

The Happy Dream

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

Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.

Part I Introduction

Our topic is the happy dream, which is also the title of a section in Chapter 18 in the text. The *happy dream*, like any number of right-minded terms, is frequently misunderstood. Terms such as *miracle, holy instant, holy relationship, forgiveness, redemption, salvation, and resurrection* all tend to be confusing for people who work with *A Course in Miracles*, even those who work with it over many years. The reason for that is what Jesus refers to early on in the text as level confusion. He discusses this in Chapters 1 and 2, although the theme recurs throughout. He talks about it specifically in "Principles of Miracles" when he first introduces the theme, and then in the section on healing in Chapter 2 (section IV) when he talks about sickness and healing. The confusion of levels has to do with people thinking that sickness and, therefore, healing are at the level of the body, as opposed to where the sickness really is, which is in the mind. And since sickness is in the mind, that is where the healing is as well.

Later on, this idea of level confusion changes into a more sophisticated discussion of form and content, and the confusion of form and content. Form is anything external, anything in the world or of the body, and content is one of two thoughts that are in the mind: the thought of fear, hate, or guilt, and the thought of forgiveness or healing. Still another way of talking about the confusion of levels is cause and effect, which is an even more sophisticated treatment of the topic. Cause is anything in the mind, and effect is anything outside the mind, which would be anything of the body or in the world. Typically, almost all spiritualities and certainly all formal religions have this confusion, expressed in the belief that the body is not only real, but is the problem, and therefore the means of salvation. In Christianity sin is seen as localized in the body and is redeemed and atoned for by the sacrificial death of Jesus' body. Then it is Jesus' body that is resurrected and ascends into Heaven, etc.

The same confusion occurs with the term the *happy dream*. It comes from the lack of awareness that the Course talks about dreams on two levels: the level of the mind and the level of the body. Later on we will look at a number of passages that make this very clear. Indeed, the dream level expressed in the body is a defense against the dream that is really in the mind, and as we will see, is *only* in the mind. So let us begin by first discussing what these two dreams are, because until we understand this, we will not understand what the concept of the *happy dream* refers to.

To spell this out a little more clearly, the happy dream does not refer to one's life in this world. When Jesus talks about the happy dream, when he talks about the Holy Spirit's happy dreams, and when he says the purpose of this Course in one sense is to have our nightmare dreams be turned into happy ones, he does not mean that our lives here will get better. He does not mean that they will get worse

either. He is telling us that our lives here as we experience them, as physical and psychological creatures, are totally irrelevant because ultimately, as we learn in the Course, we are not even here: "There is no life outside of Heaven" (T-23.II.19:1). So what we call life here is really non-life and basically constitutes a projection of the thought of non-life. And when we talk about thought, obviously we are talking about the mind, not the brain. The thought of non-life in the mind is the thought of separation, the belief that we could separate from life. When we separate from life, we are no longer a part of life, i.e., non-life.

That thought in the mind, as we will see, is a most unhappy thought because it separates us from our true happiness, which is being part of God, part of His Love and His Will. This unhappy thought that constitutes the first dream then gets projected out into the unhappy dreams that we think of as our lives here. And our lives, when we look at them objectively from above the battleground, are really lives of pain, suffering, and loss that always culminate in death. Again, most unhappy. Since that is not the true dream, when Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit's correction, which is the happy dream, he is not talking about a shift in our lives here. He is talking only about a shift in the mind.

What makes these ideas of happy dreams, forgiveness, the miracle, and healing so difficult and so prone to confusion is that we all identify ourselves as bodies. We all had to get dressed this morning, we all had to eat, we all had to get our bodies here, and so our whole identification is with the body. It is almost inconceivable to us that healing would be of anything other than the body, or that the happy dream would refer to anything other than our life here in the world.

Thus, the ultimate purpose of this course, as I say over and over again, is to shift our awareness from *mindlessness*, the state of being without a mind—the body—to the state of *mindfulness* where our full attention is placed on the mind because that is where the problem is, and therefore that is where the answer is. So we are taught in the Course that the Holy Spirit's goal for us are the happy dreams of forgiveness, whereby we change our thinking, which really means we change our teacher from the ego to the Holy Spirit or Jesus. And this has absolutely nothing to do with what we consider to be our lives. It has nothing to do with our physical life, our psychological life, our jobs, our relationships, our health, or any of those areas in terms of other people. It certainly has nothing to do with the planet becoming a happier place or a place of peace. It has to do only with the state of mind, because that is all there is.

The concept of the happy dream is meaningless if we do not know what it is the correction for. So again, as I frequently say, if as we are taught in the Course the Holy Spirit is the Answer, He is the Answer to a question or the solution to a problem. If you do not know what the question is, if you do not know what the problem is, then no matter how brilliant the answer, it will be totally meaningless to you. So Jesus' great burden in this course as our teacher is to have us recognize, understand, and accept what the problem is, which means *where* the problem is. Now the ego is no one's fool, and of course, the ego is really the part of us that likes being on its own and being independent and separate. The ego knows that *it* is the problem, or even more to the point, that the Son of God's *decision* for the ego is the problem, and that the answer is the Son of God's ability to choose the Holy Spirit instead of the ego. All of this is taking place in the mind, so the answer is really where the problem is—in the mind.

In order to keep the problem unsolved, which means in order to keep the ego in existence, the ego takes

the problem from the answer and puts it as far away as possible. If the answer is in the mind and the problem is in the mind, and the ego can succeed in bringing the problem into a world and a body, and then close off the mind for all intents and purposes by having us forget we have one, then the problem is so far away from the answer that it can never be solved. And since we all are so identified with the ego's thought system of separation, individuality, autonomy, individual existence, not to mention specialness, we all then are very much identified with the ego's strategy of keeping the problem from the answer. This is why we want to see the answer as somehow being involved in the world, because if the answer is somehow in the world, if it has a worldly expression, then it means the problem must be there too. But the problem is not there; the problem is in the mind.

So we are continually seeking the answer to a problem where the problem does not exist, which ensures that the real problem in the mind will never be addressed and never be undone, which means our individual existence, which is the problem, will never be undone. And again, to the extent that we identify with our individual existence, to that extent we will identify with the ego strategy of keeping the problem as far away from the answer as possible, and that is what we do. That is why this level of confusion is so rampant, not only in *A Course in Miracles* circles, but in almost every other religious or spiritual circle as well. That is why people are so invested in bringing the Holy Spirit or Jesus into the world's dream and having Them solve the problem here. That is why people will interpret forgiveness as being between two bodies, because the real source of unforgiveness, for which forgiveness is the answer, is in the mind. So as long as we think it is something that goes on here in the world, as long as we think that sickness is something that occurs in the body, physically or psychologically, there is no way the real problem will be healed, which means there is no way our individuality will ever be questioned, let alone undone. That is what we all like. We all love to have spiritual systems and spiritual or religious teachings focus on the body in the world, both as the source of the problem and as the means of undoing the problem. All the while, the real problem remains unknown, which means the real answer is totally unavailable to us. And to the extent that it is unavailable to us, we will never seek it, because we think we actually have sought and found it in the body.

All this is a way of introducing the theme that before we can meaningfully choose the happy dream, we first have to know why we are choosing it. Again, if we think the problem is our unhappiness here, then the happy dream will be understood by us as something that will change in the world and in our lives. So people start the Course with the magical hope that somehow their lives will get better—they will have better relationships, better jobs, healthier bodies, etc. None of this is bad, but none of this is good either. It is just totally irrelevant to the real issue. The source of our unhappiness as we experience it in this world is the decision for guilt in the mind. That is the only problem. That is where Jesus is; that is where the Holy Spirit is; that is where the memory of God is; that is where the Atonement is; that is where forgiveness is; that is where the miracle brings us; that is where healing is. Thus, we first have to be instructed that we are a mind, not a body, and that the mind is the source of the unhappy dream. For only then will we be motivated to find the real solution for the unhappy dream, which is the happy dream of forgiveness that, again, is the change of mind or the change of teacher.