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A BETTER WAY

A New Vision of the Miracle Based on Fourteen Real-Life Examples from the Original Notes of Helen Schucman

by Robert Perry

We all know the title. *A Course in Miracles*. That tells us that this is an educational course designed to teach us to experience or give “miracles.” Just as another course might be a course in history, or a course in painting, this is a course in *miracles*.

What the Course means by miracles, then, is central. It is the key issue in determining what this course *is*. So what are miracles? We all know the Course defines them in a new way, but what is this new way? Are they shifts in perception? Are they unexpectedly fortunate circumstances, like physical healings, remarkable coincidences, or experiences of serendipity?

I have actually spent the last nearly thirty years subtly avoiding this term. To be perfectly honest, I haven’t really thought of this as a course in *miracles*. I don’t even use the full title all that much, preferring instead just “the Course.” In my own mind I think of it as a course in forgiveness, or in acquiring true perception, or in spiritual awakening, not so much a course in miracles.

Recently, I’ve been spending a great deal of time with digital photocopies of Helen’s original handwritten notebooks, where she initially recorded the words of the Course. Reading these notebooks has caused a revolution in my understanding of the word “miracle.” And that has significantly shifted my understanding of the Course itself.

What I found in her notebooks was fourteen examples of miracles, real-life events that Jesus identified as miracles. These examples supply what I have been lacking in understanding the term. “Miracle” as the Course uses it, is so redefined that it is essentially a new term, and everyone knows that to really grasp a new term you need concrete illustrations. I have those now, and as a result, I see this term in a new way.

I expect, in fact, that everyone will be somewhat surprised by these examples. They contain a new vision of what a miracle is, and thus a new understanding of what *A Course in Miracles* is.

The Examples

Let’s go through them now, in the order in which they appear.

1. Handing Wally back his chalice

Peppered throughout Helen’s very earliest dictation are references to her intense dislike of a friend of Bill’s named Wally, and her need to get over this dislike. For instance, at one point she writes to Bill, “Last night I was planning to type up the Course for you, and was strictly ordered not to go back to it before I got over Wally.” Then she says, “This morning I did ask for help with Wally. The answer seems to be in points 6 and 7. That’s why He [Jesus] gave me the chalice for Wally. It belongs to him but he cannot find it.” “Points 6 and 7” refers to two of the early miracle principles (#7 and #8 in the FIP Course):

- 6. Miracles are everyone’s right, but purification is necessary first.

PUBLISHED BY

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SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

A Better Way is published monthly by e-mail. If you wish to subscribe, please visit our website.

CIRCLE OF ATONEMENT

is a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to *A Course in Miracles*. It was founded in 1993. Its publishing division, Circle Publishing, was founded in 2003.

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WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT SAYS

A Course in Miracles is a spiritual path. Its purpose is to train us to work miracles—to accept and extend to others the shifts in perception that awaken us to God. It consists of three volumes, which signify the three aspects of its program:

- ◆ Text : Through studying the teaching, the Course's thought system first enters our minds.
- ◆ Workbook for Students: Through doing the practice, the Course's thought system penetrates more and more deeply into our minds.
- ◆ Manual for Teachers: Through extending our healed perception to others, the Course's thought system receives its final reinforcement and becomes the only thing in our minds.

The Course's message is that the source of our suffering is not the world's mistreatment of us, but rather our egocentric attack on the world. This attack convinces us that we have defiled our nature beyond repair, that we are irredeemably guilty. Yet the Course says true reality cannot be defiled; it is a realm of pure, changeless, unified spirit. This realization allows us to forgive the world's apparent mistreatment of us by recognizing that it did not actually occur. And as we see this forgiveness come forth from us—see that we are capable of something genuinely loving and egoless—we gradually realize that we never defiled ourselves. Thus we awaken to the untouched innocence of our true nature.

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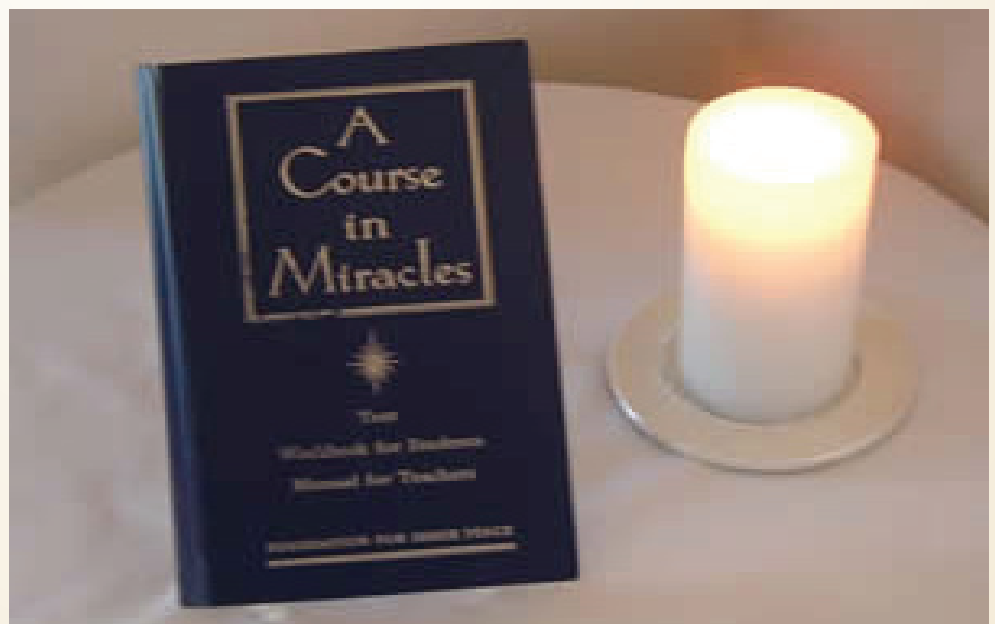
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7. Miracles are a form of healing. They supply a lack, and are performed by those who have more for those who have less.

The fact that “the answer seems to be in” two miracle principles shows that the answer is to give Wally a miracle. Actually, it is a bit more complicated than that. Principle #6 implies that before Helen can give him a miracle, she needs to purify her mind of her dislike of him. Once she has done that, she can give him the miracle and thereby supply his lack (à la principle #7). Another way of describing this is that she is supposed to give him “the chalice” that “belongs to him but he cannot find.” Jesus has therefore given that chalice to Helen, so she can give it back to its owner, Wally.

Jesus returns to this same process some time later. He first dictates a new miracle principle: “A miracle is a service. It is the maximal service one soul can render another. It is thus a way of loving your neighbor as yourself. The doer recognizes his own and his neighbor’s inestimable value simultaneously.” Then he adds, “This is why you cannot keep that thing about Wally. If you do, your own value can be estimated at X, or infinity minus that [amount].” The idea here seems to be basically the same as before. If Helen can let go of “that thing about Wally,” then she can render “the maximal service” to him by giving him a miracle. She can recognize his “inestimable value” and then love him as herself. On the other hand, if she can’t let “that thing” go, she will neither love him *nor* herself.

After the initial guidance above, Jesus clarified that Wally might not be ready for this miracle. Helen asks about Wally’s chalice, saying “Does this mean he is on my list?” Jesus replies, “Not necessarily,” explaining that Wally may be too afraid of his chalice to accept it from Helen. “You of all people should know that it frightens people if you hand them back their own chalice.” Therefore, “At present he is a *potential* candidate.” Then Jesus adds, “But *Amy* is on it now. She is a child you hurt.” And indeed, Helen had earlier recorded a dream in which Amy’s mother left her in Helen’s care.

This is not as concrete as other examples we’ll see. All we know is that Helen is supposed to get over her intense negativity toward Wally and then, if he is ready, hand him back his “chalice.” Based on other references, the chalice seems to represent an inner awareness of his innocence and holiness. Thus, she needs to recognize his innocence and holiness, and then hand that recognition back to him. We don’t know the form that this handing back would take. But we do know that it would have a powerful enough impact on Wally that she might need to refrain from doing it, as he might still be too afraid of his chalice. We also know that Wally is not the only one, that Helen has an actual “list” of people whose chalices she is supposed to return. Being on the list seems to be a matter of readiness to accept one’s chalice back, given that Wally’s lack of readiness is precisely why he is “not necessarily” on the list.

I find all of this so suggestive. Do I have a list of people whose chalices I am supposed to hand back to them, by giving them a miracle? Is this act of giving them back their chalice so potent that some may not be ready for it, making them only *potentially* on my list? And is this miracle I give also a way to undo my own past hurtfulness toward these people? I also find the image itself a very potent one. Think of someone in your life, perhaps someone you have hurt, and silently say, “*I hand you back your chalice.*” You might even picture handing this person a holy chalice, filled not with drink, but with the radiant spirit of Christ. You might even ask if this person is on your list, so that you’ll know if a more overt gift of the chalice is appropriate.

2. “A maximal effort for Chip”

Later, Helen took this down from Jesus:

Remember that there is no order in miracles because they are always *maximal* expressions of love. You *did* make a maximal effort for Chip, and the *only* reason you did it was because you loved Bill.

You might tell him to think about that sometimes, because he *does* need signs of love. But he does not always recognize them because he does not have enough confidence.

Jesus opens by referencing the first principle of miracles, saying “they are always *maximal* expressions of love.” Then he cites what Helen did for Chip (a friend of Bill’s) as an example of that principle: She made a *maximal* effort for Chip as an *expression of love* for Bill. In other words, she did a miracle. Jesus then says that this can benefit Bill, “because he *does* need signs of love.” Unfortunately, however, his lack of confidence often blinds him to the very signs of love he needs. Therefore, Helen is supposed to suggest to him that he think sometimes about what she did for his friend as a sign of love for *him*. This may sound like her tooting her own horn, but it’s clearly for Bill’s sake. Without her reminder, he may not recognize a sign of love that he really needs and has in fact received.

Again, we don’t have a report of the actual miracle—we don’t know *what* she did for Chip. But we know enough to recognize this as a familiar scenario: a person goes out of her way for someone else out of love for a third person, some-

one close to them both. We may not see this every day, but it is certainly a recognizable situation.

3. Helping Chip get over his misperceptions

The next example is also about Chip. (Actually, it may be the same example, but since we don't know that, I'll treat them as separate.) Jesus had recently dictated a new miracle principle: "Miracles are an industrial necessity. Industry depends on cooperation, and cooperation depends on miracles." Shortly after that, he says,

By the way, you are an example of the point on cooperation. And don't underestimate your cooperation either. You don't listen [to Jesus], and you would save yourself a lot of pain if you did. But you did get Chip over his misperceptions of Wally with very creditable integrity.

Here Jesus is again saying that something Helen did was an example of a miracle principle, which implies, of course, that what she did was a miracle. What did she do? She got "Chip over his misperceptions of Wally." Like the previous example, this is a familiar kind of situation. A friend of yours is caught up in negative perceptions of another person, whom both of you know, and you help that friend get over those negative perceptions. In Helen's case, this act was more impressive than usual, since *she* had negative perceptions of that same person. This is clearly why Jesus said she displayed "very creditable integrity."

This miracle becomes even more interesting when we note that Chip seems to have been on Helen's chalice list. If you remember, Wally's readiness to get his chalice back was the determiner of whether he was actually on Helen's list. Jesus said, "Whether he is or not depends on a three-way readiness. I am *always* ready. Your job is to take care of *your* readiness. His readiness is up to him." Not long after this, Jesus said this about Chip: "*You* are helping Chip's readiness...Chip is almost ready." Given their similarity and proximity to the comments about Wally's readiness, these comments seem to be about Chip's readiness to receive *his* chalice back.

How was Helen's miracle an example of the principle on cooperation? I'm not entirely sure, but I have a guess. The principle says that "cooperation depends on miracles." The miracle here was Helen helping Chip let go of his misperceptions of Wally. If Chip's misperceptions had caused cooperation between him and Wally to break down, then Helen's miracle may have restored that cooperation. In this interpretation, the above passage would mean something like this: "You are an example of the principle that cooperation depends on miracles, in that Chip and Wally's cooperation depends on that miracle you gave Chip. And don't underestimate your own cooperation, either. You may not listen to me. But the miracle you did with Chip was an example of *you* cooperating with *me*."

By the way, after this generous compliment from Jesus, Helen said "You mean You think I'm *nice*?" and then burst into tears. This led to a very sweet and touching exchange between her and Jesus.

4. The Shield report

Our fullest example of a miracle is the Shield report. This again is a situation from Helen's life that Jesus mentions as an example of a miracle principle, which was this one:

Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness which when completed, is the atonement. This process works all the time and in all dimensions of time.

Immediately following this, Jesus says, "A very good example of how this is accomplished is the time you rewrote the entire report for Esther for SOD [the Shield Institute for Retarded Children]."

The situation was this: Esther had written a report for the Shield, which was apparently needed to secure a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH), but Helen regarded the report "as very bad." However, Jesus says, "You recognized in this case, you *are* your brother's keeper." Therefore, Helen went above and beyond her professional duty and rewrote the entire report in Esther's name. Jesus says, "You atoned for her by writing one that was very good." He says that by doing this, she canceled out the effects of Esther's "sin" (soon clarified as simply a "lack of love"). Later, he made the same point again, calling Esther's initial report "a sin which you cancelled out in advance by a miracle of devotion."

So here he is openly calling Helen's act "a miracle," something he will do twice more before he is done. Later, he clarifies why: "The reason it was a miracle was because it not only atoned for Esther, but also for *you* because it kept the children from harm." Jesus had explained earlier that Helen had "hated and hurt" the children (apparently in past lives), but this act was a reversal of that. He clearly implies that her new report did secure the needed funding, which would in

turn benefit the children served by the Shield.

When I read this account in *Absence from Felicity* years ago, I assumed that Helen must have rewritten the report filled with love for the Shield and sincerely wanting to spare Esther the painful consequences of her poorly written report. Unless it came from such a state of mind, how could it be a miracle? Yet in reading the complete story from Helen's notebooks, I see now that I was incorrect:

The reason why you found rewriting that so taxing was because you resented Esther's sin and thought she put you in a very unfair position. But no one can really do this to anybody. If you had known that you were really part of a miracle for the Shield, for Esther, for yourself, and for Me, you would have done it with real joy.

In other words, far from being filled with love, Helen found the whole process taxing, because she resented Esther for putting her in this unfair position, as she saw it. But amazingly, it was still a miracle! It was a miracle for the Shield, because it secured the needed funding; for Esther, because it wiped away her loveless error; for Helen, because it canceled out her past hurtfulness toward the children; and even for Jesus, because as the gospel of Matthew says, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matt 25:40). If Helen had known about all these effects of her act, she would have done it with joy. Yet still, *not* doing it with joy did not deprive it of being a miracle.

Perhaps we now can understand why this was "a very good example" of the miracle principle Jesus had just dictated: "Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness." Esther's report could easily have had very negative consequences, for the Shield and those it served and for Esther personally. It could have been a millstone around a lot of necks. Yet Helen's rewriting made it as if Esther's "sin" had never happened. It wiped the slate clean. You could thus see it as a very concrete act of forgiveness, like when a bank forgives a debt. But it didn't just wipe the slate clean for Esther. It also did for Helen. Indeed, it blessed everyone involved. This single act really did forge "an interlocking chain of forgiveness." And that's why it was a miracle.

5. The psychic readings of Edgar Cayce

Several times and in two widely separated places, Jesus calls the psychic readings of Edgar Cayce "miracles." Here is one place:

While what he did came from Me, he could not be induced to ask Me each time whether I wanted him to perform *this particular* miracle. If he had, he would not have performed any miracles that could not get through constructively, and would thus have saved himself unnecessary strain.

He burned himself out with indiscriminate miracles, and to this extent did not fulfill his own full purpose.

There is no question what Jesus is referring to here. Towards the end of Cayce's life, he became quite famous and was deluged with requests for readings, many from people with life-threatening illnesses. As a result, he disregarded the instructions he had received from his own readings to do only two readings per day and did as many as seven or eight a day. The resulting strain on his system (Jesus: "unnecessary strain") was too much. His health failed ("he burned himself out") and he died at the relatively premature age of 67 ("did not fulfill his own full purpose").

This situation is clearly what Jesus is talking about, which means that what he refers to as Cayce's *miracles* were actually Cayce's *readings*. In these readings, Cayce would go into a self-induced trance and then give lengthy advice to the person who was seeking the reading. This advice was usually medical, but could also be spiritual, psychological, marital, financial—anything that person might need.

At first I thought it odd that Jesus would call Cayce's readings miracles. Yet as we'll see in several later examples, one of the chief forms that miracles take is that of a helpful message given to another person, especially a message inspired by a higher source.

6. Refraining from blaming Bill

At one point, Jesus gives an interesting little reinterpretation of witchcraft. In this, he redefines cursing as simply projecting lovelessness onto others and thereby reinforcing errors they have already made. Their preexisting error, he says, "makes them vulnerable to the curse of others, since they have already cursed themselves." In this sense, we are all practicing witchcraft; we are all cursing others by projecting our lovelessness onto them and thus cementing their errors in

place. The job of the miracle worker is to undo what the “witch” has done: “The miracle worker can only bless, and this undoes the curse and frees the soul from prison.”

Jesus then implies that Helen had been a demonstration of this very idea:

...you *did not* project onto Bill the blame for your omission to *ask me* if you should transcribe the notes. The fact that *he* should have done so *does not* exempt you from your own omission.

Thanks for blessing him with a miracle instead of cursing him with projection.

Apparently, then, both of them forgot to ask Jesus if they should transcribe the latest dictation. Helen could easily have blamed the whole thing on Bill, projecting her responsibility onto him, and thus reinforcing his error. It would have been the very act of cursing Jesus had just described. However, she didn’t do this. She took responsibility for her own error, and to that extent lifted the cloud of blame off of Bill. This ordinary, everyday act was the very thing Jesus had just spoken of, an act of “blessing him with a miracle instead of cursing him with projection.”

And this permitted Jesus to bless her. He not only thanked her, he dictated to her a beautiful “special revelation” that is virtually a song of praise to her true Identity. It begins with, “You are wholly lovely—a perfect shaft of pure light.” After he was done, he explained why this was able to come through at this time: “This revelation was permitted because you *did not* project onto Bill the blame for your omission to *ask me* if you should transcribe the notes.”

This introduces a central theme that we will see repeatedly in future examples: Giving a miracle allows some kind of blessing to return to the miracle worker, often immediately.

7. Patience and gentleness in pursuit of the flu shot answer

The issue of Bill getting a flu shot crops up three times in Helen’s notebooks. The first time, Helen was told to discuss “the flu shot” “*very* frankly” with Bill. The second time, Jesus said, “Ask Bill’s help for guidance about the flu shots, but be sure to tell him not to let fear enter into the consideration.” Finally, Helen got the answer she had been seeking. She explains in the Urtext that she had a “meeting with Dr. Wise and Dr. Damrosch,” the latter being the chairman of the flu board. She said Dr. Damrosch then “permitted an opportunity for questioning in his capacity as chairman of the flu board for asking re Bill’s flu shot.” He somehow opened the door for Helen to ask her question about Bill. The answer (returning to Helen’s notes): “One now and a booster *if* there is an epidemic.” Jesus then broke in:

P.S. This is how miracles should work. You *did not* jump into the question yourself, and even though you *did* rush to the phone on Red’s advice, you exerted no pressure on Bill’s reluctance. This gave me a chance to let you leave it to the real expert, whom I sent to answer the question.

We unfortunately do not know the exact scene here. But what comes through clearly is Helen’s patience and lack of pushiness. Rather than hastily thrusting her question forward, she waited until Dr. Damrosch “permitted an opportunity for questioning.” Yes, she “*did* rush to the phone” (was it perhaps a phone meeting with the doctors?), but this was in response to someone else’s advice to do so. Finally, she “exerted no pressure on Bill’s reluctance” (to get on the phone with the doctors as well?).

In short, she exerted no pressure on anyone. She was patient and gentle. She worked *with* everyone involved, rather than pushing against them. This was the miracle. It may seem like a very small miracle, but then almost all of our examples are like that. Her lack of pushiness here, in fact, is reminiscent of her lack of projecting blame in the previous example.

And like the previous example, the miracle she gave allowed a blessing to come back to her: “This gave me a chance to let you leave it to the real expert, whom I sent to answer the question.” Because she was patient and gentle, the answer she had sought for some time was allowed to come to her, through the expert Jesus had sent her.

8. Mrs. Albert

One of the most interesting examples concerns a woman named Mrs. Albert, who Helen apparently encounters at the hospital bed of Dave Diamond (who we’ll also see in later examples). Jesus opens a long discourse involving Mrs. Albert by saying, “Bill and you need considerable clarification of the channel role.” Based on other early references, “channel” refers to being a channel of miracles. To provide this clarification of the role of channeling miracles, Jesus points to an example: “Look carefully at Mrs. Albert. She is working miracles every day because she knows who she is.”

This is quite a statement. According to Jesus, Mrs. Albert is a real miracle worker, a living example of the course he

is teaching. I don't know of anyone else who comes in for such high praise from him. Let us, then, follow his advice and "look carefully at Mrs. Albert."

Jesus' discourse is long and complex. It opens by describing Helen's way of being. He says that she has a "fear of involvement" that is really rooted in a sense that something is deeply wrong with her. She is afraid of the hate within her and what it might do to others, so she tries to insert distance between her and them, which she does in part by getting their names wrong. That way, she thinks, her hate can't reach them. Two other things, mentioned elsewhere, probably also contribute to this fear of involvement. One is that she is embarrassed by the love she feels. The other is that she is ashamed of her connection with Jesus. Both of these surely add to the distance between her and others.

Mrs. Albert stands in stark contrast to all of this. Helen gets her name wrong (calling her "Mrs. Andrews") out of her usual fear of involvement. In response, Mrs. Albert simply corrects her as a purely factual matter, "without embarrassment and without hostility," says Jesus. Indeed, he says, "the whole question of embarrassment did not occur to her." She hasn't identified herself with her name, which would give her a shaky and vulnerable sense of identity. Instead, her sense of identity stands on a firm foundation: "She is not afraid, because she knows she is protected."

Then comes Mrs. Albert's miracle:

She was also quite unembarrassed when she told you that everything has to be done to preserve life, because you never can tell when God may come and say "Get up, Dave," and then he will. She did not ask what *you* believed first, and afterwards merely added, "and it's true, too."

To appreciate Mrs. Albert's statement, try to imagine the scene. It sounds like Helen ran into her in Dave's hospital room, where he is in a coma, on life support, and dying. Put yourself in Helen's shoes. You have just encountered this woman whose name you really should know, but you get it wrong instead, out of an unconscious attempt to put distance between you and her. She then closes that distance by openly correcting you, yet without any trace of hostility and without a hint of embarrassment. You can feel her sense of security, which leaves her free of your fear of involvement; indeed, seemingly free of any fear at all.

Then, without testing the waters by asking what you believe, she simply volunteers her view that Dave should be kept on life support, "because you never can tell when God may come and say, 'Get up Dave,' and then he will. And it's true, too." In other words, she has told you that this dying friend of yours could at any moment be healed by God. Just as Jesus told the paralytic "rise up and walk," so God may say, "Get up, Dave," and, like the paralytic, he would. If someone said this to you, with a conviction that was both utterly innocent and absolutely rock solid, wouldn't you feel your mind pulled in her direction? Wouldn't you feel new possibilities arise and new vistas open up before you? That's why it was a miracle.

Yet this is not all. Jesus has a great deal to say in the wake of Mrs. Albert's statement. He characterizes it as an example of following the authority of God within, rather than treating other people as your authority. As Helen clarifies in the Urtext: "If you ask somebody what he believes before you tell him what you believe, then you are implying that you will say what he approves. This is not 'the real authority.'" Jesus then implies that Mrs. Albert was witnessing to him, representing him, showing that he was her authority. This stands in clear contrast to Helen, who was ashamed of him (and who famously treated the Course as her "guilty secret"). Jesus then summarizes the situation with Mrs. Albert:

Those who witness for Me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned *belongs* to them.

Mrs. Albert, then, was coming from a place of inner abundance, a place of immovable security ("she knows who she is"), and a place of serene safety ("she knows she is protected"). Because of this place in her, she was free of embarrassment and fear. And at the heart of this place was her connection with God, of Whom she was completely unashamed. This place in her enabled her to give, to speak to Helen with unembarrassed directness about the power of God to work miracles even in an extreme case like Dave's. In essence, what this statement did was share with Helen the treasure that was inside Mrs. Albert, that place in her that was filled with abundance because God and Jesus were there. To paraphrase the above quote, by witnessing for Jesus, Mrs. Albert was expressing, through her miracle, that she had abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance she had learned belonged to her.

I find it telling that the star miracle worker in this early material was not a Course student at all. After all, Bill and Helen are the only ones studying the Course, which is just beginning to come through. Rather than being a Course student, Mrs. Albert is almost certainly a Christian. She speaks of God's power to do miracles. Jesus calls her a "witness for Me." She even seems to be in favor of keeping people on life support indefinitely! Let's face it, she's a Christian. And

yet, by affirming that God could raise the nearly dead, she directly echoes the first principle in the Course, that there is no order of difficulty in miracles. She actually makes the same point that Jesus had made to Helen the day after the Course started coming through, where he applied the first principle of miracles to Dave, implying that healing Dave's terminal illness was in principle no different than healing Louis' hernia.

So here is a Christian who almost certainly believes none of the Course's lofty metaphysical teachings, and yet, "She is working miracles every day because she knows who she is."

9. Helen's scribing of the Course

Helen, however, was working miracles of her own, albeit in a different way. Jesus overtly compares Helen's scribing of the Course to Edgar Cayce's readings, which we have already seen labeled miracles (see #5 above: "The psychic readings of Edgar Cayce"):

P.S. the reason you have been late recently [the Urtext adds "for work"] because you were taking dictation is merely because you did not remember to ask me when to stop. This is an example of the "indiscriminate or uncontrolled" miracle-working we already spoke of. It is well-meant but ill-advised.

The "indiscriminate...miracle-working we already spoke of" was Cayce's ("He burned himself out with indiscriminate miracles"). Just as Cayce didn't let Jesus limit the number of his readings and thus ended up compromising his health, so Helen wasn't letting Jesus tell her when to stop taking dictation and thus ended up compromising her schedule. Both were doing essentially the same thing.

The implication is inescapable. Helen's scribing, like Cayce's readings, was miracle working. After all, indiscriminate miracle working is *still* miracle working. And, of course, Helen was doing something fairly similar to Cayce. She was bringing forth information from a higher source that could be helpful to others.

That this is why her scribing of the Course is miracle working is made clear in other places. In one place Jesus said,

Scribes have a particular role in the Plan of Atonement, because they have the ability to *experience* revelations themselves, and also to put into words enough of the experience to serve as a basis for miracles.

Jesus then gives an example in which Helen experienced a revelation "*very* personally, but also *wrote it*." Then he said, "What you wrote *can* be useful to miracle workers other than yourself." Elsewhere, he says that in a past life, Helen violated this central principle of the scribal role. Her scribal ability, he says, was "turned to secret rather than shared advantage, depriving it of its miraculous potential." This makes it clear that its miraculous potential lay entirely in its ability to *benefit others*.

Helen, in other words, had the ability to allow into her mind something from a higher realm, either a spiritual experience or a flow of dictation, and then bring that forth in a form that would be useful for others, that would bring "shared advantage" rather than mere private gain. And by doing so, she was working miracles.

10. Jean Dixon's statement

Here is another example of a verbal statement that is overtly labeled a miracle:

All actions which stem from reversed thinking are literally the behavioral expressions of those who know not what they do. Actually, Jean Dixon was right in her emphasis on "Feet on the ground and fingertips in the Heaven," though she was a bit too literal for your kind of understanding. Many people knew exactly what she meant, so her statement was the right miracle for them.

Jean Dixon, as many of us recall, was a renowned astrologer at the time of this dictation (1965). Jesus' point here is that when your thinking is upside down, you end up doing crazy things, not realizing what you are really doing. (In the previous paragraph, he alludes to the Nazis and his own crucifiers as examples of this.) The antidote is expressed in Jean Dixon's image: to have your feet planted firmly on the ground and yet your fingertips stretched up into the heavens. This image unites two kinds of sanity: the sanity of being in touch with everyday earthly "realities" and the very different sanity of being in touch with lofty heavenly principles. To unite both of these is to possess a true sanity, a state of being in touch with the full spectrum of existence. It is the opposite of having your mind flipped upside down and running around not knowing what you are doing.

Jesus calls Dixon's statement a miracle, presumably because the sanity expressed in the image could bring a breath of sanity into the minds of those who read it. It wasn't the right miracle for Helen because it was too literal. However, for those who "knew exactly what she meant," "her statement was the right miracle for them."

When I first read this, I thought, "Surely he can't mean that some mere statement, some little line Jean Dixon put in one of her books, was a *miracle*. He must just be getting loose in his terminology here." Yet in light of these other examples, we can see that he was actually quite precise in his terminology. Verbal messages that bring light into the minds of others—like Cayce's readings, Helen's scribing, or Mrs. Albert's statement—are one of the primary forms that miracles take.

11. Praying for Dave

Helen did a great deal of praying for Dave in the time leading up to his death. In the two days after she began her notebooks and before the Course started coming through, she prayed for him at length on paper, which took the form of pleading with him to accept a miracle by identifying with his spirit rather than his brain (it sounds like his illness was of the brain). Now she hears that he has died, and she writes about her prayers for him in the days preceding his death:

I prayed that he would be able to love everybody in return, (this too was under instruction), having been told, (I *think* on Great Authority) that his only real danger came from lacks in *this* connection.

I did not visit him on Friday, but I am sure this was right because I was *very* careful to ask. I was going over, too, after the lecture, and was told not to....

I am upset about it, and am leaving my notes for a while. I think I'd rather pray just now.

Then she reports that she has heard that Terry, presumably Dave's wife, "was talking about giving away the baby." She says, "I jumped to the conclusion that I was supposed to take her, but that may easily be an indiscriminate miracle impulse. I think I'd better just stop now." What I find interesting is that it shows how Helen had been taught to think about the miracle. She treated the impulse to take on the care of a baby as a *miracle* impulse. But she also knew that these impulses should be guided by Jesus, and she suspected this one hadn't. As a result, she steps back and tries to be more open about what miracles she might offer, as she continues her prayers:

I prayed for Dave, and said that whatever miracles I could do for him even now, or any of his family, I would will to do. I also asked Jesus to help Dave with the course. Then I was told to go in and visit with Jonathan [Louis] and pray for him [Dave], particularly if he was asleep, which he was. It was the only time so far I prayed intensely for him. When that happens, I am strongly aware that I am not praying alone.

The conclusion to this story comes a few pages later, which is where Jesus calls her praying for Dave a miracle:

(You did surprisingly well today, after a rather bad start. Actually, Dave helped you, but this will *not* be explained.)

Helen responds, "I got very frightened about this." After all, Jesus has just told her that Dave is somehow helping her from beyond the grave. He then responds to her fear:

A: It's just an example of how no miracle is ever lost, and *always* blesses the doer.

In other words, the miracle she gave Dave with her prayers may seem to have been lost, in that Dave wasn't healed. Yet it wasn't lost. It came back and blessed her in the form of Dave, now out of the body, helping her with her day. After a bad start, she found herself doing "surprisingly well" in going through the day in the way Jesus wanted. Little did she know that this was Dave returning to her the miracle she gave him with her prayers.

12. Visiting Louis' mother

One evening at this same time, Helen had planned some lovely self-time, but Jesus had other plans:

I was going to wash my hair after fixing his dinner, but I was told to visit his [her husband's] mother. Am not too enthusiastic about this, but am going now. It occurred to me while waiting for the elevator that I was glad

I was going, because it was a way of atoning to Jonathan for my being so nasty to him. (He is always happy to have me visit his mother) and in a way of atoning for Dave too.

By speaking of a guided visit to her mother-in-law, that would atone for her own lovelessness and for Dave's too, Helen was really saying that she was doing a miracle. Jesus apparently agreed, because immediately after she finished the above sentence (and without her even starting a new paragraph in her notebooks), he broke in with these comments:

The *impersonal* nature of miracles is because atonement itself is *one*.

By being one, it unites all creations with their Creator. Miracles arise from a miraculous state of mind. This state of mind goes out to *anyone*, even without the awareness of the miracle-worker himself.

Given that this came right after her comment about her mother-in-law visit "atoning for Dave, too," it seems intended to answer the question as to how her miracle could reach someone like Dave, who was not only not involved, but had passed from this earth. The answer lies in "the *impersonal* nature of miracles," which is alluded to several times in the early dictation. Even though a miracle is directed at an individual very personally, that is not because the individual's special attributes make her especially deserving. The miracle disregards all differences between people, seeing everyone as equally deserving. That is what is meant by its "impersonal nature." As a result, every miracle, however specifically aimed, has at its core a spirit of nonspecific, universal blessing, aimed at everyone. That is why it can go out "to *anyone*, even without the awareness of the miracle-worker himself." In other words, that is why Helen's visit of her mother-in-law could reach and out and bless Dave, even though he was no longer in a body.

13. The taxi miracle that could have been

The next example is of an opportunity for a miracle that was passed up. Bill and Helen were waiting for a cab after work, and Bill was apparently upset with a woman named Dora, who had committed an "error" which Bill regarded as "stupidity." Here is the scene as Jesus describes it:

Bill, having already weakened himself, was very un-miracle-minded first by not asking Dora if she wanted a lift in the cab, which was going her way. Even if she didn't want it, she would have been able to use the thought well. There is probably no human error that is more fear-provoking (in the will/behavior conflict sense) than countering any form of error [Dora's error] with error [Bill's error]. The result can be highly inflammable. [The Urtext adds: "By reacting to Dora's stupidity with his own, all of the elements which are virtually certain to engender fear have been provided."]

Bill should note that this is one of the few times that he had to wait for a cab...

His original slight to Dora, because of his own needs [Urtext: to get home] as he perceived them, stopped him from benefiting from the time-saving device of the miracle. He would have gotten home *much quicker* if he had taken time to use time properly.

Obviously, if it was "un-miracle-minded" to *not* ask Dora if she wanted a lift in the cab, then it would have been miracle-minded to *ask* her. Indeed, we can safely say it would have been a miracle. After all, "the miracle is an expression of miracle-Mindedness" (Urtext), and offering the cab would have been an *expression* rather than a state of mind, an outer expression of a miracle-minded inner state. And indeed, Jesus later gives it the label "miracle": "His original slight to Dora...stopped him from benefiting from the time-saving device of the miracle."

This miracle may seem particularly mundane and commonplace, but it's clearly similar to our other examples. Further, it was about more than just helping Dora get home more easily. Its real context seems to be Dora's original error, about which Bill was apparently harboring resentment. If Bill had given the miracle, he would have met her error with kindness. It would have been an act of forgiveness and of reconciliation between them. This helps explain why, even if she didn't want the lift in the cab, "she would have been able to use the thought well."

This story is an interesting flip side of other examples in which the miracle returned to the giver. According to Jesus, that would have happened here *if* Bill had given the miracle, in which case a taxi would have arrived quickly. But since he didn't, the reverse happened: "This is one of the few times that he had to wait for a cab."

This suggests that the miracle returning to bless the doer can take very concrete forms, as concrete as a taxi showing up sooner. It makes you wonder how different our lives would be if we were giving miracles throughout each day.

14. Bill's potentially miraculous puns

Our final example in a way is less concrete, in that Jesus is urging Bill toward a general kind of miracle working. However, Jesus himself performs a concrete example of this kind of miracle, so I felt this story definitely belonged on our list.

In the early dictation, Jesus would occasionally use puns as gestures of love toward Bill, who had a penchant for them. For example, after one of Jesus' puns, he said, "That's a special pun for Bill. He is still under the impression that he needs special signs of love" At another time, Jesus was talking about remembering the knowledge of Heaven. Then he said, "This is not a literal remembering as much as a real re-remembering." This pun actually makes an effective teaching point. Remembering knowledge is not like remembering something from the past. Rather, it is more like reattaching a detached member, such as an arm. The member is not a thing in the past; it is here in the present. (The Course will later say, "This is not a memory of past events, but only of a present state"—T-28.I.4:2.) Further, it belongs to you, and even belongs attached to you. After all, a thing is only a member by virtue of its belonging to a larger body. So is knowledge like that—something that is part of me, like an arm, and that is right here in the present, but that I have simply detached from my awareness? Is my job not so much to remember it as to "re-member" it? These are the insights opened up by Jesus' pun.

Having made this pun, Jesus again says, "That is largely for Bill," and then goes on to talk about Bill's own puns:

I wish he would decide to use that talent of his constructively. He has no idea of how powerful it could be. Actually, it does come from the unconscious, and is really a distorted form of miraculous perception which he has reduced to word twisting. Although this can be quite funny, it is still a real waste. Maybe he'd care to let me control it, and still use it humorously himself. He doesn't have to decide it is one *or* the other.

In its real form, Bill's talent for puns comes from what Jesus calls the miracle-level of the unconscious and carries "miraculous perception." Bill, however, has "distorted" this and "reduced" it to mere "word twisting" for the sake of getting a laugh (which Jesus calls "a real waste"). But Bill could let Jesus control it, even if only part of the time, allowing it in these times to revert to its original nature. This would mean using it "constructively"—a code word in this early dictation for miracle working—in which case it would have a surprisingly "powerful" effect on others. Rather than just provoking laughter, his puns would now open people's minds to a new way of looking at things. They would do for others what Jesus' pun just did for us. They would implant in the minds of others the "miraculous perception" that the puns themselves contained. They would work miracles. How fascinating that making a pun could actually be giving a miracle!

The Miracle According to These Examples

With many of the above examples, when I first read the event recounted and realized that Jesus was calling it a miracle, I quickly discounted his use of the term, assuming that he was using it loosely or carelessly. The event just didn't fit my concept of a miracle, often because it didn't rise to the high level of what I understood to be a miracle. With other examples, I didn't even notice Jesus was calling them miracles, in part because his language was subtle, but in part because, again, they just didn't fit my concept.

But something happens when you put all of these examples side by side. Their similarity jumps out at you. They look like members of a single family. They express a very definite, unified concept of the miracle. Let's use these examples, then, to draw out this concept.

The miracle is a gift to someone else

Perhaps the first thing that strikes one is that in every single one of these cases, the miracle is a gift to someone else. It is not an internal shift in perception, as Course students typically believe. It is an act of yours that benefits someone else.

These examples even raise the interesting possibility that we, like Helen, have a list of people to whom we are supposed to give a miracle. We might even surmise that we have a daily list in addition to a more long-term list. While Helen's chalice list seemed more long-term, the following message seems to speak of that daily list:

Note also that I specifically told you in answer to your own question of this morning, that miracles should be offered both to Art [a colleague] and to your brother [Helen's brother Adolph]. They are urgently needed for *you* [Helen and Bill], although this is not the spirit in which you must undertake them.

This gift is usually an external act

In almost every case, this gift either definitely or probably takes the form of an external action. Helen rewrites Esther's report. Mrs. Albert states that God can heal Dave. Helen visits Louis' mother. Even in cases where the form the miracle would take is unclear, it is most likely behavioral. For instance, Helen's gift of Wally's chalice, as we saw, would have such an impact that he might not be ready for it, and to have that impact, it would almost certainly be something overt and visible. The only clear exception is Helen praying for Dave. That miracle was obviously given internally and invisibly.

The miracle is designed to help the recipient, usually to change the recipient's perception

The miracle, like any gift, is clearly intended to somehow benefit the recipient. It may help the recipient with something concrete, like Bill offering Dora a lift in his taxi. More often though, it helps the recipient see things differently. The gift of Wally's chalice would have helped him see himself differently. Helen helped Chip see Wally differently. Mrs. Albert helped Helen see Dave's situation differently. Helen's scribing—the Course—was intended to help its readers see things differently. Helen's prayer was that Dave could see the people in his life differently: "I prayed that he would be able to love everybody." Rather than a shift in our own perception, these miracles are something we do to shift someone *else's* perception.

Miracles are motivated by impulses from a deeper part of the mind

There is a definite sense that miracles come from somewhere other than the conscious mind. This was clearly true in the case of Helen's scribing and Cayce's readings, both of which were channeled from a higher source. Yet all of our examples were probably motivated by divine forces in the mind of the giver, even when the giver was unaware of that. Jesus mentions that Bill's miraculous puns would have "come from the unconscious"—what he calls elsewhere the miracle level of the unconscious. Yet in this early material, Jesus teaches that *all* miracles begin as impulses arising from the unconscious. An example of this is the story of Bob the elevator man. It is not called a miracle (and thus is not on my list of fourteen), but it almost certainly is. Jesus says to Helen,

I inspired Bob [the elevator man who took Helen down from her apartment] to make that remark to you, and it is a pity that you heard only the last part. But you can still use that. His remark ended with: "Every shut eye is not asleep."

So Jesus inspired Bob to say to Helen, "Every shut eye is not asleep," because she could "use" it. Indeed, Jesus himself then used it, saying, "Man's spiritual eye can sleep, but... a sleeping eye can still see." Now I think we can safely assume that Bob was unaware his remark was inspired by Jesus. He didn't know where it came from. He just had an impulse to say something and said it. That is exactly how miracles work.

Miracle impulses need to be guided in how and whether they are expressed

It is not enough to have a miracle impulse. These impulses need to be expressed according to inner guidance. We see this in a number of these cases. Jesus told Helen who was on her chalice list and who wasn't. Helen said she prayed "under instruction" that Dave "would be able to love everybody in return." She "was told" to visit her mother-in-law rather than wash her hair. To perform miracles without such guidance was, as Jesus said, "well-meant but ill-advised." He called it "indiscriminate miracle working." It could easily lead one to do miracles that were too much for one's schedule (Helen being late because of taking dictation), one's health (Cayce doing too many readings), or one's life (Helen's idea of adopting Terry's baby). This is why there is so much emphasis on asking for guidance in this early material. The material was about miracles, and being guided is a crucial component of doing miracles.

Miracles often take the form of an act of kindness

So many of these examples are ordinary kind deeds. There was Helen rewriting the Shield report, or helping Chip get over his misperceptions of Wally, or visiting her mother-in-law, or being gentle and patient with all concerned while seeking information about Bill's flu shot. These are not epic events of biblical proportions. The blind weren't healed and the dead weren't raised. They were just simple acts of kindness, yet in Jesus' mind they fit exactly his new definition of a miracle.

Miracles also often take the form of a helpful message given to another

Five of our miracles take the form of information or messages that one person gives to help others. These include Edgar Cayce's readings, Helen's scribing, Mrs. Albert's statement about God's power to heal Dave, Jean Dixon's statement "Feet on the ground and fingertips in the Heaven," and finally the kind of inspired puns that Jesus wanted Bill to make. There is also the probable miracle of Bob the elevator man's remark. I find this one of the most surprising things about these examples, that so many consist of some verbal message given to another. For the most part, the messages are not even personal ones but rather abstract statements about spiritual truth. Both Jean Dixon and Helen wrote down abstract teachings that eventually went out in print to a broad audience, and Jesus called these miracles. That may seem to blow our whole idea of what a miracle is. Yet when you think about it, it makes sense, for such verbal messages are one of the primary ways that we can change the perception of others, and as we saw above, that seems to be the main purpose of the miracle.

The miracle is often designed to undo something done in the past, either by the miracle worker or by someone else

In certain cases, Jesus says that Helen's miracles are intended to atone for something hurtful she has done. By "atone," he does not mean to pay off guilt, but simply to *undo*, to wipe away some past misdeed. Giving Wally and Amy back their chalices was meant to undo Helen's past hurtfulness toward them. Rewriting the Shield report undid Helen's past hurtfulness toward the children. Visiting Louis' mother was designed to undo Helen's nastiness toward her husband. Interestingly, in two of those cases, the miracle also atoned for something that someone *else* had done. Helen's rewritten report atoned for Esther's shoddy version and Helen's visit to her mother-in-law atoned for Dave's lovelessness. These examples give us visual snapshots of a principle enunciated in the later Course: "Each one allows a past mistake to go, and leave no shadow on the holy mind my Father loves" (W-pII.316.1:2).

Certainly this atoning can be done in a misguided, ego-based way. For instance, in the taxi situation, Bill tried "to atone on his own" (Jesus' words) by giving to someone else the one taxi that did come, a seemingly magnanimous act that, according to Jesus, was "well calculated" to bring grief to an "extremely cold" and "very late" Helen. Yet such atoning can also be done in a healthy and guided way. We all know how healing it can be to have someone undo his past hurtfulness toward us with a truly kind gesture. Indeed, there is an implication that this is exactly what Bill's offer of a lift to Dora was meant to have been.

The miracle returns to bless the giver

This tantalizing theme comes through in four of our examples. When Helen didn't blame Bill for something she forgot, that allowed Jesus to give her a "special revelation" about her true nature. When Helen displayed gentleness with the doctor and Bill while seeking the flu shot information, that allowed Jesus to give her the answer through the expert he had sent. If Bill had offered a lift to Dora, a cab would have shown up sooner. When Helen prayed for Dave, it came back to her in the form of Dave, from the other side, helping her with her day. In the last case, Jesus even announces this theme as an invariable principle: "It's just an example of how no miracle is ever lost, and *always* blesses the doer."

I find it fascinating to think that going out of my way for someone else will return in the form of blessing to me. It almost seems too good to be true. Yet this is the very kind of thing the Course leads us to expect. Lesson 345 says, "The miracles I give are given back in just the form I need to help me with the problems I perceive" (W-pII.345.1:4). Isn't this exactly what we are seeing in these examples?

How does this miracle compare with common understandings?

If we were to craft a definition of miracles based just on these examples, we would come up with something like this:

The miracle is a gift from you to someone else, usually in the form of an act of kindness or a helpful verbal message. It is designed to help the recipient, especially by changing the recipient's perception. It is motivated by an impulse from a deeper part of your mind and its specifics should be guided by the Holy Spirit. Though a gift to someone else, it will also bless you. It will undo something hurtful you have done in the past. And it will return to you, often immediately, in some form that helps you with your own needs.

I think it safe to say that this concept rocks our whole understanding of the miracle. We have been told since the Course first came out that a miracle was a shift in perception, something strictly internal. That is clearly not what we see

here. The only example that unambiguously involves an internal shift is Helen’s need to let go of her dislike of Wally. (Helen refraining from blaming Bill may have been a shift, but then again, in this case she may have not blamed Bill from the start.) Further, in two of the miracles, Helen’s internal state is not shifted upward toward joy and peace, but is rather one of *strain*. She found rewriting of the Shield report “taxing,” and she was “not too enthusiastic” about visiting Louis’ mother. Yet these actions were still miracles.

The other concept of the miracle I often hear is that it is an unexpected positive shift in outer circumstances. We all know what this looks like: a check shows up in the mail, a parking space appears, a relationship takes a turn for the better. This also is clearly not what we see here. True, the miracle may return to us in a form like this. After all, a parking space materializing is not so different from a taxi showing up. Yet in these stories, that is the *aftermath* of the miracle. The miracle itself is our gift to another person.

The basic difference is that our usual view—both in the Course community and in our culture—is that the miracle is something wonderful that happens *to* us. It is something we receive. Our perception miraculously shifts. Our finances miraculously improve. It is a blessing that comes to us. Isn’t that how we hear the word “miracle”? Don’t we hear it as “something wonderful coming to me”? Here, however, it is not something that happens *to* us, but rather something that happens *through* us. It is something we do, a blessing we give. That is a huge change in meaning. Can you imagine switching over to this new meaning? Can you imagine hearing the word “miracle” as “something wonderful coming *through* me”?

Should We Trust This Picture of the Miracle?

Obviously, the question here is: *Should* we switch to this new meaning? Should we let these examples redefine our entire understanding of the miracle? That is a question we have to resolve. I see three possible answers:

1. We should discount these examples because we know from elsewhere in the Course that a miracle is an internal shift in perception. Clearly, Helen’s hearing was still rusty at this early stage, and what she heard about these stories was inaccurate. Since they are not shifts in perception, they are not miracles in the true Course sense.
2. These examples are miracles, but they do not reflect the emphasis of what a miracle is later in the Course.
3. These examples and the teachings they illustrate form a crucial foundation that is meant to inform our understanding of everything that comes after. Their appearance at the beginning signifies their *foundational* nature, not their erroneous nature.

Clearly, these are vastly different options, with 1 and 3 being directly opposite. We have no choice but to figure out which one is correct. In attempting to resolve this, I will present two points.

Almost all of these stories are presented as examples of formal miracle principles or of specific teaching about miracles

Our first clue about this issue is that these are not stand-alone stories. Out of the fourteen, twelve are treated as examples of teaching about the miracle, as you can see in the following table.

Example	Miracle teaching illustrated by the example
Handing Wally back his chalice	An example of two early miracle principles, that miracles “supply a lack, and are performed by those who have more for those who have less,” but that “purification is necessary first”
“A maximal effort for Chip”	An example of the first principle of miracles, that miracles “are always <i>maximal</i> expressions of love”
Helping Chip get over his misperceptions	“An example of the point on cooperation”—the miracle principle that “cooperation depends on miracles”
The Shield report	“A very good example” of the miracle principle that “Miracles are part of an interlocking chain of forgiveness which when completed, is the atonement”

The psychic readings of Edgar Cayce	Cayce not asking Jesus if he should do a particular miracle was an example of “indiscriminate miracles,” which can burn out the miracle worker.
Refraining from blaming Bill	An example of the miracle worker doing the opposite of the witch: “blessing [another] with a miracle instead of cursing him with projection”
Patience and gentleness in pursuit of the flu shot answer	“This is how miracles should work”—that the giver’s kindness toward others allows Jesus to meet the giver’s needs.
Mrs. Albert	An example of the teaching “Those who witness for Me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned <i>belongs</i> to them”
Helen’s scribing of the Course	Being late to work because of taking dictation was “an example of the ‘indiscriminate or uncontrolled’ miracle-working we already spoke of.”
Praying for Dave	Dave helping Helen with her day was “an example of how no miracle is ever lost, and <i>always</i> blesses the doer.” This is a restatement of the recently given principle: “A miracle is never lost.”
Visiting Louis’ mother	That Helen’s visit of her mother-in-law blessed Dave was an example of “the <i>impersonal</i> nature of miracles,” which means that a miracle can go “out to <i>anyone</i> , even without the awareness of the miracle-worker himself.”
The taxi miracle that could have been	It would have been an example of “the time-saving device of the miracle.”

I think this is quite significant. Not only are almost all of our examples treated as illustrations of specific teaching about miracles, but five of them are given as examples of formal miracle principles (principles 1, 7, 8, 19, 25, and 45 in the FIP Course). Jesus even stresses the word “example,” using it four times in linking the story with its corresponding teaching (“an example of the point on cooperation,” “a very good example of how this is accomplished,” “an example of the ‘indiscriminate or uncontrolled’ miracle working we spoke of,” “an example of how no miracle is ever lost”).

Why is Jesus linking these stories with teaching? One reason is that the teaching is being used to illuminate the stories. This allows Helen to understand events in her life in light of his teaching. Jesus, for instance, wants Helen to understand that the answer with Wally lies “in points 6 and 7.” Or he wants her to realize that she has actually carried out his teaching: “By the way, you are an example of the point on cooperation.”

The other reason is the reverse: Jesus is using the *stories* to illuminate the *teaching*. The strongest example of this is the Mrs. Albert story, where Jesus tells Helen and Bill that they “need considerable clarification” of the role of channeling miracles, and then says, “Look carefully at Mrs. Albert. She is working miracles every day.” He then goes on to tell the story of a specific miracle she does. Mrs. Albert and her miracle, then, offer a crucial example of how to do miracles, and Helen and Bill need to pay close attention to this.

Therefore, one of the purposes of these examples was to illustrate the teaching, to help Helen and Bill understand this new concept of miracles. As I said earlier, when trying to grasp a new term, we all need concrete examples. And here Jesus was providing exactly that to Helen and Bill. They needed “considerable clarification” of this new role of miracle worker, and these examples delivered that.

This clearly argues for option 3 above, that the examples are an important part of the foundation the Course lays in its opening chapters. It suggests that we too should “look carefully” at these examples, in order to gain the “considerable clarification” that we too need.

Yet this assumes that the early teaching on miracles, including the miracle principles, is meant to be foundational. What if it isn’t? One point of view is that this is flawed teaching due to Helen’s rusty hearing, and thus should largely

be discounted. We do need to address this. The fact is that our fourteen miracle examples are part and parcel of the early miracle teaching. So what do we make of that teaching?

The early teaching that miracles are something we give to others is reflected throughout the Course

Perhaps the most surprising thing about these examples is that they frame the miracle not as an internal shift, but as a gift we give to someone else. This really shouldn't surprise us, however, since this is actually the major emphasis throughout the Course. For that reason, this is not the part that surprised me. We at the Circle have been arguing for years, in a number of books and articles, that "by far the majority of references to the word 'miracle' refer to an extension of healed perception from one person to another" (*Return to the Heart of God*, p. 283).

Our stance has its beginnings in a bit of research I did in the mid-80s. I had been studying the Course and noticing an exceptionally strong emphasis on extending to others. This included the fact that most of the references to the miracle seemed to portray it as an act of extension. Yet no one seemed to be talking about this. So I went through the nearly six hundred references to miracles with one question in mind: Does a particular reference frame the miracle as something that happens in my mind or something I give to another? The vast majority clearly fell into the latter camp.

It is easy to see what I mean. For instance, look at the following Workbook lesson (345), and ask yourself, "Does this portray the miracle as an internal shift in perception or as a gift to another?"

I offer only miracles today,
For I would have them be returned to me.

Clearly, the miracle in this case is something I "offer," something I give. This is the kind of reference I saw again and again and again, all throughout the Course. It is not just early in the Text. It is throughout the Text, Workbook, and Manual for Teachers. Here, for instance, is a line from the Manual: "The teacher of God is a miracle worker because he gives the gifts he has received" (M-7.3:3).

It is not only the *thought* of the later Course that fits our examples. Even some of its *imagery* looks like these examples. Lesson 315 gives us these images of what it calls "gifts": "A brother smiles upon another....Someone speaks a word of gratitude or mercy" (1:3, 4). The Manual (M-3.2) then offers us these three vignettes: "Two apparent strangers in an elevator" "smile to one another"; an adult does "not scold [a] child for bumping into him"; two students "walk home together" and "become friends." After telling these stories, the Manual provides this punch line: "Salvation has come." None of these five snapshots are labeled miracles, but one can't help but notice their similarity to the examples we have seen. Further, the labels they are given—"gifts" and "salvation"—are basically synonyms for miracles.

There is, then, a striking consistency between the miracle as it shows up early on and the miracle as portrayed later in the Course. However, there *is* a difference in emphasis. While both the early and later Course acknowledge an internal shift in our perception as a miracle, in the early dictation you get the distinct impression that the strictly internal miracle is a kind of second-class citizen. For instance, look at these two early passages:

The emphasis on mental illness which is marked in these notes reflects the "undoing" aspect of the miracle [undoing the mind's illness]. The "doing" aspect is, of course, much more important. But a true miracle [the doing] cannot occur on a false basis [on the basis of mental illness]. Sometimes the undoing must precede it. (Urtext)

Miracle working entails a full realization of the power of thought in order to avoid miscreation. Otherwise a miracle will be necessary to set the mind itself straight, a circular process that would not foster the time collapse for which the miracle was intended. (T-2.VII.2:2-3)

Do you get that second-class citizen feeling I was talking about? "The 'doing' aspect is, of course, much more important," and so it's really unfortunate when the miracle has "to set the mind itself straight," since "that would not foster the time collapse for which the miracle was intended." Well, all right, if you really *must* use a miracle to heal your own mind...

Later in the Course, however, you don't get this feeling. Here, the miracle as an internal shift is still a minority emphasis, but now it's treated as a full citizen, so to speak. For instance, in Lesson 106 we find this line:

The bringer of all miracles [the Holy Spirit] has need that you receive them first, and thus become the joyous giver of what you received. (W-pI.106.6:5)

This, to me, strikes a different note. It's not "Alas, sometimes the undoing must precede the much more important doing." Instead, it's "The Holy Spirit *needs* you to receive miracles first, so that you can joyously give what you have joyously received." Clearly, it's a different emphasis.

Conclusion: Option 3 with a touch of option 2

All the evidence that I see (and there's much more than I have space here to present) points to option 3 above, with a little bit of option 2 thrown in. In other words, we should treat these miracle examples as part of a crucial foundation laid in the Course's early chapters (option 3). Thus, we should carry them with us throughout the Course, using them as real-life snapshots of that central term "miracle." However (and here is that touch of option 2), we should realize that internal healings, which don't show up in these examples, are *also* miracles. They are a secondary emphasis in the Course, but are still extremely important.

We have thus decided completely against option 1. This is a relief, since option 1 is frankly disturbing. Are we really prepared to say that *every single* example that Jesus calls a miracle in the early dictation is *not* a miracle? Since these examples are so interwoven with his teaching on miracles, and since that teaching is so much of what the early chapters are about, at that point we might as well just rip out the Course's early chapters. Are we willing to go that far?

A Course in Miracles

Mentally cast your eye back over the examples that we have explored and then say to yourself, "A course in miracles. This is a course in *miracles*. And *these* are what miracle are like. The Course is an educational program in learning how to do *these*, every day."

Can you feel that shifting your view of the Course? I hazard a guess that for most of us, embracing this new concept of the miracle would mean a sea change in our view of the Course. It really changes the whole nature of the Course. It's like signing up for a course in piano, assuming that you would be taught piano playing, only to discover it was a course in piano *making*. Could it be true that all these years we have profoundly misunderstood what this is a course *in*?

As I think about all the Course writings I have read, all the teachers I have heard, all the students I have talked to, and all the groups I have attended, it seems to me that for the most part, we all agree on a certain core view of the Course. It is this: "What we are seeing exists only in our minds, and therefore we can see things differently, and thus find peace. This is a course in doing that." We disagree on a lot of things, but it seems to me that we come together on that essential core. We all know that it's about changing our minds and finding peace.

Yet what if our common core is not the Course's core? What if it doesn't capture what *A Course in Miracles* is about? In light of these examples, and in light of how the Course characterizes the miracle throughout, I propose a different core: "By seeing people differently, we can become a continual channel of kindness and helpfulness to them, and the peace we give we will receive."

What if this is what the Course is really about? What if all the high metaphysics, all the deep psychology, all the study, and all the practice, are meant to teach us one thing: how to let miracles constantly flow through us to bless and uplift the people around us? And since giving is receiving, could this not be the way that we ourselves become blessed and uplifted?

I said that for years I have seen the miracle as primarily a gift to others. How, then, did these examples change my view? Aren't they saying what I already believed? In a sense, they are. Based on the rest of the Course, I honestly would have been shocked if examples of the miracle hadn't been mainly focused on extending to others. What these examples do, however, is *lower the bar*. Extrapolating from the Course's abstract descriptions, I had assumed that the miracle must be a pretty lofty thing. It had to be an expression of an extraordinary, almost otherworldly, perception of the other person as holy and forgiven, and this extraordinary perception, once conveyed, had to have a genuinely transformative impact on that person.

The effect of this lofty view of miracles was basically to make them seem out of reach. That, I think, is why I avoided the term. I saw it as so far up in the sky that, even jumping as high as I could, I couldn't reach it. While stuck here on the ground, then, I focused on what I could attain: changing my perception in order to find peace. I knew the Course was about extension to others, and I *tried* to live up to that ideal, but I saw the bar as set so high that there was not much *reason* to try.

Now I see that even though these lofty miracles are where we are heading, the more down-to-earth miracles are still miracles. This means that long before I can heal the sick and raise the dead, I can still be a genuine miracle worker. The effect of this new picture, then, is to lower the bar to where I can get over it. These miracles I can do! These miracles we

all could do, every day. There are fully within reach. Rather than rare occurrences, they could become the norm for us. Our relating to others could become a constant stream of miracles. And indeed, that is how the early dictation talks. It speaks of “miracle-inspired relating” becoming the basis of our relationships, which would then become the opposite of “superficial.” It describes miracles as a *way of relating* (“Sex and miracles are both *ways of relating*”). Obviously, a way of relating is not some spectacular deed you do once every six months. It’s just the way you are with people. Can we see miracles becoming that for us? Can we see them becoming our *way of relating*?

These examples have had a profound effect on me. After years of trying to piece together the miracle based on abstract teaching, I finally have a series of concrete illustrations. These illustrations have not only revolutionized my understanding of miracles, they have opened up a new view of what the Course is, as well as a new way of life. And I am not alone. These examples have also had a powerful effect on people I’ve shared them with, here at the Circle and in our online Circle Course Community. Perhaps they will have the same effect on you.



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CIRCLE MAILBOX

Comments on Robert Perry's article “How Exactly Is Attack a Call for Love?” (A Better Way #90):

I just finished reading this article and it couldn’t have been better timed. I received a pretty mean-spirited e-mail from a man with whom I have had a peculiar online relationship for two years now. He is in Ireland and I met him briefly while I was there.

His e-mail was an obvious attack and I responded from a place that was more rooted in peace than hate. I instinctively realized that his anger and cutting remarks were coming from a place of poverty and I tried to appeal to a better and higher spirit in both of us.

And then I read your article. And repeated the passage to him as directed. Not personally of course as that probably would have been perceived as an attack on him and fanned the flames.

*You did not gain from your attack.
You merely damaged your own peace of mind.
I did not lose from your attack,
For I am invulnerable.
You are thus in a position of need,
And I am in a position to give.
I give you my forgiveness and my love.
I acknowledge you as a Son of God and my brother.*

I hope I was able to extend forgiveness, realizing that he is apparently hurting and I, just for the moment, was the saner of the two.

Thanks for another great article Robert. I have learned so much from all your writings. I am very grateful for the insights you share and hope to make it out to Arizona some day.

— Liz Trzcinski

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Attack is a call for love to remind us to express love in all circumstances on this material plane. We are not to say to the attacker that “You are in need and I can forgive you.” That is placing ourselves in a category above the attacker, which smacks of grandiosity the ego loves. It is our responsibility to acknowledge that whatever it was that we think

attacked us *never happened!* Because it didn't in reality.

Doesn't this make more sense?

— Susan Ferren

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First, thank you for your dedication and service to us all via ACIM. As I read your article, I recalled a situation that occurred to a pastor I knew. When visiting New York City, a man accosted him and demanded his wallet at gunpoint. Stanley took out his wallet and told the man that he didn't want him to be a thief and bear the guilt of that, so he would give it to him as a free gift. He did so and the man left. As far as he knew, there was no "turn around" or "born again" experience. However, as the Course says, a miracle may have effects we know nothing of. I think he did something along the lines of what you were talking about, at least insofar as not thinking of himself but thinking of the "cost" to this other man.

I personally love thinking in terms of the various levels. Yes, the attacker's ego is in charge, and so there is murder afoot, kill or be killed, one or the other. But at the level of "need," perceived need, there is felt lack of love and a call for love, for help. And yet, beyond that, the attacker is chock full of love overflowing, and needs nothing, only he thinks he does, and hence his attack.

I am a therapist and am working at this time with the idea of how I see my client. I'm becoming a much better listener, and I'm also becoming more aware of my past tendencies to judge. As the *Psychotherapy* supplement says, therapists have been trained as experts in the art of judgment. I find I'm having more compassion for my clients because I see them as calling for love in all the pain and suffering they're experiencing, and yes, at their own hands. I also see that their call for love is the same as mine. And so we join. Again, thank you for your life's work.

— Mark Walker

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The correction really seems fitting in many ways. This understanding, I believe, really leads to the true heart of compassion. That's why it's so important. With it, we need not play games with ourselves—no mental trickery is required. We simply see that such motivators and behaviors are in themselves broken and are signs of real distress and real need. *As such* they literally call out for a compassionate response, rather than for some form of vengeance. As you mentioned in your article, "it's obvious" once we see clearly what's in front of our face.

I know in my own life experience that this has been the manner in which compassion for another has arisen within me. The hurt that was intended toward me was considerable, but my thought of what must be going on inside the one who would so harm me outweighed the concern for myself. It was a simple case of love for another. So, I know that this approach actually carries weight and actually works. (That's not saying it was easy however)

The "intent theory" may be only that...it may be only a theory only that has no actual power or substance behind it. I'm really focusing in on these kinds of issues lately. I only want a Course that works! I only want a Course that changes lives! I don't want another pretty theory that lacks the ability to carry its power into our day to day existence. Yet, I'm convinced that our Course isn't just another "pretty theory", I'm convinced it is real and it is strong. But, we have to want it to be that...and we have to approach it in ways where its strength becomes our experience.

— Michael Little

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Thanks for this clarification. I didn't realize "call for help" was used more often in the Course than "call for love." I have heard "call for love" quoted more often, maybe because the contrast of love versus the call for love is more catchy and easier to remember. But the idea of "call for help" is more understandable and makes forgiveness more understandable.

— Martha Fitzgerald