the Course may not focus primarily on physical rest, but honoring our body's need for sleep is vital in today's 24/7 world. Findings in the *European Heart*

Journal of 15 studies showed those who sleep less than six hours a night nearly double their risk of heart attack and stroke. To improve health and longevity, the

counsel is to get six to eight hours of sleep a night. The National Sleep Foundation offers these tips on getting quality shut-eye: Make your room dark (possibly place a mask or something over your eyes) and keep the room cool (60-67 degrees), keep a regular sleep schedule, exercise daily, shut off electronics an hour before retiring, replace your mattress if more than 10 years old, and (we will add) invite the Holy Spirit into your sleep so you can truly rest in God – and since this is our prayer thought for September, it's not a bad time to practice it!

● **"I am so grateful I could attend the conference** – what a "glorious" experience. Many thanks to MDC's speakers (and musicians), staff and fellow participants... it was uplifting, incredibly helpful, and I absolutely loved it! What a transformative gathering." We thank N.J. in Minneapolis, MN for sharing this comment about our conference. These conferences are miraculous events; so if that's what you're looking for (and who isn't?), it's time you attend! Check out the **"Events"** tab in the menu bar at our website to see our upcoming gatherings.

● **Choose Once Again** – "I want to say how much the 'Choose-A-Quote' web page is appreciated. I have it saved on my work computer, and it's just one click away when I want a quick respite from my day," says Patricia from Chico, California. Get a different Course quote each time you visit the Choose-A-Quote page. Want another?

Just click **"Choose Once Again"** and another will appear for you! Find it under **"Services"** on our home page at www.miraclecenter.org

Choose-a-Quote!

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

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

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

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



● **"Dear Miracle Prayer Ministry...** It was so nice to receive a letter from MDC and then a handwritten letter from a prayer partner at the Center. It lifted my spirits a lot. Even better to know I can pray daily and know all of you are joined with all of our prayers as one. The time for prayer with you is 4:30pm (Pacific Time), but for me it's at 7:30pm. Thank you for keeping me in prayer. I am excited to watch all the miracles around us." We are honored to join with all seeking hearts in prayer and invite you to join us every day as Colette in Canada does! As the Course reminds us, *"Healing is holy. Nothing in the world is holier than helping one who asks for help. And two come very close to God in this attempt, however limited, however lacking in sincerity. Where two have joined for healing, God is there."* (P-2.V.4)

Affirmations for:

September: *I rest in God.* (L109)

October: *I am one Self united with my Creator.* (L95)

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



Miracle Musings...

The Unlearning of Marilyn

by Paul McNeff

And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3)

"What God has given is so far beyond our curriculum that learning but disappears in its presence. Yet while its presence is obscured, the focus properly belongs on the curriculum. It is the function of God's teachers to bring true learning to the world. Properly speaking it is unlearning that they bring, for that is 'true learning' in the world. It is given to the teachers of God to bring the glad tidings of complete forgiveness to the world. Blessed indeed are they, for they are the bringers of salvation." (M-4.X.3)

Marilyn Monroe. Just the name has become synonymous with the most "blockbuster" fame anyone can achieve during a lifetime. Widely acclaimed as the sexual icon of her generation, she is not often known for her "spiritual" adeptness. From the highest



"Widely acclaimed as the sexual icon of her generation, she is not often known for her 'spiritual' adeptness."

pinnacle of fame to her tragic ending by taking her own life, she did, however, gain many insights into spiritual principles. The other day I came across some of her observations, and I was struck by how "Coursey" (a term I often use to define how an idea parallels with *A Course in Miracles*' teachings) they sounded, and, therefore, how they may contain some useful insights.

Monroe said, *"I believe everything happens for a reason. People change so that you can learn to let go, things go wrong so that you can appreciate them when they're right, you believe lies so eventually you learn to trust no one but yourself, and sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together."*

When we begin to learn the essentials of living a full and productive life are not

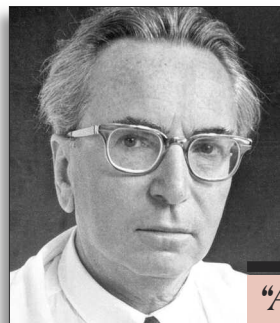
necessarily subject to the actions of people or circumstances we encounter, we can then be free to choose to let go of the perceived outcome of those experiences and open ourselves to something better. We can then begin to see everything that happens to us has a

reason.

A most dramatic example of this can be found in the life of Viktor Frankl. An Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor, Frankl observed: *"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."*

Frankl and millions of other Jews during the Holocaust were powerless to change their day-to-day circumstances while living in a Nazi concentration camp. But what Frankl found, even in this most extreme of circumstances, was that there was a way, at a spiritual level, to find purpose and meaning which eventually led to his healing — and, in his case, physical survival.

I must assert that by no means am I comparing Viktor Frankl's experience with any of our contemporary experiences. Certainly, I don't know what it is like to be imprisoned in a Nazi concentration camp.



But, at some level, you and I have experienced similar feelings of lost hope and despair. What I am saying in the case of Frankl is he tapped into a truth that, if cultivated in our lives, can equally lead us to the path of healing, so we, too, can thrive in our world of insane illusions.

Frankl discovered a truth about the power of forgiveness and personal choice. *"Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms — to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."* As attested later, Frankl, like Jesus, practiced the attitude of forgiveness — "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

I believe Frankl's spiritual insights deeply resonate with *A Course in Miracles*. The Course is never about manipulating form, but is all about shifting our perceptions; an action the Course calls a miracle.

As the Course teaches, "How do the open-minded forgive? They have let go all things that would prevent forgiveness. They have in truth abandoned the world, and let it be restored to them in newness and in joy so glorious they could never have conceived of such a change."

(M-4.X.2) In this passage the Course

"An Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist as well as a Holocaust survivor, Frankl observed: 'When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves.'"

states something that I believe the ego has the hardest time doing. "They [the open-minded — which is the potential within you and me!] have let go all things that would

Continued on page 12

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



Change Your Mind Change Your Life

My Ups and Downs with *A Course in Miracles*

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

During my spiritual journey, sometimes I found it difficult to distinguish between the voice of my ego and the Voice of God. I had my ups and downs studying the lessons in the Course. At times I would awaken in the middle of the night and words would pour from me which reminded me of the beauty, joy, peace, and safety that we can all experience by accepting God's Unconditional Love. At other times I awakened to the terror and cries of my ego, and words from my insane mental state flowed from me. I wrote my thoughts in my journals as diary entries and as poems. At first, I kept these poems private, using them only to increase my own awareness. When I began sharing a few of them in my lectures, I found that others, people who were struggling through their own dark nights of the soul, felt and experienced the very same things I was describing.

During the summer of 2016 when Diane was cleaning out our storage area, she found my journals from decades past. When I listened to Diane read them, I was moved, remembering my own struggles, and thinking that perhaps they could be helpful to others. I, therefore, decided to include many of them in my newest book, *Poetry and Notes to Myself – My Ups and Downs with A Course in Miracles*. Below I share with you a few excerpts and hope they will be helpful to you too.

I Have Felt Lost Most of My Life

I have felt lost most of my life, and it is only
today that I equate losing my way and
feeling empty inside as one and the same.

When I have chosen to let my heart shrink and
be empty of love, I manufacture that state of
loneliness and separation that has plagued me
most of my life.

When will I awaken to know, without any
doubts whatsoever, that I have been
looking for my identity in the external world?
I have been looking in the wrong place.

Help me only to look inside so that I may be home
once again, so that I can stop this endless
wandering in a circle that goes nowhere.

Fear

Fear, what lightning speed you have!
With the blink of an eye, you fill my
heart and mind with terror.
You make my heart pound with
apprehension of my own
destruction.
You produce a state of separation,
isolation and aloneness that
is beyond despair.

Fear, my nightmare of deception,
you tried to convince me that Love
has vanished from my being,
never to return again.

Creative Love Force of the Universe,
I hold my arms out to you
and pray for your help.



Awaken me and transform my fear
into my true state of Love.
Awaken me to the truth that there is
no fear, that there is only Love.
Awaken me to the truth that there is
no separation and that we are
joined in Love as One forever.

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

Money, Money, Money!

Money, money, money, what a cunning teacher
you have been.

You have been the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow
that promised me lasting happiness.

What an elusive goal you have been!

What a slippery fish you have been!

I have made you a heart maker,
yet you have become a heart breaker.

I have given you love, thinking you were love.

Money, money, money, I thought you were my
measurement of success, my yardstick
of life and love.

I've let you be my master that has controlled and
put me in distress, yet I have used you as
a whip in life.

You have been a fearful god and a loving god
all wrapped into one.



You have been a means and an end.

I thought you were what I wanted.

I have camouflaged you in fear.

You made the external world real to me.

You have been a filter for my eyes and ears.

I have used you as a sleeping pill.

I've let you make me ill.

You have never made me full at all.

You have never let me see the treasure of love
inside me.

Money, money, money, you have been a teacher of
emptiness to me.

You have been a god of getting and holding on and
never getting enough.

Every time I have made you a god of my security,
my god of the future, I have become dead inside.
How could you have looked like light yet be filled with
darkness?

How tricky my perception can be.

How upside down my perception can be.

How attached I have been to you.

How angry you have made me.

How I blamed you for everything.

And oh, how I have loved you!

Money, money, money, I thank you for your lessons.

I thank you for teaching me what is real.

You have taught me that money will never buy me
spiritual fulfillment within.

I have learned that if I make money a god, I cut
myself off from love.

If I make giving love a goal, I awaken to God's Peace.

I used to think that having and holding made my reality.
I now believe that the Love that created me is formless,
and it is only the content of my spiritual reality
that leads me to live a life that is based on love.

Now I enjoy experiencing my Oneness with God.
Money is no longer a god for me when I remind myself
that I am the light of the world and so is everyone
else regardless of their behavior.



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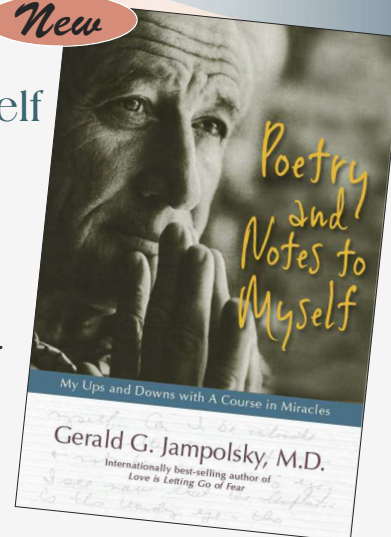
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Clarity Through Contrast

by Jacob Glass

"You will not remember change and shift in Heaven. You have need of contrast only here. Contrast and differences are necessary teaching aids, for by them you learn what to avoid and what to seek." (T-13.XI.6)

When you know what you don't want, you know what you do want. That's contrast. When we feel sad, we want to feel joy. When we feel afraid, we want to feel comforted and safe. When we feel impoverished or in scarcity, we want to feel abundant and provided for. When we are sick, we want to be healthy and whole. It's so simple really. The issue is that instead of using the clarity to focus our attention on what we want, we tend to focus over and over on what we do not want. And since there are no idle thoughts, our focus is creating the world we see though our perceptions of what we do not want. We're not benefitting from the contrast.

It would be like getting in the car and somehow getting very lost along the way and instead of simply setting the GPS to our destination, we sit talking about how this sucks and trying to figure out HOW we got lost and whose fault it is, feeling guilty or angry or frustrated and telling the story of how this is not at all what we want.

The Holy Spirit is like our internal Spiritual GPS. It can get us right back on the road again and going in the right direction at any given moment. There is no punishment or karma for getting lost. Just as the car GPS does not judge us, neither does the Holy Spirit. The GPS in your car doesn't say, "Well, you didn't listen to me when I kept telling you to make a legal

"The Holy Spirit is like our internal Spiritual GPS. It can get us right back on the road again and going in the right direction at any given moment."

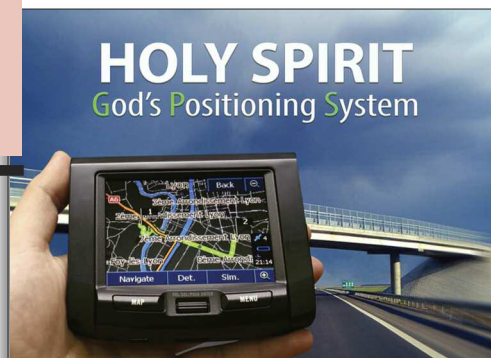
U-turn, or to all the other directions as I kept recalculating your journey, so I'm not helping you anymore. You're on your own. I'm done with you." This is not a Universe of punishment and rewards. It's a Universe of following Divine

Guidance or following egoic self-will. There is no good or bad to it — no value judgment. And no matter how many times we get lost, or ignore the guidance, we get to start right now from this present moment with a clean slate IF that is what we truly want.

It will never happen that you must make decisions for yourself. You are not bereft of help, and Help that knows the answer.

(T-14.III.11)

The word "guidance" is used 49 times in the Course. The word Guide is used 109 times. I think He is trying to tell us something. We get to decide our goal, but the Holy Spirit will make all the decisions about HOW to arrive there if we will step back and let Him lead the way. Why would we



try to do it ourselves when we have Help that knows the best route possible? Why would we struggle and strain when we could relax and enjoy the ride?

Everyday, I set my GPS by writing a little list I call "The Day I Choose." Lately, the goals I set are things like:

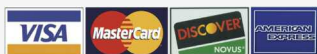
- God's Will done in me.
- Joyfully used by Spirit to Help.
- Laughter and fun as I savor the journey!
- Peace and joy.
- Clear mind and open heart.

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The I Am Meditations *New*

by Jacob Glass

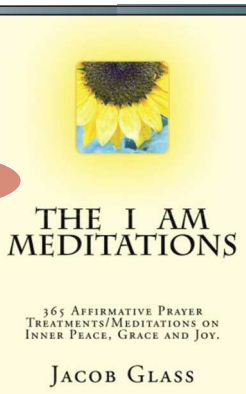
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Jacob lectures in Southern California and has a global ministry of his recorded weekly talks. His new book, *The I Am Meditations* is available now from the Center. You can contact Jacob at www.jacobglass.com



Recognizing Spirit

The Power of Love, Gentleness, and Forgiveness (Part 1)

by Lee Jampolsky, Ph.D.

"I ask but this; that you be comforted and live no more in terror and in pain. Do not abandon Love. Remember this; whatever you may think about yourself, whatever you may think about the world, your Father needs you and will call to you until you come to Him in peace at last." (S-3.IV.10)

It would be a vast understatement to say that we are living during a time of upheaval and challenge. Some in the Course community approach the barrage of news coverage and discussion by saying statements such as "It is all an illusion," while others want to be able to respond in some way that makes a difference in this world. What does *A Course in Miracles* say about all of this? It is an area where Course students become confused.

We certainly don't want to "feed" the illusory world by never questioning what we see and becoming increasingly angry and blaming, but we also don't want to deny our very human reactions in the name of being "spiritual." The Course is written to be a practical tool in the world, but also very clear and uncompromising in the metaphysical foundation of what it teaches. It is thus best understood by seeing that it eloquently addresses two levels.

On the metaphysical level the Course makes very strong and clear statements where absolutely no ambiguity exists. On this level it teaches that there is either Truth or illusion, and that we are either living in a false dualistic reality of the physical universe (ego) or we are living in the non-dual reality of God (love). This "one or the other" approach tells us that we are either in a state of perfect unity or we are in a world of separation and duality. This level is the foundation of the thought system the Course puts forth. Frankly, if this were the only level the Course was written on I would not have lasted very long.

Fortunately, the Course, I believe, is unique in its capacity to address and integrate a consistent non-dualistic

metaphysical thought system with the most practical "meet you where you are" approach I have ever encountered. In short, the Course not only provides us with clear teachings about the Truth, it also teaches us how to live in this world while working our way toward fully living from this Truth. More specifically, on the practical level we are offered Jesus' and the Holy Spirit's perception

"We certainly don't want to 'feed' the illusory world by never questioning what we see and becoming increasingly angry and blaming, but we also don't want to deny our very human reactions in the name of being 'spiritual'."

of the world to replace the illusion of the ego's perception.

The ego's perception appears to be working overtime in the world right now, preaching and convincing that we are forever separate and our only means to survive is to attack and defend. The Course is actually quite gentle in how to approach the ego, and it teaches us the world is a classroom where we can learn to shift our perception and act from Love, kindness, and tolerance. Yes, the world is an illusion, but it is also an illusion that is here to teach us of forgiveness, of Love, of how to go Home.

On this practical level we don't look at the mess of the world and all of the conflict, suffering, and environmental

issues and dismissively say, "This is all just an illusion." Yes, again, it is an illusion, but most of us are not able to *really* see and feel this all of the time, and when we go to the "it's just an illusion" response we are likely being "spiritually dismissive" to try

and make ourselves feel better. The Course addresses this in the text when it says that it is practically impossible to deny your physical experience in



the world. It would seem clear that we, as students of the Course, are not asked to proclaim how illusory the world is when we are in pain from something that *appears* and *feels* very real, and to do so would be a harsh direction. What we are asked to do is to bring in help by way of asking Holy Spirit to help us see the situation differently, to help us realize a non-dual awareness, to help us love. Much of my work in the development of Inspirational Psychology is reflective of this.

In the world you are either learning of gentleness and love through forgiveness or you are reinforcing fear, attack, and defense. Nothing in between these two is possible. Time exists for you to choose whether you wish to learn of love through the Now or to go deeper into suffering through holding onto guilt, blame, and resentment. There is nothing else to choose between, and the Holy Spirit is here to help us. Today begin to ask for

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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 www.drleejampolsky.com. He is a retired psychologist and currently offers online spiritual mentoring and coaching. He can be reached at lee@drleejampolsky.com



Revelatory Events

Examining *A Course in Miracles*, Alcoholics Anonymous and Mormonism

An Interview with Ann Taves

Ann Taves is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her new book, *Revelatory Events*, examines the emergence of new spiritual paths and focuses on three case studies: Mormonism, Alcoholics Anonymous, and *A Course in Miracles*. In this brief conversation with Dr. Taves she explains her reasons for writing the book and shares some of the surprises she encountered.

What lead you to write the book?

I have a long-standing interest in unusual experiences and how they are interpreted. In responding to my earlier work, some scholars seemed to suggest that unusual experiences were fringe phenomena. As if the major world religions weren't founded on just such claims! But most of those religions were founded so long ago that the process of emergence is shrouded in legend. I want to look at the process of interpretation. What kind of experiences did people have? How did others react? What emerged through their interaction? To get at these questions I had to look at relatively recent groups that left good records of their beginnings.

How did you select the three spiritual traditions?

I had several criteria. First, I was interested in traditions that emerged in response to unusual experiences. Second, they had to have left records that would allow me to reconstruct the process of emergence. Given my linguistic skills and area of expertise, I looked for groups that had emerged in the American context. I started by looking into movements that involved channeled entities, such as Jane Roberts who channeled Seth and J.Z. Knight who channeled Ramtha, and also into movements such, as *A Course in Miracles*, where Schucman scribed the words of a Voice. At the same time I was aware the Book of Mormon, which launched the most successful American religious movement to date, emerged

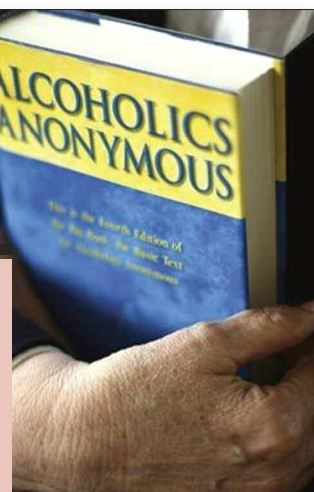
through a process more like channeling than ordinary translation. I had also had a longstanding interest in AA, which often gets left out of discussions of "American religion," because it claims it is "spiritual but not religious." As I pondered the gap between early Mormonism as a nineteenth century movement and

"Students of the Course, many of whom also have some familiarity with the Twelve Steps, likely recognize some of the spiritual similarities between A Course in Miracles and AA. Both identify the feeling of "specialness" as the central problem humans need to overcome."

the more recent "channelers," I decided a comparison between Mormonism, AA, *A Course in Miracles*, and Jane Roberts/Seth might offer interesting insights. Once I started reconstructing the emergence of these traditions, I realized treating each tradition well would require several chapters. As the book threatened to balloon out of control, I decided I needed to delete a group. Roberts as the channeler of Seth, while fascinating, didn't produce a text or a movement to the same extent we see with the other three. In the end, I opted for three spiritual traditions that originated in

unusual experiences and produced a new scripture-like text (the Book of Mormon, the Big Book of AA, and the Course), which was translated into numerous languages and disseminated around the world.

Can you give us a brief comparison and contrast of the three?

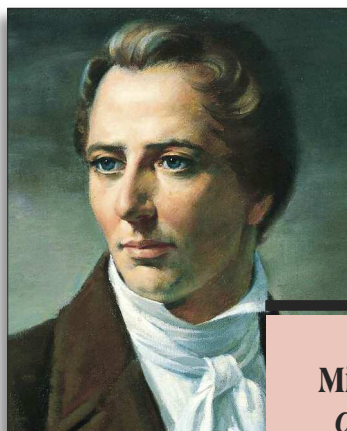


Students of the Course, many of whom also have some familiarity with the Twelve Steps, likely recognize some of the spiritual similarities between *A Course in Miracles* and AA. Both identify the feeling of "specialness" as the central

problem humans need to overcome. Both the Course and AA downplay the role of their founding figures — Schucman and Thetford in the case of *A Course in Miracles* and Bill Wilson and Bob Smith in the case of AA — emphatically declaring they were not special. Neither wanted their founders to be perceived as gurus or prophets; neither wanted to be perceived as a new religious movement or, worse yet, a "cult." Both are relatively loosely organized, value inner direction, and characterize themselves as spiritual paths or ways of life. If we probe more deeply, we find the founders of both groups had overlapping interests in psychics, such as Ellen Garrett and Edgar Cayce, and in research on psychic and paranormal phenomena.

On these points, Mormonism is clearly the outlier. It definitely views itself as a

religion and insists Joseph Smith was a prophet. It is highly structured and hierarchically organized. Where *A Course in Miracles* and AA played down the specialness of their founders, Mormons played up the specialness of theirs. Nonetheless, after reading the book, an AA historian told me he viewed the similarities between *A Course in Miracles* and Mormonism as the most intriguing part of the book. Both Joseph Smith and Helen Schuman produced long, complex texts they claimed they did not write. Smith said he translated the Book of Mormon from ancient golden plates. Schuman said she scribed the words of the Voice to produce the Course. To see the similarity, you have to realize Joseph Smith “translated” the ancient golden plates he had allegedly found not by looking at them, but while staring at a stone in a hat to block out the light. (The plates, as per the Lord’s instructions, were always kept covered.) Although Smith used visual imagery to describe what it was like to translate and Schuman used auditory imagery to characterize scribing, a closer examination of the evidence they left us suggests both may have experienced a flow of words they did not exactly see or hear but that emerged within them and yet did not seem to be their own.



Joseph Smith (1771-1840)
founder of Mormonism

Miracles was the claim this world is illusory, a claim – as Bill Thetford observed – characteristic of some Hindu traditions. But it is also characteristic of Christian Science, which is a bit closer to home. So it was interesting to me that while Thetford made connections to Hindu Vedanta and Kenneth Wapnick to Neoplatonism, neither *A Course in Miracles* nor Christian Science has really looked at – nor acknowledged – their similarities.

“Where *A Course in Miracles* and AA played down the specialness of their founders, Mormons played up the specialness of theirs.”

What did you find that most surprised you?

What most surprised me was when Judith Whitson, president of the Foundation for Inner Peace, publisher of *A Course in Miracles*, who I invited to read early drafts of my chapters on *A Course in Miracles*, pushed back against my discussion of how she, Helen, Bill, and Ken “positioned” the Course as spiritual, metaphysical, and psychological, but not psychic. Her

problem was not with the characterization of the Course, but with my claim the four of them did the “positioning.” She insisted in no uncertain terms it was not them, but the Voice Who made these decisions. Her insistence on this point forced me to recognize all three of the groups I was studying felt they’d been guided by a spiritual presence in a real and practical sense. Although I certainly recognized each group *believed* in a spiritual presence, I minimized its role as an active agent in the process in the way historians often do. In the wake of Whitson’s comments, I realized that people’s recognition of – and interaction with – these guiding presences was at the heart of the emergence process. Without her feedback, it would have been a much poorer book. ✧

Were you an adherent of any of the traditions before you wrote this book?

I went to CoDA (Co-dependents Anonymous) meetings in late 1980s, so had first-hand experience of the Twelve Steps and how Twelve Step groups worked. Otherwise, no I wasn’t.

Is there an aspect of *A Course in Miracles* that stood out to you as unique?

In terms of teachings, the thing that stood out for me about *A Course in*

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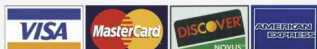
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Revelatory Events Three Case Studies of the Emergence of New Spiritual Paths

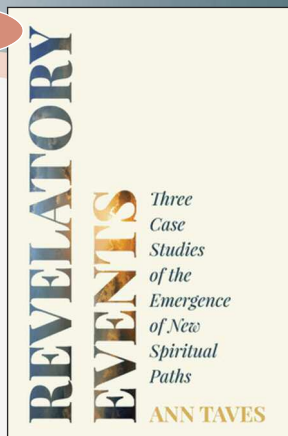
by Ann Taves

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we have no idea if they are happy, but they often don't seem as miserable as we are.

It is time for us to unpack and live a lighter life, but this will take some effort on our part. *A Course in Miracles* tells us that healing requires only willingness to allow the Holy Spirit into our lives, and that is true. However, we first have to believe we have something that needs healing and that we are entitled to something much better than we are currently experiencing. This is why we read in the Course: "Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom." (T-6.V.C.2)

"Just as the grandfather encouraged his grandson to feed the good wolf, we need to encourage the truth of Who we are and our ability to not get distracted by the weakness of our ego."

By being vigilant for God and His Kingdom, we are taking the steps to remember who and what we are: Children of a loving God and heirs to His Kingdom of peace. The Course tells us vigilance requires effort only because we have made a lot of other things we find more interesting than God.

"Vigilance does require effort, but only until you learn that effort itself is unnecessary. You have exerted great effort to preserve what you made because it was not true. Therefore, you must now turn your effort against it. Only this can cancel out the need for effort, and call upon the being which you both *have* and *are*." (T-6.V.C.10)

We are capable of a life of miraculous experiences because we are creations of a loving God and not of a fearful ego. You have all the power to choose where you dwell; no one else or nothing else has done this to you.

There is a great Cherokee tale that highlights this truth. A grandfather is teaching his grandson about life, and he says to the boy, "A fight is going on inside me. It is a terrible fight, and it is between two wolves. One is evil – he is anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt,

resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

"The other is good – he is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion, and faith. The same fight is going on inside you and inside every other person, too."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?"

The grandfather replied, "The one you feed."



The Course tells us, "Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated." (T-26.X.4) This statement is a powerful truth, and it reinforces the point that you are in charge of your own salvation. If someone else is responsible for your healing or pain, you are lost. How will you find him? How will you make him pay enough? It's a losing battle, and this is the only battle the ego wants you to fight.

It's time to stop the fight and unload our burdens by taking full responsibility for packing our own luggage so that we can learn how to heal. We need to feed the truth and not the lies. Here's great counsel the Course offers us:

"Do not be afraid of the ego. It depends on your mind, and as you made it by believing in it, so you can dispel it by withdrawing belief from it. Do not project the responsibility for your belief in it onto anyone else, or you will preserve the belief. When you are willing to accept sole responsibility for the ego's existence you will have laid aside all anger and all attack, because they come from an attempt to

project responsibility for your own errors. But having accepted the errors as yours, do not keep them. Give them over quickly to the Holy Spirit to be undone completely, so that all their effects will vanish from your mind and from the Sonship as a whole." (T-7.VIII.5)

There are three practical steps we can use from this powerful section, but first we need to look at a very important point:

"Do not be afraid of the ego." (ibid)

Just as the grandfather encouraged his grandson to feed the good wolf, we need to encourage the truth of Who we are and our ability to not get distracted by the weakness of our ego. If we blame another, we waste time in weakness because we affirm they have power over us. If we buy into fear, hate, greed, arrogance or self-pity, we pay the price of our peace because we are again relinquishing our power as the masters of our own destiny. Our ego reigns because it tells us we have no ability to choose the wolf we would feed.

Whatever happens in our world, our mission must be to stay vigilant for the truth of who we truly are and the Kingdom of God we want to experience. The ego has no power over us unless we give it the power.

"If you remember the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, you might recall that he liked jelly beans. On his desk was a jar of jelly beans engraved with the words, 'The buck stops here.'"



When Nelson Mandela was finally released from prison and the white government of South Africa had to step down and allow his presidency, they were terrified as to how Mandela would treat them. The former government had mercilessly persecuted the black people of South Africa. Mandela's reply to their fears was he had no intention of punishing them. He despised the way he and his people had been treated. Why then, he told them, would he treat another with this same type of hate? For then, he

would become what he hated.

And now, here are the three steps (in the above passage from the Course) we can take to unpack our suffering and experience healing:

“If you have ever been on a freeway or any street where an accident has occurred, you know a long traffic jam often results. As people finally drive past the accident, they often ‘rubber neck.’ You know, slow down and take a nice long look.”

1. “Accept the errors as yours.”

(ibid) This doesn’t mean you are accepting blame for the things that you are experiencing: you are accepting responsibility. We know that projecting blame onto others only weakens us, so accepting responsibility – whether or not the world says we are responsible – shows we are willing to allow healing to begin.

If you remember the Presidency of Ronald Reagan, you might recall that he liked jelly beans. On his desk was a jar of jelly beans engraved with the words, “The buck stops here.” His presidency was not without a few bumps, but what most people remember about Reagan was that he was willing to have the buck stop with him and take responsibility for the bumps. He came straight to the public, and the public was very forgiving. I also like the idea of the “buck” stopping at a place with jelly beans. It’s sort of a reminder that taking responsibility does not have to be totally painful and can actually be a treat for your soul.

2. “Do not keep them [the errors].” (ibid)

The Course warns us in many places throughout the book that once you take responsibility for your ego actions or thoughts, do not hold onto them. As I mentioned, taking responsibility is not about taking blame, it’s about stopping the pain and the chaos of the ego’s world. It’s like playing a game of “Hot Potato.” If you quickly pass off the hot potato, it’s not so bad; and, the Holy Spirit is ready to take that “potato” for

you with a, “thank you very much!”

Therefore, this is a quick step, so don’t get stuck holding the potato.

If you have ever been on a freeway or any street where an accident has occurred, you know a long traffic jam often results. As people finally drive past the accident, they often “rubber neck.” You know, slow down and take a nice long look. I’m sure many feel they waited long enough for their turn, and they want to get that good,



long look they think they have earned. The same thing happens with us and our errors (or the

errors of others) – we want to get a nice long look, and sometimes we dwell way too long. Best to pass that “hot potato” to One Whose only purpose is your healing, and move on quickly to our salvation.

3. “Give them [the errors] over quickly to the Holy Spirit to be undone completely.” (ibid) This is

said in many places in the Course because this really is our salvation. We have no idea how to heal our lives, and we have a great investment in our problems and how we think things should turn out. But, what if we truly believed that, just like a magic spell in a Harry Potter novel, we could erase all effects of pain and suffering for ourselves and the world simply by turning to the Holy Spirit and letting healing in? This is what we are told in this section: “Give them over quickly to the Holy Spirit to be undone completely, so that all their effects will vanish from your mind and from the Sonship as a whole.” (ibid)

This can happen because the Holy Spirit works at the level of our beliefs to lead us to the truth. The ego is a mistaken belief that we looked at a little too long and thought it had some value, so we packed it away in our mental suitcase and have been carrying it around ever since.

Familiarity, however, does not make it true. A lie said over and over again is still a lie, and this is where we find ourselves now. We are comfortable with the lie, but what that lie is giving us in the way of peace, joy and love is pretty meager.

The ego’s lies are exhausting and never seem to give us the “gifts” they promise. The Course is here to teach us that the “gifts” of the ego are nothing, but because we made the ego, we need help to let it go.

You are not alone and never have been alone. By joining with the Holy Spirit in this process you are accepting the Atonement for yourself, which means you are not alone and are therefore “dispelling the idea of separation and affirming your true identification with the whole Kingdom as literally part of you.” (ibid) Yes, all that can

“The ego is a mistaken belief that we looked at a little too long and thought it had some value, so we packed it away in our mental suitcase and have been carrying it around ever since.”



happen with just your choice to join.

Okay, how does your mental suitcase feel now? Still too heavy? Well, now you have the steps to lightening your load and get to the destination God wills for you. The next step is up to you; but don’t worry, you have a

mighty traveling companion to help you...

“Have faith in only this one thing, and it will be sufficient: God wills you be in Heaven, and nothing can keep you from it, or it from you. Your wildest misperceptions, your weird imaginings, your blackest nightmares all mean nothing. They will not prevail against the peace God wills for you. The Holy Spirit will restore your sanity because insanity is not the Will of God. If that suffices Him, it is enough for you. You will not keep what God would have removed, because it breaks communication with you with whom He would communicate. His Voice *will* be heard.” (T-13.XI.7)



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Unlearning of Marilyn

Continued from page 3

prevent forgiveness." This is not easy and cannot be done of the ego. We all need help, something beyond worldly powers, and that is what the Course offers us.

As Frankl let go of victimization at the hands of the Nazis, and Jesus let go of Roman brutality, we too must give up, as the Course says, "all things that would prevent our forgiveness."

But to what end? What can forgiveness do? The Course goes on to tell us where this shift in perception can lead us:

"Nothing is now as it was formerly. Nothing but sparkles now which seemed so dull and lifeless before. And, above all, are all things welcoming, for threat is gone. No clouds remain to hide the face of Christ. Now is the goal achieved. Forgiveness is the final goal of the curriculum. It paves the way for what goes far beyond all learning. The curriculum makes no effort to exceed its legitimate goal. Forgiveness is its single aim, at which all learning ultimately converges. It is indeed enough." (ibid)

It's a safe bet to say we've all had moments in our lives when we felt we were the victims of an unjust act. The question is: did we want to live there in that hell, or did we want to move forward to heaven?

What a picture the above words from the Course paint for us! Do you see what "letting go" can do for you? "No clouds remain to hide the face of Christ," meaning if we but let go, we do not have to go down the path of hatred and revenge, which will only lead to death and destruction. Rather, we can see all things new as it sparkles in beauty.

Spiritual healing is not always dependent upon achieving justice in this world. Justice is something we should all advocate. But, unfortunately in this world, it may not always be attained. At the Nuremberg trials, many of Holocaust perpetrators were brought to justice. For Jesus, however, we don't have much of a historical account of him receiving even a small measure of justice.

If we can let go of all things that would prevent forgiveness, we have tapped into a powerful truth – one, however, that is not the easiest to achieve. The ego always speaks first, and when we feel we have been unjustly accused of something, we can be most certain our ego is weighing in

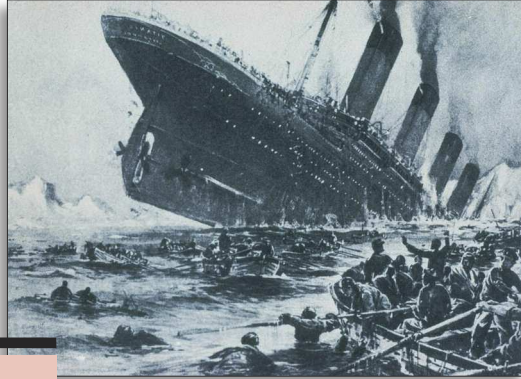
on the issue. The Course tells us the ego is suspicious at best and vicious at worst. Therefore, being aware of this is crucial to our end game.

As Marilyn Monroe had believed “lies” about herself, how often have we believed lies about ourselves? Voices from both outside and inside our sphere are constantly telling us what to do. And yet, for every lie, there is a light within that exposes that lie, which will in turn lead to truth. Truth, as Monroe experienced, was to trust no one but herself. I think Monroe was talking about the ability to listen to that small voice of light that lies within all of us, a belief in our higher Self, as it were.

And then that last statement by Ms. Monroe, “and sometimes good

iceberg, arrived at its destination with a disastrous performance marred by vocal failures and an equally diminished confidence in myself. I was devastated. I judged myself a big failure.

Witnessing my personal shipwreck, my voice teacher reached out and gave me a bit of advice that was quite remarkable. He said I needed to forget everything I had



learned: all the vocal technique and exercises, all the dramatic coaching and yes, all the previous successes I had experienced as a singer. On opening night, my instructions were simple: “Go back out on

that stage and just sing the hell out of that role.”

And, that is what I did! To great success, I must say. When I was willing to “let go” of everything from the past, all successes and failures, and simply be open in the present, I was then ready to be free in the moment and just “let it happen.” In Monroe’s words, “sometimes good things fall apart so better things can fall together.” In Course words, “let go all things that would prevent forgiveness.” In my case, it was forgiveness of myself.

Learning to unlearn is one way to enlightenment. I’ve learned through thirty-one years as a Course student, I must, on a regular basis, “come before God with wholly empty hands.” Socrates put it this way, “The only thing I know is that I don’t know anything.”

It’s truly amazing how when one navigates the world with this type of spiritual practice, how much enjoyment it can bring. Who knew unlearning could be so much fun! And the other advantage, you don’t have to worry about a grade. ✧

“At the final dress rehearsal, my singing, like the Titanic steaming toward that killer iceberg, arrived at its destination with a disastrous performance marred by vocal failures and an equally diminished confidence in myself.”

things fall apart, so better things can fall together.”

During the last semester of completing my graduate work in vocal performance at Cal State Fullerton, I was cast to sing the lead tenor role of Fenton in Otto Nicolai’s “The Merry Wives of Windsor” based on the play of the same name by William Shakespeare. To set the stage (no pun intended), I was twenty-seven years old with two young children and a wife who was not employed outside the home, working three jobs and completing my master’s degree in music. As one might surmise, I was overwhelmed with personal, professional and educational commitments.

On top of all that, and perhaps because of it, I found myself struggling with my voice. I couldn’t understand what was happening. After all, I had years of the best vocal training and dramatic coaching with hundreds of hours of successful performances behind me.

At the final dress rehearsal, my singing, like the Titanic steaming toward that killer

Clarity Through Contrast

Continued from page 6

And since I have ZERO idea of HOW that can happen, I surrender it to the Holy Spirit to guide me step-by-step in the right direction — every turn to make as I go is instructed from within. Oh, I invariably get off-track along the way, but it’s so easy and simple to get right back on as soon as I realize what I’ve done. I make mistakes every day along the journey, but I’ve learned to surrender

“I make mistakes every day along the journey, but I’ve learned to surrender them quickly instead of getting delayed and lost in holding onto them and rehashing them and studying them looking for fault and guilt and blame and shame.”

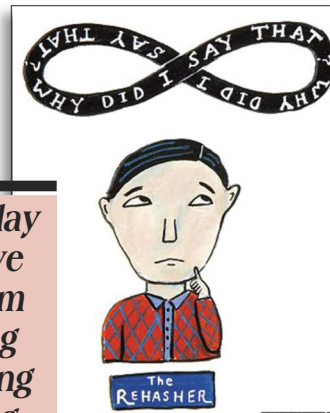
them quickly instead of getting delayed and lost in holding onto them and rehash-

ing them and studying them looking for fault and guilt and blame and shame. I do my best to remember:

The Holy Spirit is not delayed in His teaching by your mistakes. He can be held back only by your unwillingness to let them go. Let us therefore be determined, particularly for the next week or so, to be

willing to forgive ourselves for our lapses in diligence, and our failures to follow the instructions for practicing the day’s idea. This tolerance for weakness will enable us to overlook it, rather than give it power to delay our learning.

(W-95.8)



See? No judgment. Just like the GPS in your vehicle or device. We can follow the Guidance or ignore it, but getting lost is not a punishment for not listening, it’s just a result. And we can get right back on track again as soon as WE choose to. I love that. ✧

help to hold the heart gently of each you meet along your journey, judging not, nor thinking you should be elsewhere with someone else. In the single act of kindness that comes from asking Holy Spirit for help, all can be forgotten that is not of love and all can be remembered that is. There is nowhere you can go, nobody you can be with, that does not have the potential to lead you to a deeper awareness of Love.

Once when I was in another country, I asked for directions from a local, and after much thought and wanting to be helpful, the person replied, "I am sorry, but you can't get there from here." Internally I had a chuckle, thinking of some sort of dark vortex in this particular spot in town that rendered it impossible to get to where I wanted to go. On the path to loving deeply with the help of the Holy Spirit, the opposite is actually true – there is no path you can take that won't lead you, eventually, to love, for there is a part of our consciousness that love has never actually left.

Think about this for a moment: there is

"Think about this for a moment: there is a part of your mind that knows peace and is full of the wisdom of love, no matter where you are or what the situation in the world is."

a part of your mind that knows peace and is full of the wisdom of love, no matter where you are or what the situation in the world is. The journey to love is a journey without distance and you cannot help but succeed.

The proper use of time while living in this world is to increase the awareness of love. Be aware that the power of love exists at all times and is always available to you to give and receive. In today's world it is important to remind yourself often that you want to be compassionate, loving, and forgiving in your daily life. You have a precious opportunity to love and forgive in every second of every

day, even when things are not going your way. This is the proper use of time.

It is easy to love people in your life when they are filling your needs and playing by agreed-upon rules. But when people close to you, or our leaders, differ greatly from what you may think is best, it's not so easy to be compassionate. In fact, many



times, in your humanness, you may become little more than opinionated, angry, and defensive. However, you can learn to stop, turn towards the knowledge of love that lives in the spaciousness within you, and ask Holy Spirit how to be, what to say, and what response is best.

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What Really Bugs Us

Continued from page 1

bugs or protecting his mother. I decided to go back in because my bladder was 42-years-old and telling me to stop the delay. I sat down and told myself the light is on, and they won't come back out into the light.

No sooner had that thought gone through my brain, when I saw the bigger one heading for my feet. Needless to say, I was freaking out. I pulled my legs up and thought, "OH MY GOD! What am I going to do?" I was really scared. I figured I could get up and get out, but my pants were around my ankles, and that would make it hard to walk away, let alone run. Thankfully, the bug went running past me. I was able to complete my objective and get myself out of there. I have to confess, though, I did not wash my hands that day in that bathroom.

When I had time to pull myself together, I thought about my fear of a bug that was no more than two inches long. What was I so afraid of? It was my perception that was so skewed. I started to wonder about all of my thoughts and how

many of them were as distorted as that one. In reality that bug had no power over me, but boy, in the moment, it was real and my heart was pounding.

I'm sharing this silly story with you because it made me challenge my thoughts and perceptions about things that were

"When I had time to pull myself together, I thought about my fear of a bug that was no more than two inches long. What was I so afraid of?"

automatic. It made me realize that I do not know what I see — it is all based on my perception. As the Course says "I have invented the world I see." "I could see peace instead of this." I have to challenge those perceptions in order to change my experiences.

I'm not sure I won't react with fear the next time I see a cockroach, but I'm guessing I will have a smile on my face while I'm running out the door.

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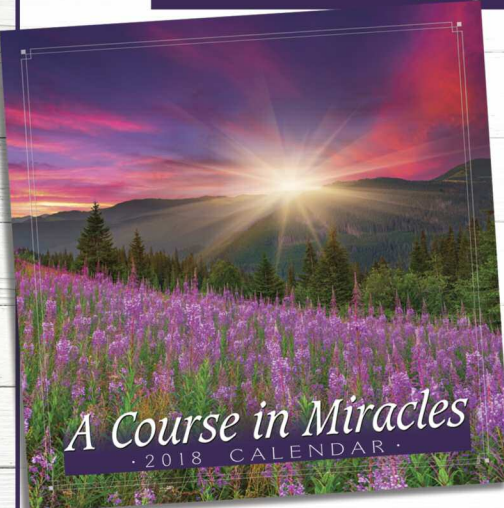
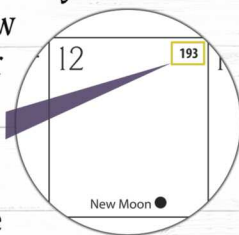
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