

# Allen Watson's ACIM Study Notes

Study of the ACIM Text, Complete & Annotated Edition

All references are to the Complete and annotated Edition unless otherwise noted.

You will see miracles through your hands through me.” He is talking to all of us.

## CE Text, 1:1–19

**1. The first principle of miracles is that there is no order of difficulty among them.** <sup>2</sup>One is not “harder” or “bigger” than another. <sup>3</sup>They are all the same.

**2. Miracles in themselves do not matter; they are quite unimportant.**

**3. Miracles occur naturally as expressions of love.** <sup>2</sup>The real miracle is the love that inspires them. <sup>3</sup>In this sense, everything that comes from love is a miracle.

<sup>2</sup> This explains their lack of order. <sup>2</sup>All expressions of love are maximal. <sup>3</sup>This also explains why miracles in themselves do not matter. <sup>4</sup>The only thing that matters is the source, and this is far beyond human evaluation.

<sup>3</sup> Please read these three principles as often as you can today, as if there were going to be a quiz this evening. <sup>2</sup>This is merely to introduce structure, if it is needed. <sup>3</sup>It is *not* to frighten you. <sup>4</sup>Do not feel guilty if you are doubting these principles. <sup>5</sup>Just reread them and their truth will come to you. <sup>6</sup>My strength will support you, so don't worry and leave the rest to me.

<sup>4</sup> All miracles mean life, and God is the giver of life. <sup>2</sup>He will direct you very specifically. <sup>3</sup>“Plan ahead” is good advice in this world, where you should and must control and direct where you have accepted responsibility. <sup>4</sup>But the universal plan is in more appropriate hands. <sup>5</sup>You will know all you need to know. <sup>6</sup>Make *no* attempts to plan ahead in this respect.

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**Miracle Principles:** Each “miracle principle” is a short, pithy statement of a profound truth. Like a proverb, each one contains a highly condensed dosage of the Course's thought system. These early statements often concisely state ideas that are developed later in the Text.

The FIP edition relocated most of the comments following many of the principles, putting them into separate chapters. The CE edition restores the original order found in the shorthand notes,

Principles 1–3 appear with no explanations until after #3. A line or two of the three paragraphs that follow appear as another of the principles in FIP. Cf “All expressions of love are maximal,” which was moved into Principle 1. It really belongs after #3.

What's new here is how #3 explains #1 and #2. Also, ¶ 3 gives personal instruction in how to take in these principles.

Notice how the first two principles fly in the face of our common beliefs about miracles. When we consider the miracle stories in the Bible, we are sure that healing a woman's fever must

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have been easier than restoring sight to a man blind from birth. Here, he says all miracles are the same! How can that be? Likewise, we are sure that miracles are a big deal; in Principle 2, Jesus says they are unimportant “in themselves.” He explains this in Principle 3, in which he gives the Course’s primary definition of a miracle: they are “expressions of love,” all of which are “maximal.” Anyone can express love. It can be as little as a smile or as “large” as rescuing someone from drowning. Or, as in the case of Jesus, raising Lazarus from the dead. Love, by its nature, has no “order of difficulty.” The physical form it takes is unimportant. This is why Principle 3 explains the first two. The definition of miracles as expressions of love occurs five times in the Course. Love is the miracle power behind manifestations we call miraculous, and there are many expressions of love we take for granted. But every expression of love is a miracle.

Robert Perry has pointed out that several of the next few principles are, as he puts it, “bedrock for *A Course in Miracles*.” They are pillars of the Course's thought system. They are quoted later, some multiple times.

Here is a list:

- Principle 4: twice
- Principle 5: once
- Principle 7: *three times*
- Principle 11: *three times*
- Principle 12: once
- Principle 13: once
- Principle 14: once
- Principle 15: *three times*
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**4. Miracles are habits and should be involuntary. <sup>2</sup>Otherwise they may become undemocratic. <sup>3</sup>Selective miracles are dangerous, and may destroy the talent.**

Paragraph 4 Gives interesting instructions about planning. We do not need to plan anything about “the universal plan.” There is a Workbook lesson, #135, that I wrote a book about titled *A Healed Mind Does Not Plan*. It gives a clear explanation of how we can navigate our day without planning:

“A healed mind does not plan. It carries out the plans that it receives through listening to Wisdom that is not its own. It waits until it has been taught what should be done, and then proceeds to do it. It does not depend upon itself for anything except its adequacy to fulfill the plans assigned to it” (W-135.11:1-4).

Elsewhere in Helen's writings, Jesus talks to her about leaving planning about “trivial” things to him. There's a good discussion in Miracle Principle 25 and in Cameo 6 in the CE Appendices.

In #4, I was surprised by how much stronger the original warning (in CE versus FIP) about selective miracles is! They are “dangerous and may destroy the talent”! Miracles should be under

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control of the Holy Spirit in us, and not offered by our egos' choice. Sometimes we can do more harm than good by reaching out to someone without checking within first. If we make a habit of it we "may destroy the talent." We may lose the ability to express love effectively!

**5. Miracles are natural. <sup>2</sup>When they do *not* occur, something has gone wrong.**

5 says that if miracles seem rare to us indicates that something is seriously wrong! If we are in touch with our true nature, miracles should be the norm.

What do you think is meant by "involuntary"? Cf #3, #4, and #5. : "Miracles occur naturally," "are natural," and "are habits and should be involuntary."

Miracles are not supernatural; they are natural. Love inspires them, and miracles just occur naturally as a result of love. The Course uses many terms that mean very much the same thing as "natural." Miracles are habits, involuntary, our right. You get the feeling that we should not have to think about miracles at all; they should just be there, without any conscious effort, like breathing.

If miracles are love's expression, then if we rediscover our identity as love, miracles will just be there, like breathing. I think the notion of miracles as involuntary habits is stunning! When my mind is fully healed, I will shed miracles like our pet Corgi sheds hair; miracles will drop from me like leaves from a tree in autumn. I will just be going about my business, listening to God's Voice as It directs me very specifically, and wherever I go, miracles will follow.

The Workbook has a wonderfully poetic description of such a person:

From this day forth, your ministry takes on a genuine devotion, and a glow that travels from your fingertips to those you touch, and blesses those you look upon. A vision reaches everyone you meet, and everyone you think of or who thinks of you. For your experience today will so transform your mind that it becomes the touchstone for the holy Thoughts of God (W-pl.157.5:1-3).

What do you think it means in #4 by "undemocratic"? (Don't peek at the footnote yet!)

I think democratic also means that everyone can do miracles. The ability isn't restricted to high-level saints. They are far more common than the acts we normally think of as miraculous—acts that suspend the laws of time or space. The opening line of the Course (oddly omitted from the earlier editions) was, "You will see miracles through your hands through me." He is talking to all of us Remember: Miracles are expressions of love. Love as you is reaching out to those around you, naturally, involuntarily, and not selectively because everyone is worthy of love. If you try to choose who gets it and who does not, you may lose the ability to truly love.

**6. Miracles are everyone's right, but purification is necessary first.**

Principle 6 says: *Purification*: Miracles should be natural, involuntary, and unconscious habits; if they aren't, something is wrong, and purification becomes necessary. When you consider the context, this cannot mean any kind of external purification, such as abstaining from sex or meat or drink. It is our minds that need to become miracle-ready (T-1.I.43). We need to, as

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the Introduction told us, remove the blocks to the awareness of Love's presence in us and get in touch with Love's guidance; then the miracles will flow again. See T-18.VIII.15:1-2.

**7. Miracles are a form of healing. <sup>2</sup>They supply a lack, and are performed by those who have more for those who have less.**

**8. Miracles are a kind of exchange. <sup>2</sup>Like all expressions of love, which are always miraculous in the true sense, the exchange reverses physical laws.**

Notes on 7 & 8: Miracles in the Course usually involve two people; one who has something the other lacks offers it to them. (FIP added “temporarily” to the words “more” and “less.”) #7 is one of the principles repeated three times later in the Text.

In a miracle, one person, through prayer, receives God's Love, and then, temporarily having more of God's Love (or at least being *more aware* of having it), she extends it to another person or other persons. (“Extend” is a very important Course word, by the way. Extension of love is our whole reason for being.) That extension may or may not be observable—that is, physically visible; it could be purely a mental act. It always involves extending forgiveness, or recognizing her neighbor's divine worth. In the act of extending forgiveness to others, the first person accepts it for herself.

The miracle begins, then, with God expressing love to me; it continues with my mind receiving that love; it results in an extension of that love, through me, to another person. That is what the Course means by a miracle.

“Reverses physical laws” refers to the fact that, in physical giving, the giver loses what he or she gives, while in miracle-giving, what the giver gives actually increases for them. They receive what they give to another. #9 clarifies this.

**9. A miracle is a reversal of the physical order because it brings more love to the giver and the receiver.**

**10: The use of miracles as spectacles to induce belief is wrong. <sup>2</sup> They are really used for and by believers. <sup>3</sup> A miracle is misunderstood when it is regarded as a spectacle.**

The Bible seems to present miracles in this manner—they were signs and wonders to dazzle the spectators and shock them into believing in God or Jesus. This view is contrary to miracles as expressions of love. I don't question whether or not Jesus performed some dazzling acts of healing; I'm agnostic on that issue, to be honest. If he did, he did them as pure acts of love. I seriously doubt whether he had any thought of shocking people into belief. That kind of belief can vanish overnight, as it did when the crowds cried out for his crucifixion. Disciples who later wrote the gospels added that mistaken interpretation of his miraculous acts, and probably invented some he didn't ever do!

Miracles have to do primarily with our minds and our thinking and not with things outside of our minds. They do not work on the physical level so much as on the spiritual level. They rearrange *perception* rather than rearrange the physical world. They are thoughts, examples of

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right thinking, corrections introduced into false thinking that align our perceptions with truth, and devices for perception correction. Since the world is the projection of our minds, changing thoughts can and does effect changes in the external world, but “the real miracle is the love that inspires” such changes.

The Course says that it deals in cause and not in effect (T-21.VII.7:8). In the Course's view, what we traditionally think of as miracles are just the *effects* of miracles. Healing is caused by a shift in the thinking and perception of the sick person; the miracle is not the healing but the expression of love that brought about the shift in that person's perception. The miracle is what changed the mind; the change of mind, in turn, caused the rearrangement of the physical world. The Course wants to instruct us in how to receive and how to give those mental catalysts that shift and change our perceptions.

**11: Prayer is the medium of miracles. 2 Prayer is the natural communication between the created and the Creator. 3 Through prayer love is received, and through miracles love is expressed.**

The key is the third sentence here. In prayer, we are not *asking*; we come to God's Presence to *receive* love, to become aware of God as Love *for* us and *in* us. This leads to miracles as we share this love with others. Again, this is one principle repeated three times later on; it is important.

**12: Miracles are the effects of thought. 2 Thought can make the lower order or create the higher order. 3 This is the basic distinction between intellectualizing and true thinking. 4 One makes the physical, and the other creates the spiritual. 5 And we believe in what we make or create.**

As I indicated above, “miracles are the effects of thought.” Here, Jesus seems to be using the word “miracles” to refer to the visible effects. He uses it both ways, really, as when he said, “Miracles occur naturally as expressions of love. The real miracle is the love that inspires them.” The first instance refers to the visible effect; the second refers to the love behind those effects. Thought is more powerful than we realize. Principle 12 states very clearly that true thinking creates the spiritual, while intellectualizing makes the physical. That implies that the physical world is made as the result of our thoughts!

There is another important distinction made here that occurs throughout the Course: “make” versus “create.” Our lower ego thoughts *make* the physical world, but we have *created* nothing real in having done that. Creation only creates real things, things that cannot be threatened: timeless, changeless realities.

**13. A miracle is a beginning and an ending. 2 It thus abolishes time. 3 It is always an affirmation of rebirth, which seems to go back but really goes forward. 4 It undoes the past in the present, and thus releases the future.**

Our journey through time is no more than a powerful illusion.

“Time is a trick, a sleight of hand, a vast illusion in which figures come and go as if by magic.” (W-158.4:1 (CE))

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In that illusion, we have become tarnished, separate beings, or so it seems. A miracle abolishes that illusion and restores awareness of our true identity as extensions of God's love. We *seem* to be reborn, but it is our original birth that has been restored to us. It only seems to be going backward because time was never real. In the present, what we believed was our past vanishes, and we can go forward into eternity.

2 Yet there may still be one more thing: your fear of punishment for what is done now. 2Everybody makes mistakes. 3These errors are completely trivial. 4When the past has been forgiven, these minor infractions are very easily altered.

This is a very liberating paragraph! We all make mistakes, and we beat ourselves up for them. We do things we shouldn't do, say things we shouldn't say, and we fail to do and say what we should. We think we deserve some sort of punishment for it, either consciously or subconsciously. Perhaps we unconsciously punish ourselves if we don't think God will. We often hear people say things like, "What have I done to deserve this?" All such things are "minor infractions" in God's mind. They are all forgiven, and the results "are very easily altered." Take that to heart!

**14. All miracles attest to truth. 2 They are convincing because they arise from conviction. 3 Without conviction, they deteriorate into magic, which is mindless and therefore destructive, or rather, the uncreative use of mind.**

The idea here is that unless we are convinced of the truth behind what we are offering, our "miracle" becomes nothing more than "magic," which is "the uncreative use of mind." The truth refers to the truth of love. When what we offer is solidly backed by our love, it will evoke the same conviction of love's truth in those who receive or witness the miracle.

I have to add here that, although the true miracle is love, love can and does have effects in the physical world that, to most people, appear "miraculous": healings, unexpected money, "coincidental" meetings, and so on.

**15. Each day should be devoted to miracles. 2 Time was made so you could use it creatively, and convince yourself of your own ability to create. 3 Time is a teaching device, and a means to an end. 4 It will cease when it is no longer useful in facilitating learning.**

Now, here is an idea that seems unexpected: We should devote every day to miracles! That is not something that ever occurred to me before I read it here. Sentence 2 seems to imply that God created time, but that contradicts things the Course says elsewhere. For instance:

"4 How can a world of time and place exist, if you remain as God created you?"  
(W-132.9:4)

"The instant that the mad idea of making your relationship with God unholy seemed to be possible, all your relationships were made meaningless. In that unholy instant time was born, and bodies made to house the mad idea and give it the illusion of reality" (T-20.VI.8:6-7 (FIP), T-20.VI.20:6-7 (CE)).

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We made time, but the Holy Spirit has *re-made* it, or more accurately, *repurposed* it.

“But this world has two who made it, and they do not see it as the same. To each it has a different purpose, and to each it is a perfect means to serve the goal for which it is perceived” (T-25.III.3:3-4).

“There is another Maker of the world, the simultaneous Corrector of the mad belief that anything could be established and maintained without some link that kept it still within the laws of God; not as the law itself upholds the universe as God created it, but in some form adapted to the need the Son of God believes he has” (T-25.III.4:1).

So, the Holy Spirit has adapted time to serve our (seeming) needs so that we can use time *creatively* in a way that will convince us of our ability to create! By performing miracles we observe the power of our minds to create. He has made time into a teaching device, a means to an end—our participation in creation. Time allows us to learn, and when learning is over, time “will cease.” This is why we should devote every day to miracles.

2 Have a good day. 2 Since only eternity is real, why not use the illusion of time constructively? 3 You might remember that “underneath are the everlasting arms.” 4 You should begin each day with the prayer “Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me today.”

I love the idea of meeting with Jesus in the morning and having him say, “Have a good day.” If it is nice having the clerk at the grocery say it, imagine how it will feel to hear Jesus say it! How much more meaningful! And imagine yourself replying as he suggests here. I know I want to do that.

3 Notes on this course should be read only under good learning conditions. 2 They should also be reviewed, with the same rule applying to review periods. 3 I'll tell you when, but remember to ask.

Some good advice from our teacher on how to absorb all he has given us!

**16. Miracles are teaching devices for demonstrating that it is as blessed to give as to receive. 2 They simultaneously increase the reserve of strength in the giver and supply the lack of strength in the receiver.**

Giving and receiving are the same thing. When we give a miracle we also receive one. Like physical exercise, it may seem to tire us, but our “reserve of strength” increases. This is one of the central teachings of the Course.

The next paragraph was not in the FIP edition. It has been inserted here from some dictation given specifically to Helen, but applicable to us all. Read this over silently now, inserting your name each time you see the word “you.”

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2 I have forgiven you and that means all hurt and hate you have ever expressed is canceled. 2 I need the children of light now. 3 And I am calling you to be what you once were and must be again. 4 Forget the interval of darkness and be what you were. 5 The interval has vanished without a trace anywhere. 6 You who live so close to God must not give way to guilt. 7 The karmic law demands abandonment for abandoning, but you have received mercy, not "justice." 8 Help the children because you love them and love God. 9 Remember, a miracle is a spark of life. 10 It shines through the darkness and brings in the light. 11 You must begin to forget and remember.

When I insert my name it chokes me up and fills me with joy! We need to get the very real sense that we were created as children of light and must be that again. *Jesus needs us.* We have received mercy, not "justice." We must begin to forget the guilt and remember our purpose: to extend love.

**17. Miracles are the absence of the body. 2 They are sudden shifts into invisibility, away from the physical level. 3 That is why they heal.**

When you extend a miracle of love you don't pay any attention to the other person's body, appearance, or behavior. You see who they are *inside*. If they are open this helps them to see themselves in the same way, and that heals them.

**18. A miracle is a service. 2 It is the maximal service one person can render another. 3 It is thus a way of loving your neighbor as yourself. 4 The doer recognizes his own and his neighbor's inestimable value simultaneously.**

2 This is why you cannot keep anything you hold against another. 2 If you do, your own value is no longer inestimable, because you are estimating it as infinity minus that amount.

This is a beautiful description of a miracle for me. What does it mean to love your neighbor as yourself, as Jesus commanded in the Bible? It means you see inestimable value in yourself and, simultaneously, in your brother or sister. That vision, seeing the Christ in one another, "is the maximal service one person can render to another."

Namasté. That means "the divine Self is the same in you and me", and connotes "I bow to the divine in you".

To hold a grudge against another is to subtract from their "inestimable" value, and you will automatically see yourself in the same diminished way.

The following four paragraphs, "On sexuality," were deleted from the Text because Helen found them upsetting. They didn't even get included in the Urtext! They were found in her handwritten notes and nowhere else. Her reaction may be understandable to many of us. They present an almost unworldly view of sexuality that many may find off-putting. This discussion isn't about homosexuality versus heterosexuality; it addresses sex in general.



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3 On sexuality: Homosexuality is lacking in love only to the extent it is based on the principle of exclusion. 2 Everybody should love everybody. 3 It is wrong to deny the beauty of some souls because of body structures of which you are afraid. 4 This is essentially an unhealthy attempt to limit fear, but fear cannot be limited, just as love cannot have limits.

The line that stands out for me is, “Everybody should love everybody.” I once wrote an article, based on my experience with the Course, titled “Falling in Love with Everyone.” The main idea here, really, is that nothing about our bodies should limit our love for one another.

4 Heterosexual attitudes can be similarly distorted, but do contain a more natural potential. 2 Sex relations are intended for having children. 3 You have misunderstood sex, because you regard it as a way of establishing human contact for yourself. 4 This has led to body-image problems. 5 Children are miracles in their own right. 6 They already have the gift of life, and their parents provide them with the opportunity to express it.

Heterosexuality has one potential advantage: It is the natural means of having children, and as nature's way of procreation, it is less prone to misuse by the ego. But any form sex takes can be misused. The error mentioned here is using sex as a way of getting something for ourselves—for personal gratification. In 5:1, he openly calls this selfish. This approach to sex also “has led to body-image problems.” That is, people feel more or less “desirable” or “acceptable” based on their bodies. Miraculous vision, as we have seen, sees beyond the body to the invisible, divine nature in everyone.

Another problem with sex, in general, is that, by its nature, we restrict it to “special” individuals. But we are supposed to love everybody equally.

5 Nothing physical, mental, or spiritual should be used selfishly. 2 The pleasure from using anything should come from utilizing it for God's will. 3 You should live so that God is free to arrange temporary human constellations as He sees fit. 4 If you have not had children, do not interpret this in terms of guilt. 5 Many children who are already here need spiritual parents. 6 The poor are always with us, and many who are born have not been reborn.

Paragraph 5 presents what may seem a too-restrictive view of sex. Basically, it's the Roman Catholic view: The highest purpose of sex is procreation. Using it selfishly for personal gratification should be discouraged. This applies to more than sex! “The pleasure from using anything should come from utilizing it for God's will.” Procreation enables God “to arrange temporary human constellations as He sees fit.” Back in 4:6, he told us that children “already have the gift of life, and their parents provide them with the opportunity to express it.” By giving them birth we allow them to come into the world of form and learn to appreciate the divine nature of God within themselves. Apparently, this should be the basis of our pleasure from sex. It's a high bar!

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Jesus allows us to feel no guilt about not bearing children. He encourages us to become spiritual parents to children (and others) who are already here, but lack spiritual guidance. “Many who are born have not been reborn.”

6 Human birth, maturation, and development is a microcosmic representation of a much larger process of creation and development of abilities. 2 It is subject to error as long as the real purpose of free will is misunderstood and misdirected. 3 The real function of parents is to be wiser than their children in this respect, and to teach them accordingly.

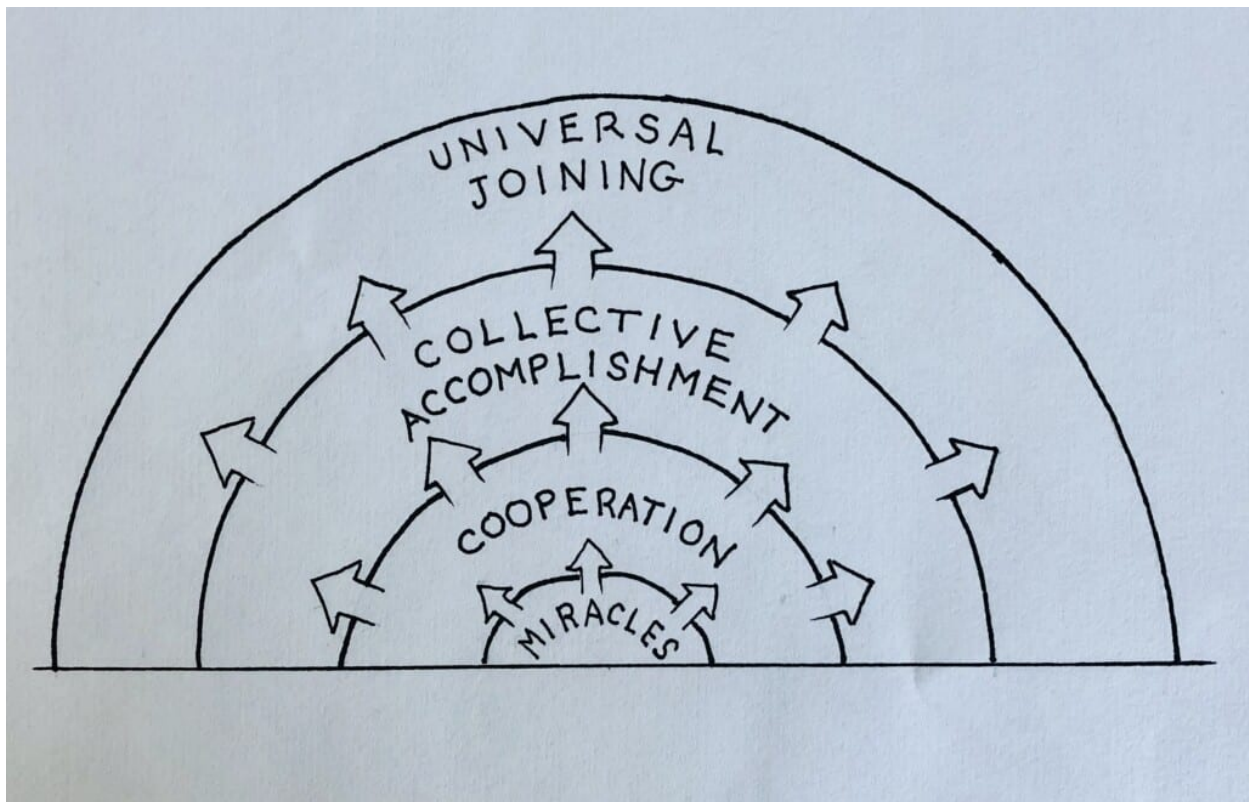
Individual human development is a microcosmic version of the overall spiritual evolution of humanity. Spiral Dynamics is a teaching that greatly expands on this concept.

What do you think “the real purpose of free will” is? What is it parents should teach their children about this?

**19. Miracles make minds one in Christ. 2 They are a corporate necessity. 3 Industry depends on cooperation, and cooperation depends on miracles.**

2 “Corporate” refers to the body of Christ, which is a way of referring to the church. 2 But the church of God is merely the sum of the minds He created. 3 This is the corporate body of Christ.

We can see Jesus’ solution in the form of a four-step process:



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The notion of what I call (along with many teachers, see my list below) “return to the One” is so powerful. It's so much more than loving your neighbor or even loving your “enemies.” It extends into cooperating with one another in loving partnership (not in competition). A group that lacks love for one another while trying to resolve a problem often fails to achieve anything. A cohesive group can produce collective accomplishments. “Industry depends on cooperation.” But it must go further, higher, to universal joining: “the sum of the minds [God] created.” The dividing lines must eventually blur and disappear. On that day, we will be “one in Christ.” It all starts with miracles: “Cooperation depends on miracles.”

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**Writings on Oneness**

*Oneing: The Universal Christ*: Richard Rohr

*The Corner of Fourth and Nondual*: Cynthia Bourgeault

*Return to the One*: Brian Hines (the philosophy of Plotinus)

*Oneness*: John Greven

*Realization of Oneness*: Joel Goldsmith

*Essential Writing on Nonduality*, Jerry Katz, ed.

*One Being One*, John Davidson

Works by or about Teilhard de Chardin

Any good book on mysticism, e.g., *God Has One Eye*, by John Mabry; *What is Mysticism?*, Jon Mundy; *The Foundations of Mysticism*, Joel Goldsmith