

## Miracles versus Magic

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

*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

### Part V

#### Discussion (cont.)

**Q:** When the carpet was rolled out, some spectacular things were part of it, and some horrors and other things were also part of it.

**A:** Right. You know, the ego did not make a terrible world, always. There are nice things in the world: lovely sunny days and beautiful spring mornings; beautiful nature scenes; Mozart and Shakespeare; and found wallets. There are many nice things. The problem is that we get attached to the form instead of using the form as a way of getting back to the content.

.....

**Q:** I fear feeling good about anything because it is so suspect.

**A:** Yes, right, but that is the same thing as someone taking vitamins. Normal people will feel good when their wallet is found or something nice happens. So be normal. Just be aware of the lesson. That's all.

**Q:** After you do this a while, there is no normal.

**A:** Unfortunately that's true. That is why I am always saying people should be normal, because no one is normal after two weeks of this. I am only kidding about the two weeks of course, but people forget how to be normal, because they forget that they are children of magic. Magic is in their DNA, so of course they are going to like magic, and they are going to prefer white magic to black magic. They like magic that works instead of magic that does not work. So of course we are going to like the good things. The Course does not say you should feel guilty because you like the good things; it simply points out that the good things will not give you the peace of God. Then you become aware—which is what resistance is—that there is a part of you that is not interested in the peace of God. You are interested in the peace of this relationship working, or your wallet being found, or this job working out. And at this particular moment, you are willing to sacrifice the peace of Heaven so that you can get the peace of magic. If you can be aware of that and not judge yourself for it, then you will have learned a lesson.

All you are asked to do, to repeat, is see the problem as it is and not the way you have set it up (T-27.VII.2:2). That is all. One of the ways of understanding what the problem is, is by recognizing your resistance to undoing or solving the problem. Thus, Lesson 79 says, "Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved." That is why we do not recognize the problem—because we do not want it solved. If the problem of the separation—the theme of Lesson 79—is solved, I am gone; I am history; so I do not want to recognize the problem. Instead, I want to recognize all other kinds of problems, which, again, are all different forms of magic. I will feel wonderful when these magical problems are magically solved,

whether it is the problem of finding a parking space on a crowded street, or the problem of a bodily disease, or the problem of a diseased bank account. We would much rather deal with those issues than with recognizing the true problem, because if we recognize the true problem—seeing the problem as it is, namely, a decision that my mind made—then at that same moment we are also accepting the solution. Our ego would never let us see the problem as it is, because we want to be separate and stay separate. If we can look at that without judgment, we are automatically choosing the Holy Spirit as our Teacher, and at that moment we can be aware of how ambivalent we are about Him as our Teacher. Then forgiving ourselves for being ambivalent about the Holy Spirit is all we have to do.

Remember, the separation began not with the *tiny, mad idea*, but when we remembered not to laugh at it and took it seriously instead. Therefore if we can look at our ego—even better, if we can look at our *decision* for the ego and not take it seriously, we will have undone the ego. Thus, we are not asked to give up taking vitamins; we are asked to give up taking our taking vitamins so seriously, which happens when we judge ourselves for taking them. Likewise, we take the ego seriously when we feel good about something working in the world and then feel guilty about feeling good. That is the problem. Remember, the problem was not the *tiny, mad idea*; it was taking it seriously. This means the problem is not your special relationship, anxiety, depression, financial or physical situation. The problem is taking any of that seriously, which means giving it power to take away the peace of God. That is what taking it seriously means. Forgiveness means being peaceful at the same moment you are aware of your resistance to doing the workbook and learning this course; being peaceful about holding on to judgments about people, and holding on to grievances of the past and bringing them up every once in a while, whether they are grievances against yourself or other people. The miracle, as well as forgiveness, means that you can look at all of that and not make a big deal about it. Forgiveness is not really about undoing your guilt; it is about looking at it and not taking it seriously. That undoes it.

Let me just read those lines, because they are so crucial:

**(T-27.VIII.6:2-3) Into eternity, where all is one, there crept a tiny, mad idea, at which the Son of God remembered not to laugh. In his forgetting did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment [the separation happened] and real effects.**

These effects are the world. That is the problem right there. That is the sum and substance of *A Course in Miracles*: "In his forgetting to laugh [at the *tiny, mad idea*] did the thought become a serious idea, and possible of both accomplishment and real effects." That is the principle. Jesus tells us in almost every workbook lesson, certainly in Part I, to understand that principle and apply it very specifically throughout the day. He gives us the nonspecific, abstract principle—the title of the lesson and then the various things he says about it—and at the end of the lesson, he tells us to apply this very specifically to whatever comes up in our day. Thus, we need to watch how we make something serious: a traffic jam; a traffic accident, a relationship; a news program. Then do what Jesus now says:

**(T-27.VIII.6:4-5) Together [meaning you and Jesus], we can laugh them both away [the accomplishment and the real effects; the belief that the separation is real and the effects of that belief: the world and the body and specifically all the things that go on in our everyday life], and understand that time cannot intrude upon eternity. It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity, which means there is no time.**

Magic says we have to do something about the "accomplishment" and the "real effects." We think we have to do something about our life, about this body, or about this course in the world. That is taking the effects seriously, the world seriously, *A Course in Miracles* seriously, and above all, taking ourselves seriously. Another word for taking yourself seriously is making yourself *special*—I now have this special function with this special book: to heal the special world. It all reeks of specialness and takes it all very seriously. This is a very important passage, because this is the problem. Magic takes the *tiny, mad idea* seriously, as well as its effects. Magic takes the solution to the real effects of the *tiny, mad idea* seriously. Magic is serious business. The miracle just laughs and smiles sweetly at everything, and says that the devastation that you are looking on is false.

What you want to do, then, is not to do anything differently in your life. Do not change anything in your life. Just smile more at it. Most of you know the beginning of Lesson 155, where Jesus says, "You do not change appearance, though you smile more frequently" (W-pl.155.1:2). That is what it means to be an advanced teacher of God. You do not change how you look, speak, or dress; you do not change your job or your relationships. You do not change anything. You smile more frequently. What does that mean? It means you do not do things so seriously. What does that mean operationally? It means you do not give the world power to take away your peace.

Guilt says I have done something so heinous, so egregious, so gargantuan in its evil that I can never be peaceful again. I have done it: I destroyed Heaven, I murdered God, I crucified His Son. It is awful and abominable! Except that nothing happened—the whole thing is one big joke! "It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity . . ." It is a joke to think you have the power to destroy Heaven's symphony. That is why Jesus says not one note in Heaven's song is missed (T-26.V.5:4). Guilt is a very serious concept, which follows upon the equally serious concept of sin. These are so serious, in fact, that we need a magical solution to deal with them, which is the world, which, as we know, is very serious. This world has very serious problems: on a personal level, we have to breathe, eat, and drink regularly. As the world becomes more populated, these needs become potential problems, as there is not enough food or water in the world. There should be enough food in the world, but there is not. There should be enough water in the world, but there is not. These are serious problems. Then there are all the psychological problems and all of the issues of specialness everyone has. Very serious! Bodies were made to be serious. When infants are born and they begin to cry, they are saying, "I am in a very serious situation here." Everything here reeks of seriousness, just as it reeks of specialness—they are the same thing.

Another way of understanding resistance is realizing how resistant we are to stepping back with Jesus and smiling at all of this. The world was made not to have us smile. The world was made but to take itself very seriously. Magic is, again, this maladaptive attempt to solve the serious problem of being in the world, which then in turn is a maladaptive attempt to solve the serious problem of guilt, which is in the mind. What this translates to on a very practical basis is that as you live your life normally, just realize how seriously you take everything, and then forgive yourself for taking it seriously. Then pay attention to the line where Jesus says: "Together, we can laugh them both away . . .," (T-27.VIII.6:4). A few paragraphs later, he talks about the Holy Spirit and says:

**(T-27.VIII.9:3) He bids you bring each terrible effect to Him [everything that upsets you in the world] that you may look together on its foolish cause and laugh with Him a while.**

That is what is meant by bringing it to Him: looking together with Him. You do not pretend it is not there or just blithely "turn it over to Him," as some people say. What you do is look at it *with* Him, and when you really do this, you will begin to understand—because that is what looking means—why you have chosen this and how much it has cost you to live with this kind of magic. Then you will realize, as Jesus explains in an earlier section, how all of this is just a flimsy veil that cannot conceal the light that lies beyond it (T-18.IX.5). You cannot look at the light without realizing this is a flimsy veil, because to us this is a solid wall of granite and very serious. Solid walls of granite are serious business. But when you really look at it, the wall starts to crumble, and then you realize that what it was hiding is this gentle, loving, sweet light. But you will not know that until you look. The purpose of this course and of the workbook then is to train you to do this each day. As you begin to realize how seriously you take things, Jesus says to "bring each terrible effect to Him [the Holy Spirit]." Then the passage continues:

**(T-27.VIII.9:4) You judge effects, but He has judged their cause.**

He does not look to the effects. Jesus tells us that earlier in the first sentence:

**(T-27.VIII.9:1) In gentle laughter does the Holy Spirit perceive the cause [the belief in sin], and looks not to effects.**

"Looks not to effects." And what do we do? We drag the Holy Spirit and Jesus into the world and say, "Look at these effects! Please do something." And They just say sweetly, "What effects? There ain't nuttin' here." (They were brought up in Brooklyn.) "Don't believe what the gospels tell you; there ain't nuttin' here." And we respond, "What do you mean, there ain't nuttin' here? Look at the effects! Look at the people starving! Look at the people dying! Look at me! Look at how pained I am! Look how abused I've been! Look how victimized I am! Look!" And Jesus says, "I am looking, but there is nothing here."

That is how we know why we did not choose him right at the beginning and chose the ego instead—because the ego looked the way we wanted to look as a separated individual. We rejoiced in what we saw because that is the kind of Jesus and the kind of God we want: one who looks to the world of effects. We do not want one who does not look at effects and just laughs—not a derisive laugh, obviously, but with a gentle smile that says, "There is nothing here." It is like the little boy in the fairy tale "The Emperor Has No Clothes." We keep trying to convince Jesus to see all these terrible clothes that the emperor has on, all the boils he has on his skin, and the cancer eating away at his organs. And Jesus says, "Not only are there no clothes on the emperor, there is no emperor." The problem is that we look through the body's eyes and interpret what our body's eyes "see" through the brain, and then we think we see something that is not really there. We think about what we see and then conclude that what we think we see is real. That is why such an important theme of this course is that we are not bodies. The single most important line in the workbook, which is repeated more than any other, is: "I am not a body." As we are taught in the Course, perception lies: "Nothing so blinding as perception of form" (T-22.III.6:7). Eyes do not see, brains do not think, ears do not hear. In spite of this teaching, we keep dragging Jesus down to our level, and rather than look through his eyes, we demand that he look through our eyes, see what is not there, and then fix it, which means we want him to be as magically insane as we are. This is why to superimpose the biblical Jesus onto this course will never work. It is not the same fellow. The biblical Jesus has eyes that see and a body that does something about what his eyes see. His body heals other bodies that his eyes see, etc., etc. The Jesus of *A Course in Miracles* does not do any of that. He does not have eyes. His inward eyes—what is called vision—see beyond the body,

which is viewed as simply a shadowy figment of the ego's imagination. Yet that is the serious world that we demand he do something about, which means we want Jesus to become part of our dream.

There is a very important line in "The Gifts of God," the prose poem Helen had taken down that was originally a series of messages meant to help her through a fearful situation. Jesus said to her, "I am not a dream that comes in mockery" (*The Gifts of God*, p. 121). In other words, "I am not part of your dream, the purpose of which is to mock the reality of God. I am not a body. I am not part of this world. I am not part of this dream. Do not ask me to take your fear away from you. Do not ask me to correct the situation that you think is causing you fear and anxiety. I am not a dream that comes in mockery." The world's Jesus that churches have been built around is a mockery of the truth that we are spirit. That is how God created us. The true Jesus has his home in our mind. He is a symbol of the Love of God that we took with us when we fell asleep, and that reminds us of who we truly are. Yet we demand that Jesus, God, and this course become part of our dream and fix it. That is why this passage at the end of Chapter 27 is so important. The paragraph ends:

**(T-27.VIII.9:7-8) But hear Him say, "My brother, holy Son of God, behold your idle dream [whatever you are upset about], in which this could occur." And you will leave the holy instant with your laughter and your brother's joined with His.**

That is the laughter—again, not a derisive, mocking laughter, but a gentle laughter that realizes how silly all of this is. "It is a joke to think that time can come to circumvent eternity." It is a joke to think that anything in this world—and this makes it very practical—has the power to take away the Love and the peace of God in my mind. Yet that is what we do every time we get anxious, depressed, upset, mildly annoyed, impatient, etc. All we have to do is see the problem as it is, not the way we have set it up (T-27.VII.2:2).