

Miracles versus Magic

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
Foundation for A Course in Miracles
Temecula CA

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part IV Discussion

Any questions or comments before I go on? Anyone want to make a case for magic?

Q: The thought of my doing magic day in and day out has made me very anxious and apprehensive, which I gather is tapping into my resistance. I have not defined myself in terms of everything I do being magic. I am forgetting the right mind on occasion.

A: Yes, the anxiety and the fear are a legitimate response to the realization that everything you do is magic. It is only a short hop, skip, and a jump from there to understanding that if everything you *do* is magic, then everything you *are* is magic too. Then you don't know what you would be without magic. And it gets worse, because breathing actually is magic. *Magic* is a pejorative term and it does not sound very nice. Then to be told that everything is magic and that we use the Course, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit for magical reasons could be a little threatening.

Q: So feeling guilt about that is the defense. Do we always have to go through that, or can we just simply go to our minds and say it is a choice?

A: After a while, you will be able to do this process more quickly. Be careful, however, that you do not skip over steps, because you know you are afraid of looking. Eventually it becomes easier and easier to identify the reliance on magic and the need to defend against the guilt. When you quickly get to that and recognize that this is really nothing, then it disappears. But again, you have to be careful that you are not skipping over steps, which is why I was emphasizing the importance of looking at your resistance. If you are not aware of the resistance, you will think that you are really doing what this course is saying, when in effect, all you are doing is just putting on another cover. Recognizing resistance is extremely important.

.....

Q: I always feel very hypocritical, because I know what magic is, and I know that when I am taking vitamins or whatever I am doing that I am engaging in magic, and that it is not doing anything. Yet I continue to do it. I mean, how can I stop the hypocrisy?

A: By not calling it hypocritical.

Q: But it is. Why do something that you know is not doing anything?

A: How about saying it is just silly, and behind the silliness is a little fear? What magic does is keep the body going. We sometimes talk about good magic and bad magic: for example, poison is bad magic and

a vitamin is good magic. They both make the body real, but one will hurt you, which would become more of a distraction. What is helpful is to realize that, yes, I still believe I am a body, and I believe that taking vitamins and minerals will make my body better, as opposed to not taking them, and as long as I think I am a body, then I might as well do what I think will make my body feel good.

Q: But then there is no advancement.

A: Yes there is, if you are willing to stop calling yourself dirty names. Forgiving yourself for the use of magic is the advancement. This is the same as doing the workbook and forgiving yourself for forgetting to think of God five times an hour—*really* forgiving yourself. That is great advancement.

Q: When does it really happen?

A: When you stop asking the question and stop caring about it. That is a very common trap that students fall into with the Course. You understand intellectually what the Course is teaching, and then you come down hard on yourself instead of saying you are still a little child and are still on the bottom rungs of the ladder. But at least now you know you are a child, which means you know you have to grow. You know that you are on the lower rungs of the ladder, but at least you know there is a ladder and you do not have to be fearful. You do not have to feel that Jesus is mocking you or pushing you up when you are not ready to go up. At least you are aware of what you are doing.

There is a line I quote a great deal that really is the answer. It is in response to the whole issue of suffering. Jesus says that the way out of suffering is to see the problem as it is and not the way you have set it up (T-27.VII.2:2). That is all he says. He does not say anything about making the right choice, or about not dealing with your body. He says that the way out of suffering is to see the problem as it is and not the way you have set it up. The way we have set it up is magic, meaning the body is the problem and the body is the answer—specifically that special relationships are the answers to all of our problems, whether a special relationship with my body or another person's body. That is how we have set it up. The way the problem is, is that my special relationship with the body is the projection of my special relationship with my ego in my mind. That is how the problem is, and that is all you have to do. Simple.

That is what makes this course easy—in the sense that Jesus is not saying that you have to give up your ego. He is saying that you just have to recognize what your ego is doing. That's all. Know the difference between miracles and magic, and recognize that, as a child of magic, you *do not want* to let it go. At least realize that that is what it is. So, as you are taking your daily dose of vitamins, don't make a big deal about it. Just say, yes, that is what I am doing, because obviously I think I am a body. I got up in the morning, I showered, I got dressed, put makeup on, I came here—I did whatever I did—because obviously I think I am a body. I drive in a car, which is a form of the body, and that has to be taken care of. I have to relate to other bodies in cars. I have to do all that, but at least I realize what it is all about. It is so important to remember to be kind and gentle with yourself. That is your problem.

.....

Q: Then there is another part in the ego thought system that involves my job: whenever I try to make the world a better place, it feels like it comes with a lot of pain and guilt, compared to just doing what I do during the day. I can feel a difference in how I am thinking.

A: Good. Don't judge it and don't try to change anything. When Jesus says, "Seek not to change the world, but choose to change your mind about the world" (T-21.in.1:7), what he means by changing your mind is changing your teacher from the ego to the Holy Spirit. Can you imagine the Holy Spirit or Jesus making you feel guilty? No. They would be kind, loving, and sweet, and would just smile with you at your silliness. That is a much better way of understanding what changing your mind means.

What is helpful about it is that when you change teachers, you are changing a whole list of characteristics that go with each teacher. The ego is harsh, judgmental, slippery, deceptive, attacking, and on and on; and the Holy Spirit and Jesus are kind, gentle, and patient. They do not care about the world, so They do not care about what you do in the world; and They do not care about your choosing guilt, except insofar as it makes you feel bad. Thus, when you change your mind, you are changing teachers, which means you are changing the characteristics of the teacher. You can always know which teacher you have chosen by just watching whether you are being kind, gentle, and patient with yourself, let alone with other people. When you start judging others because they are not getting the Course right or are not doing it right; when you get impatient with people because they don't do something you want them to do, it is because you chose the wrong teacher. That is very helpful information. You will know which teacher you chose by the effects: "By their fruits, you shall know them." The fruits of the ego are always harshness, guilt, anxiety, fear, depression, impatience, and specialness. The fruits of Jesus are always kindness, gentleness, and peace.

Jesus does not care what you do. You really have to understand that. He does not care what you do, and he frankly does not even know what you do, because he knows there is no world, only in a mind. All he knows is love or fear, but since fear is an illusion, all he knows is love. That is why I always say that Jesus cannot count past one—because all he knows is love, light, and peace. That is all he knows. He does not know anything else. Therefore, why should you agonize over something when he is your teacher and he is not agonizing over it? I sometimes say to people on my staff when they get upset about something or when something is not done right, "I'm the boss, I'm not upset, so why are you upset?" Likewise, Jesus is your boss, so why are you upset if he is not upset? If he does not care what happens to this book in the world—and I assure you he does not—then why do you care? All he wants you to do is to take the content of this book—not the words or the form, but the content of the book—and make it your own. That is what he wants.

.....

Q: I want to address the fact that sometimes spectacularly neat things happen in the world, which my wrong mind calls miracles. For example, I had a problem: I lost my wallet and then I found it. That would be a mild example of a neat thing, and it actually means nothing? Sometimes when these kinds of events happen, I feel I certainly did not have anything to do with this good fortune. It feels good to have spectacularly neat things happen without my knowing how to make such things like that happen.

A: I think the problem with that, which is a way of answering your question indirectly, is that you think it makes a difference. When spectacularly good things happen and work out—something that was lost has been found, for example—you think this course is working, and you thank Jesus for it. Unfortunately, then, the real lesson gets lost. The real lesson is, I can be at peace and I can feel the Love of God whether this works out or does not work out; whether my wallet is found or is not found, and I have to go through the whole mess of getting my credit cards, my license, and all those matters fixed up. I can still be at peace. That is the real lesson, which gets lost when your wallet is found, because then, at that

point, everything seems wonderful. The ego is so slippery. One could even think that this is a cosmic conspiracy—to have you lose your wallet so you can then find it—so you can think this is wonderful and that God is a magician, when the real lesson is, I could be at peace whether the wallet is found or not; whether or not I get the job; whether or not my favorite team wins the World Series. It does not make any difference. That is the real lesson. This lesson gets lost if you are devastated if the wallet is not found, and you then are exhilarated when it is found. This does not mean you should feel guilty when your wallet is found and you feel good, any more than you ought to feel guilty when you take vitamins. That is just something bodies do. Bodies take care of their bodies in whatever way they think they need help, and bodies will feel good when something they feel is important to their bodies is lost and then found.