

How to Work Miracles

A Course in Changing Your Mind, Changing the World, and Finding Your Ultimate Release

by Greg Mackie of the Circle of Atonement (www.circleofa.org)

A Course in Miracles is, I believe, exactly what it says it is: a course in how to work miracles, quite literally. It is all about how to 1) receive miracles into our minds, 2) give or extend these miracles to our brothers as directed by the Holy Spirit or Jesus, and 3) as a result, come to fully recognize the miracles we received—a recognition that is salvation.

The second step in the three-step process above is very important, and one often overlooked by Course students. The extension of miracles to others is actually the primary definition of the term “miracle” in the Course. The Course calls miracles “expressions of love” and even says (in the Urtext version of T-9.V.8), “This Course is a guide to behavior.” Our change of mind is meant to be expressed in the form of loving behavior, miraculous behavior.

So, in this presentation, I want to draw from the Course—especially from the early dictation, where miracles are a major theme—to offer practical instruction on how to become the living, breathing miracle workers the Course wants us to be. Because, in line with this conference’s theme, by learning how to work miracles, we can change our minds, change the world, and thus find our ultimate release.

One logistical point: I’m doing a talk in which I’ll be covering a lot of material, and there won’t be any experiential exercises, except for a brief prayer at the end. Therefore, what I’ve done is make my notes available on the Circle of Atonement’s website. That way, you can review what I’ve covered here at your leisure (which will help in your assimilation of the material), and you can apply it to your daily life in the days to come (which will give you the experiential element). I’ve been doing that myself, with great results.

Why did Jesus give us a course in how to work miracles?

I’m sure we could give many answers to this question. But here, I want to focus on the answer that Jesus himself gave to Helen. And my hope in presenting this here is that we can draw upon this answer to increase our *motivation* to work miracles.

The celestial speed-up guidance

This was a mental “explanation” for why the Course was coming through Helen at that particular time. Here is the account she wrote, as recorded in Ken Wapnick’s *Absence from Felicity*, p. 200:

According to this “information,” the world situation was worsening at an alarming pace. People all over the world were being called back to help, and were developing what to them were highly unexpected talents, each making his individual contribution to an overall, prearranged plan. I had apparently agreed to take down a course in miracles which the Voice would dictate to me as part of the agreement, and my doing it was actually my reason for coming. It did not really involve unexpected abilities, since I would be using abilities I had developed very long ago, but which I was not yet ready to use again. And that was why I would have so much trouble doing it. However, people had reached a point where they were losing more than they were gaining. Thus, because of the acute emergency, the usual slow, evolutionary process of spiritual development was being bypassed in what might be called a “celestial speed-up.”

A summary of this guidance:

- The world situation is worsening dramatically. People are actually going backward in development.
- Because of this “acute emergency,” celestial helpers have speeded up their efforts.

- One form this has taken is that people have been “called back to help,” to do their individual part in a larger, prearranged plan (a part that the Course later calls our special function).
- There is such a great need for these helpers that some people are being called back before they are fully ready to use their abilities. Therefore, they may experience challenges in fulfilling their functions.
- Helen and Bill’s scribing of the Course was itself an essential part of the speed-up: “You and B. *do* have special talents which are needed for the Celestial speed-up at this time.”
- Our miracle working is an essential part of the speed-up. The miracle, after all, is a device for speeding up time. How quickly we awaken depends on “the effectiveness of the present speed-up,” and “If a sufficient number of people become truly miracle-minded quickly, the shortening process can be almost immeasurable” (Urtext version of T-2.VIII.2:7).
- The answer to our question, then, is this: The Course was written as Helen and Bill’s contribution to the celestial speed-up, and was meant to help us make *our* contribution to the celestial speed-up—to help us perform miracles, the means of speeding up the process of awakening.

Given the “acute emergency,” we are to be miracle-working EMTs—Emergency Miracle Technicians

We are like Emergency Medical Technicians, the people who come to us in ambulances to bring us to the ER. I like this metaphor because it captures three important elements. Like Emergency Medical Technicians, as miracle-working EMTs we are called upon to:

1. **Give urgent care in an acute emergency.** The “urgent” element of this is captured in Course passages like this one: “I have made His Plan perfectly clear and perfectly explicit to you, and have also told you of your part in His Plan and how urgent it is that you fulfill it” (T-5.VII.4:4).
2. **Do so in a calm, fearless, and skillful manner.** Though the situation is urgent, we are to respond not with frantic desperation, but with calm, skillful help. This is how we respond to this acute emergency in a truly effective way.
3. **Take a training course in how to do this.** Of course, the training course for Emergency Miracle Technicians is *A Course in Miracles*.

This is the way to our ultimate release

I want to close this section with this, because, as I mentioned, this whole first section is about motivating us. I’ve tried to motivate us by talking about the urgent necessity of the miracle-working role. But this motivation strategy might backfire, because it may appear that this is some sort of forbidding assignment, a grim duty, a thankless burden.

But of course, it really isn’t. Fulfilling this function is not some sort of dreary sacrifice, but the thing that will make us most deliriously happy: “The miracle will always bless *you*” (T-1.III.8:2). As I like to say, we don’t have to do miracles; we *get* to do miracles! As we will see later, working miracles is the way to our ultimate release.

How do we work miracles?

Needless to say, the entire Course is designed to teach us how to work miracles. But as I said, I’m going to focus especially on the early material in the Text, including a lot of material that was edited out. Again, miracles are a major theme in the early Text, and we see laid out there clear instructions for how to work miracles.

The theory behind miracles

I’ll begin with some theory, which may sound a bit removed from practical concerns at first, but—as always with the Course’s presentation of theory—ends up being very practical in day to day life.

The map of the mind

In the original dictation, the Course gives us a whole map of the mind which was unfortunately edited out of the Foundation for Inner Peace edition (pieces of it remain there, but not the entirety). The map describes various

levels of the mind and how they relate to one another. I want to present this map briefly because it is vital to our understanding of how to work miracles. Here it is, in summary:

Superconscious—the Heavenly level. This is the level of Heavenly knowledge; Jesus says that this “is the level of the mind which *wills to [know]*.” It is in constant communion with God, and is the only level that is ultimately real. This is the source of what the Course calls “revelation,” brief experiences of direct knowledge of God.

We won’t be talking about this level in this presentation, though. Rather, I’m going to go through three other levels which could be called the levels of our earthly mind, our post-separation mind, all of which are perceptual levels. I’m going to start at the surface of our mind, and then go deeper and deeper, to the core:

- 1. Consciousness—the conscious level.** Jesus says that this “is the level [of the mind] which engages in the world, and is capable of responding to both external & internal impulses.” In other words, it is *the conscious mind*, the surface level, which interacts with the world and can discern, respond to, and act upon impulses from any of the other levels. It’s the famous “tip of the iceberg.”
- 2. Superficial level of the subconscious—the ego level.** Jesus tells us that “[Man] is free to fill [*the superficial levels [of the subconscious]*], which are closer to consciousness, with the impulses of this world and to identify himself with them.” In other words, this is the level of the ego, a level made by us, which is the source of the impulses of the world, ego impulses.
- 3. Deeper level of the subconscious—the miracle level.** Jesus says, “*The deeper levels of [man’s] subconscious* always contain the impulse to Miracles...[This level contains] *an ability...miracle-mindedness...and should be under my [Jesus’] direction.*” In other words, this is a level of pure miracle-working ability, a level we didn’t make, the level of miracle-mindedness, which is the source of miracle impulses.

How to work miracles—1) change your mind, and 2) change the world

With this theory in mind, we can now talk about how to *work* miracles. As you can see, I’ve expressed the basic process in terms that dovetail with the theme of this conference: In working miracles, we change our minds, and change the world.

1. Change your mind—miracle-mindedness

The miracle level is the source of *miracle-mindedness*, the state of mind from which we extend miracles to other people. Miracle-mindedness is also called *right-mindedness*, *true perception*, or *vision*, and is the result of *forgiveness* and *accepting the Atonement for yourself*. (Accepting the Atonement for yourself is always depicted in the Course as the prerequisite for the miracle worker’s *extending* of miracles to others.)

The state of miracle-mindedness is attained through what I call the *internal miracle*, given by the Holy Spirit within our minds to shift our perception. In essence, He brings miracle-mindedness from the miracle level of our mind to our conscious mind.

How do we receive an internal miracle?

In the Course’s program, an internal miracle is received mainly through our Course study and practice—especially the practices in the Workbook. Any practice that is meant to establish right-mindedness in some way is, in essence, a practice that delivers the internal miracle, that brings us to a state of miracle-mindedness.

In fact, the theme of receiving the internal miracle is addressed very specifically in the Workbook, in lessons that use the specific term “miracle.” For instance, in Lesson 77, “I am entitled to miracles,” in our longer practice periods we tell ourselves confidently that we are entitled to miracles, ask for them, and wait for the inner assurance that we’ve received them. This is the attainment of miracle-mindedness.

Dealing with egoic distortions of our miracle-mindedness

One more point: As the Holy Spirit brings miracle-mindedness from the miracle level to our conscious mind, it can be distorted in various ways as it travels through the superficial level of the unconscious where the ego resides—it can be tainted with fear, it can be converted into inappropriate sexual impulses, etc. The early dictation of the Course talks a great deal about this.

So to attain and *maintain* miracle-mindedness, we need to keep this distortion from happening. To do this, we do what the Course calls “response to temptation” practices: practices in which we respond to the temptation to listen to the ego with a miracle-minded remedy—usually a sentence we repeat. For instance review VI of the Workbook (W-pI.rVI.In.6:2) gives us this response-to-temptation practice: “This thought I do not want. I choose instead _____” (fill the blank with your Workbook idea for the day).

2. *Change the world—miracle-doing*

Miracle-mindedness changes the world above all by giving us a different *perception* of the world. This is the thrust of the passage that is the inspiration for this conference: “Change but your mind on what you want to see, and all the world must change accordingly” (W-pI.132.5:2). The Course also says this miracle-minded state *does* extend to other minds naturally, without our doing anything at all.

Miracle-doing: the external miracle

But sometimes, we are meant to do more. This is “miracle-doing,” in which a miracle *giver* extends an *external miracle* in a *specific form* to a miracle *receiver*. Again, miracles are expressions of love. I call this the *external miracle* simply because it is a miracle that is given to another person perceived to be “outside” us. This is what Jesus means when he speaks of us as *miracle workers* who are to *perform* miracles.

According to the early dictation, the external miracle is a result of *miracle-mindedness* at the *miracle level* of the mind generating a *miracle-drive* which produces *miracle impulses*. The miracle drive is the strongest drive we have, much stronger than things we think of as drives, like the drive for food or sex. Imagine that!

What form can miracles take?

They can take many forms. They can be extreme, like healing the sick and raising the dead as Jesus did. But they can also be very ordinary words and acts of kindness. My colleague Robert Perry wrote an article (“A New Vision of the Miracle,” available on the Circle of Atonement’s website) on some of the specific acts that Jesus regarded as “miracles,” and they included things like Helen rewriting a bad report someone else had written, Helen visiting her mother-in-law, and the psychic Jean Dixon reminding us to keep our feet on the ground and our fingertips in Heaven. *This is something we can do! This is something I’m sure you’ve already done many times!*

What are the effects of the miracle (on the other person)?

The primary and most important effect is that the miracle brings *right-mindedness* to the miracle receiver. It shifts the perception of the miracle receiver to a right-minded state. Indeed, the Course says that “miracles are expressions of miracle-mindedness” or “right-mindedness.” They are acts of extending love that “re-establish right-mindedness in someone else” (2.V.3:1,3-5).

But there is often another important effect: In addition to re-establishing right-mindedness in the receiver, a miracle can also heal *external conditions* as an expression of right-mindedness. In fact, we are told that there is no external condition that the miracle *cannot* heal: “There is no order of difficulty in miracles.” This is not an irrelevant side effect of the miracle, but rather a powerful reinforcer of the right-mindedness the miracle brings. As the Course says, we cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see His external *effects*, and these effects convince us He is there: “Miracles are His witnesses, and speak for His Presence” (T-12.VII.4:3; see the entirety of that paragraph). The Course even says that external healing, by showing us that appearances can change, demonstrates the saving truth that *reality*, unlike appearances, is changeless (see T-30.VIII.2).

When, where, and to whom should we extend miracles?

This extension of external miracles is meant to be guided by Jesus or the Holy Spirit: “Ask me which miracles you should perform” (T-1.III.4:3). This is a critical point: Doing miracles *without* asking Them is what Jesus in the early dictation calls “indiscriminate miracle impulses,” which if indulged can lead to burnout for the miracle

worker and panic for the miracle receiver. The early dictation even says that the psychic healer Edgar Cayce burned out and died prematurely because of this. Jesus' antidote to this is clear: "The answer is *never* perform a miracle without asking me *if* you should. This spares you from exhaustion."

A qualifier to this point: Though we should generally ask for guidance about miracles and can even do so very quickly when needed—Robert Perry calls this "flash-asking"—I do think that when we are in a miracle-minded state, miracles can come through us from Jesus or the Holy Spirit *without* our formally asking. They can "drop in," so to speak. I think the key is that we need to develop a *habit* of asking frequently which miracles we should perform; if we do so, we'll be more open to miracles being sent through us without our formally asking. I think what the Course says about guidance in general applies to miracles: "If you have made it a habit to ask for help when and where you can, you can be confident that wisdom will be given you when you need it" (M-29.5:8).

Miracle working is our function in this world

I said earlier that this is something we *can* do. Indeed, this is something we *must* do. According to the Course, miracle working is our function in this world. As I mentioned, this extending of miracles to others is actually the primary meaning of the term "miracle" in the Course. It is the thing that this is a Course *in*. The very first line Helen actually received was "You will see miracles through your hands through me." And so, Jesus says, "Each day should be devoted to miracles" (T-1.I.15:1). He tells us to "Begin each day with the prayer 'Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me today.'" (A prayer I have used a lot.) This is the thing we're all supposed to do in some form as our part in the celestial speed-up. This is what we are here to do; it is the purpose of our lives on earth.

Application: How do we work miracles in our daily lives?

Here I would like to briefly describe how we can actually live out what I've been describing in daily life—how to be miracle-working EMTs. I myself am following this basic framework, and I'm really benefiting from it. The framework is built around the structure of practice that the Course has put in place by the end of the Workbook: morning/evening quiet times, hourly remembrances, frequent reminders, and response to temptation. You can adapt it as needed to your own current Course practice.

As I just mentioned, the Course says that "Each day should be devoted to miracles." Here, then, is a way that we can do that as we go through our day:

- 1. In the morning:** Do morning quiet time—some form of Course practice, like your Workbook lesson—to establish miracle-mindedness *and* commit to a day of guided miracle-doing. End with the prayer "Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me today."
- 2. Throughout the day:** Do two things to maintain the mindset you established in the morning:
 - a. "Hold yourself ready" to do miracles by maintaining your miracle-mindedness through Course practice—on the hour, frequently between the hours, and whenever you are tempted to listen to the ego.
 - b. Keep an eye out for Jesus' or the Holy Spirit's guidance to *do* miracles, their guidance to engage in miracle-doing. You can ask for guidance during your practice periods throughout the day, though of course you can and should also ask for guidance in response to specific situations that arise in the course of the day. Then, when you feel like you've received guidance to do a miracle, it's vital to *actually do it* as guided. *Tip:* When in doubt about your guidance, err on the side of doing what you feel you are guided to do.
- 3. In the evening:** Do evening quiet time—again, some form of Course practice, like your Workbook lesson—to thank Jesus and the Holy Spirit for a day of miracle working and to carry miracle-mindedness into your sleep. You might even want to prepare for the next day with the prayer "Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me tomorrow."

How do miracles lead to ultimate release?

In this final section, I want to show that working miracles is nothing less than the Course's path to salvation.

The three-step process of salvation: receive, give, recognize

The process in short (expressed in the language we've been using here, the language of miracle working):

1. We **receive** an internal miracle—miracle-mindedness—from the Holy Spirit.
2. We **give** an external miracle to another—miracle-doing—as guided by Jesus or the Holy Spirit.
3. As a result of giving, we come to **recognize** more deeply the miracle we have received, which is salvation.

This is a process that is rooted in what the Course calls “the law of love”: “What I give my brother is my gift to me” (W-pI.344.Heading). Indeed, the Course applies this law to miracles in the very next lesson: “I offer only miracles today, for I would have them be returned to me” (W-pI.345.Heading).

The three-step process I'm highlighting here is referred to countless times in the Course (in part or in full). It is expressed, for instance, in this passage from Lesson 154 of the Workbook (notice Jesus' reference in the last sentence to how often he has mentioned this idea in the Course):

Let us but learn this lesson for today: We will not recognize what we receive until we give it. You have heard this said a hundred ways, a hundred times, and yet belief is lacking still. (W-pI.154.12:1-2)

Notice the elements of this process in these passages from a couple of lessons about miracles from late in the Workbook. As you read, just see if you can catch the flavor of it:

Lesson 349: Today I let Christ's vision look upon all things for me and judge them not, but give each one a miracle of love instead.

So would I liberate all things I see, and give to them the freedom that I seek. For thus do I obey the law of love, and give what I would find and make my own. It will be given me, because I have chosen it as the gift I want to give. Father, Your gifts are mine. Each one that I accept gives me a miracle to give. And giving as I would receive, I learn Your healing miracles belong to me.

Our Father knows our needs. He gives us grace to meet them all. And so we trust in Him to send us miracles to bless the world, and heal our minds as we return to Him.

Lesson 350: Miracles mirror God's eternal Love. To offer them is to remember Him, and through His memory to save the world.

And so we've come full circle...

A *Course in Miracles* is, I believe, exactly what it says it is: a course in how to work miracles, quite literally. It is all about how to 1) *receive* miracles into our minds (miracle-mindedness), 2) *give* these miracles to our brothers as directed by Jesus or the Holy Spirit (miracle-doing, expressions of love), and 3) as a result, come to fully *recognize* the miracles we received—a recognition that is salvation.

I really want to encourage you to give what I've outlined here a try. As I mentioned, I've been doing it myself, and it has really made a difference. How so? No, I haven't become a “heal the sick, raise the dead” kind of miracle worker just yet. But what I've experienced is a genuine sense that what Jesus talks about here is *real*. I really do have a miracle drive that generates miracle impulses in me. I really do receive guidance to work miracles for particular people. And when I actually do that, then based on the positive responses of those people, I really do feel like a genuine miracle has passed from me to them. It's a wonderful feeling!

And on a larger level, I'm feeling more than ever like there's a real plan for my life, that Jesus really does have specific miracles he wants me to perform as part of my special function, and he sets up opportunities to do them. I really do feel like a miracle-working EMT, part of a plan that's so much bigger than me, part of a celestial speed-up. And I feel so blessed as a result.

As I've said, I think this is what all of us are here to do. So again, I encourage you to give this a try. In summary, we are meant to take our part in the celestial speed-up, to become the living breathing miracle workers

the Course wants us to be, to take up our role as Emergency Miracle Technicians. By learning how to work miracles, we can change our minds, change the world, and thus find our ultimate release.

A prayer for Emergency Miracle Technicians

I'd like to close with a prayer based on Lessons 349 and 350 (and a few other choice lines), a little prayer of commitment as we take on our role as Emergency Miracle Technicians:

Father, miracles mirror Your eternal Love. To offer them is to remember You, and through Your memory to save the world. And so, each and every day we let Christ's vision look upon all things for us and judge them not, but give each one a miracle of love instead. We will see miracles through our hands through our brother Jesus. Help us to perform whatever miracles You want of us, each and every day.

So would we liberate all things we see, and give to them the freedom that we seek. For thus do we obey the law of love, and give what we would find and make our own. It will be given us, because we have chosen it as the gift we want to give. Father, Your gifts are ours. Each one that we accept gives us a miracle to give. And giving as we would receive, we learn Your healing miracles belong to us. And so we trust in You to send us miracles to bless the world, and heal our minds as we return to You. Amen.