



CONTENTS

Does the Course’s Teaching on Vision Fit What People Experience?  
by Robert Perry 1

Reader’s Experiences of Vision 5

Circle Mailbox 10

Circle News 13



# A BETTER WAY

## Does the Course’s Teaching on Vision Fit What People Experience?

by Robert Perry

My article “What Is Vision?” in last month’s *A Better Way* focused on examples of vision rather than on Course teaching about vision. This naturally raised the question of whether the experiences I included actually fit what the Course means by vision. I especially imagined readers thinking that I had gone a bit soft on strict fidelity to the Course. After all, in these experiences, people are in some cases seeing visual light around bodies and objects. They are seeing God glowing in plants, stones, grains of sand, boards, rags, debris, broken bottles, and even molecules in the air. Isn’t that all a bit woo-woo? And doesn’t it imply that the physical world is real? If something is full of God, doesn’t that make it real?

The fact remains, however, that the experiences I included are strikingly similar to descriptions of vision in the Course. I honestly can’t see any meaningful difference between them. To show you what I mean, I have taken the composite experience of vision from my article and, alongside the various parts of it, placed Course quotes that mirror the experiences. For these quotes, I have tried to use passages that are specifically about vision. In the few cases where a passage is not about vision, I have followed it with an asterisk.

So please read through these two columns, comparing the items in the left column (the composite experience of vision from my article) to the items in the right column (descriptions of vision from the Course). Answer for yourself the question: Is the experience on the left really an example of what the Course means by vision?

Composite experience of vision	Descriptions of vision from the Course
I was in a decrepit and ugly area, the ground covered with boards, rags, and debris. The people looked dirty and shabby.	When you have looked on what seemed terrifying, and seen it change to sights of loveliness and peace; when you have looked on scenes of violence and death, and watched them change to quiet views of gardens under open skies, with clear, life-giving water running happily beside them in dancing brooks that never waste away; who need persuade you to accept the gift of vision? (T-20.VIII.11:1)
I passed a disheveled, dirty, street person who looked very drunk. I found myself judging him. All of a sudden, what I saw changed. Time also seemed to change—it slowed down.	And you will see him suddenly transformed from enemy to savior; from the devil into Christ. (W-pI.161.11:6)

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*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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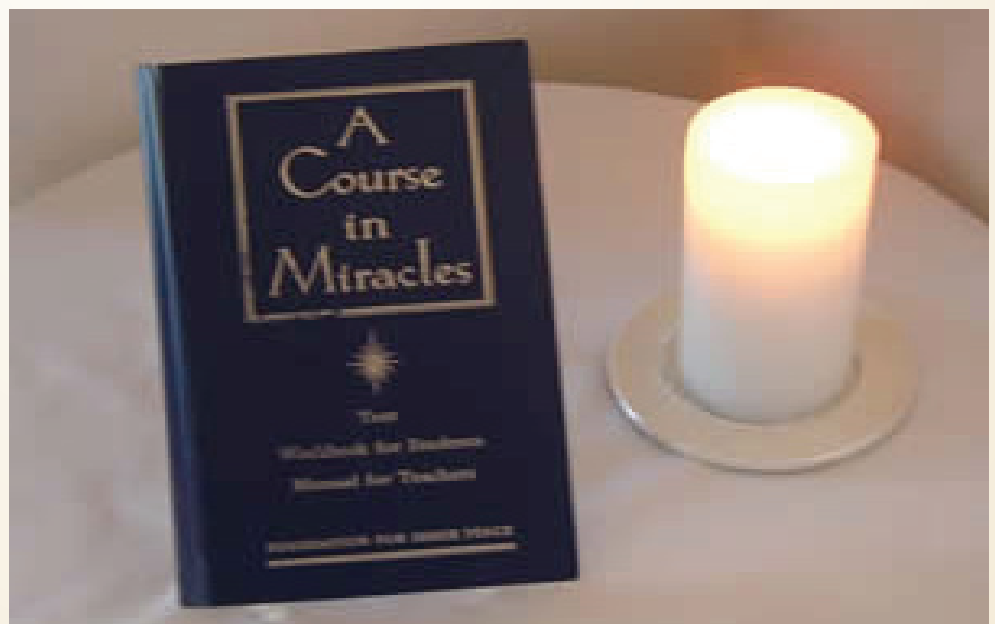
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<p>I was now shocked by the homeless man’s overwhelming beauty, a beauty that I suddenly became aware of beyond his outer appearance.</p>	<p>Can you imagine how beautiful those you forgive will look to you? In no fantasy have you ever seen anything so lovely. (T-17.II.1:1-2)</p>
<p>He was stunningly beautiful to me. I felt as if I should kneel at his feet.</p>	<p>And in Christ’s vision is his loveliness reflected in a form so holy and so beautiful that you could scarce refrain from kneeling at his feet. (W-pI.161.9:3)</p>
<p>Along the contour edge of his body, there were some glistening sparkling things, like star points.</p>	<p>You will begin to understand it when you have seen little edges of light around the same familiar objects which you see now. That is the beginning of real vision. (W-pI.2:2-3)</p>
<p>Then I looked around and it wasn’t just this person—it was <i>everyone</i>. Everyone there was unbelievably beautiful and incredibly dear.</p>	<p>I will recognize in everyone my dearest Friend. (W-pI. rI.60.3:5)</p> <p>[Your brothers] are all the same; all beautiful and equal in their holiness. (T-13.VIII.6:1)</p> <p>Nothing you see here, sleeping or waking, comes near to such loveliness [the loveliness of those you forgive]. And nothing will you value like unto this, nor hold so dear. (T-17.II.1:3-4)</p>
<p>Indeed, <i>everything</i> was alive and full of energy and intelligence. Everything appeared to have an “inside” just as I do. Everything was <i>urgent</i> with life, which was the same in the boards, the broken bottles, the people. And every object, seen under this aspect, appeared exceedingly beautiful.</p>	<p>See only this Mind everywhere, because only this is everywhere and in everything. (T-7.V.10:10)</p> <p>[The table] has something to show you; something beautiful and clean and of infinite value, full of happiness and hope. (W-pI.28.5:2)</p> <p>The world will be transformed before your sight, cleansed of all guilt and softly brushed with beauty. (T-19. IV(A).15:2)</p>
<p>I saw the unity and interconnectedness of all life. Plants, stones, and animals had an awareness of this connection and their inner spark of life.</p>	<p>[Christ’s vision] sees no separation. (W-pI.158.7:4)</p> <p>All things that live bring gifts to you, and offer them in gratitude and gladness at your feet. The scent of flowers is their gift to you. The waves bow down before you, and the trees extend their arms to shield you from the heat, and lay their leaves before you on the ground that you may walk in softness, while the wind sinks to a whisper round your holy head.</p> <p>The light in you is what the universe longs to behold. All living things are still before you, for they recognize Who walks with you. The light you carry is their own. And thus they see in you their holiness, saluting you as savior and as God. (W-pI.156.4:2-5:4)*</p>

<p>All things seemed to glow with a light that came from within them. I saw it in everything and everyone and everywhere. It was in every grain of sand, in every molecule in the infinite sky. And I saw that this holy light glowed in people's hearts.</p>	<p>Nothing is there [in the real world] but shines, and shines forever. (T-13.VII.1:7)</p> <p>[Christ's vision] looks on everyone, on every circumstance, all happenings and all events, without the slightest fading of the light it sees. (W-pI.158.7:5)</p> <p>How holy is the smallest grain of sand, when it is recognized as being part of the completed picture of God's Son! (T-28.IV.9:4)</p> <p>The smallest leaf becomes a thing of wonder, and a blade of grass a sign of God's perfection. (T-17.II.6:3)</p>
<p>I recognized this radiance as the light of God. There was nowhere I could look that did not contain the essence of this Being. I had no doubt that I was seeing God.</p>	<p>Our eyes behold His [God's] loveliness in all we look upon. (T-pI.124.4:5)</p> <p><i>God is in this coat hanger.</i>  <i>God is in this magazine.</i>  <i>God is in this finger.</i>  <i>God is in this lamp.</i>  <i>God is in that body.</i>  <i>God is in that door.</i>  <i>God is in that waste basket.</i> (W-pI.29.5:3-9)</p>
<p>Then I felt the waves of love wash over us. In that instant I loved everybody and everything with incredible intensity.</p>	<p>What is in him will shine so brightly in your grateful vision that you will merely love him and be glad. (T-20.V.4:4)</p> <p>...a sense of love you cannot understand, a joy too deep for you to comprehend, a sight too holy for the body's eyes to see. (W-pI.124.11:2)</p> <p>Only the light they love is in awareness, and only love shines upon them forever. (T-23.IV.8:4)</p>
<p>I was in a state of bliss.</p>	<p>Nothing that you remember that made your heart sing with joy has ever brought you even a little part of the happiness this sight will bring you. For you will see the Son of God. (T-17.II.1:5-6)</p> <p>What would induce you now to let it fade away from your ecstatic vision? For this sight proves that you have exchanged your blindness for the seeing eyes of Christ. (W-pI.165.5:5-6)</p>

<p>I experienced a complete certainty that at that moment I saw things as they really are. I knew that in our fundamental nature, we <i>are</i> love and we are each loved and forgiven in each moment.</p>	<p>[The one with saving vision] brings the light to what he looks upon, that he may see it as it really is. (T-31.VII.11:7)</p> <p>But see the Love of God in you, and you will see it everywhere because it <i>is</i> everywhere. See His abundance in everyone, and you will know that you are in Him with them. (T-7.VII.10:4-5)</p> <p>You are only love. (T-6.III.2:3)*</p>
<p>I felt grief at the realization of the real situation of human beings, living continuously in the midst of all this without being aware of it. I could see how they veiled their divinity, muddled over with false ideas about what is important.</p>	<p>Never allow purity to remain hidden, but shine away the heavy veils of guilt within which the Son of God has hidden himself from his own sight. (T-14.V.4:5)</p> <p>Let not the world's light, given unto you, be hidden from the world. It needs the light, for it is dark indeed, and men despair because the savior's vision is withheld and what they see is death. Their savior stands, unknowing and unknown, beholding them with eyes unopened. And they cannot see until he looks on them with seeing eyes, and offers them forgiveness with his own. (T-15.VII.15:1-4)</p>
<p>Then the light faded. I began to be aware of time again, and the impression of entering into time was as marked as though I had stepped from air into water, from a rarer into a thicker element.</p>	<p>Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides. He will remain when you forget, and the body's activities return to occupy your conscious mind. (T-18.VII.7:8-9)*</p>



E-mail your comments to the author at: [robert@circleofa.org](mailto:robert@circleofa.org)

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## Readers' Experiences of Vision

Compiled by Robert Perry

*At the end of my article last month, "What Is Vision?" I asked for readers to share their own experiences of vision. I had a terrific response and received a number of fascinating and very moving experiences. I don't know if all the experiences below fit the Course's idea of vision. What I have done is include any non-ordinary experience that featured a changed perception of the world, one that seemed infused from within, and was especially a more loving perception. My thanks to all who contributed their experiences. I hope you will be as inspired by them as I am.*

### James Coleman

Here's my story. In December 1996, I was as low as I can remember. I was contemplating suicide, but leaving my sons with that as a legacy was unthinkable. For about three days, I could barely find the motivation to move. I remember telling "God" or anybody that was "listening" that I gave up. My attempts to arrange my life had failed and I was a failure. I wish I had a great memory of what happened transitionally, but I don't. The next thing I remember was being overwhelmed with Love. All life's tragedies appeared to be a joke and I'd just gotten the punch line! Everywhere I looked I saw Love. I specifically remember every blade of grass transmitting Love. It was *almost* unbearable. I laughed all the time and tried to

tell those close to me what I was going through. They seemed to think I was nuts. That made me laugh, too! I had a brief sexual relationship during that time and the experience was what I understand to be tantric. My partner was a practitioner of tantric sex and was amazed at my ability to experience and practice it without going through all the proper preparation. That has colored our (ongoing) friendship, as she expresses some kind of awe at that.

This period lasted about a month before I found myself upset about something. I don't remember what it was, but I remember thinking, "Uh oh, it's over". However, I know it is better to have Loved and lost, than never to have Loved at all. I know what vision is, and I have since had "moments." But that was my biggie...so far!

## Patricia Weberman

This is the second time I have attempted to put into words an experience that can never be fully described. To do so can only limit it, but since this is our current means of communication, I will do my best to describe what can *only* be experienced.

From a conceptual frame of time reference, it occurred on February 2, 1981. I had recently experienced the loss of a very close relative due to suicide, and I was still reeling from the effects it had had upon me. Two months later, my best friend's mother experienced a severe heart attack. I did not wish my friend to have to experience the grievous loss I had felt. So, I decided to pray for her, and for her mother's healing. I began my prayers by asking God to forgive me for all the sins I had committed. I tried to list them all, as best as I could remember them. I recall feeling genuine remorse and crying.

I think I also said "The Lord's Prayer." In the midst of my plethora of words and prayers...my mind suddenly became stilled and went blank. It was as if "something" silenced my brain waves and all my thoughts.

Then suddenly, the room I was in became filled with a brilliant, intense Light. It permeated both the room as well as my body. More intense and brighter than sunlight, this Light filled my being. It was both within and without. With it came "the peace that passeth understanding"; I knew that I was forgiven, as if there was nothing to forgive. This presence of Light infused me with an unending, ever-present Love. It seemed to engulf my entire being. I felt supremely happy and joy-full.

This communication was not in words, but more like telepathy. In this knowingness, I also realized that all my questions had been answered; in fact, any question I could ever formulate or had formulated in the past, had been answered in this moment of pure bliss. It was as if time itself had ceased to be and was only a part of a continuous now that endured. Then, I was given this: "All will have this experience...when they are ready to receive it."

Just as suddenly, I must have become frightened by the experience. My heart felt as if it had enlarged and expanded and was now beating against the edges of my rib cage. I could feel it pounding. I had the thought, "I could die of this," yet I did not care. Only this experience was real. I remember these feelings to be simultaneously occurring.

Then, it was communicated to me to "turn to the East;" I was facing the South, so I turned my head to the right, towards the East, as if it had been a literal direction. The Light faded after awhile and I opened my eyes. The duration of the experience seemed to be timeless. It was far more than a moment.

For nearly two months afterwards, I felt altered. When I would gaze even at strangers, it felt as if I really loved them. I didn't want to speak, nor did I try to tell anyone of my experience. I didn't want them to think I was special in some way or different from them, because of the experience I had had. It seemed I needed to ponder it in my heart for a time, and keep it Sacred.

I turned to Eastern philosophy, Buddhism in particular, for it seemed to have an explanation for what had happened to me, one that was missing from my conventional Christian upbringing. I found the Edgar Cayce books called *A Search for God*, and Harmon Bro's book *Dreams in the Life of Prayer*, which had references to a viable method of prayer and meditation that came from the Edgar Cayce readings. In fact, it was Bro's book that inspired me to try meditation, and was a precursor to the amazing experience I had had, which seemed more like Grace.

My existential search for the meaning of this experience led me from immersion in an Edgar Cayce *Search for God* Study Group to Native American cosmology and shamanism. These teachings felt more viable and more alive to me with the presence of Great Spirit in all living beings than my early education about Jesus Christ and the dogma the Christian Church espoused in my childhood.

It was not until my study with *A Course in Miracles*, and doing the Workbook lessons, that I have been empowered to have a better understanding of Christ's mystical teachings and the help ever available through the Holy Spirit. Reason inspires me that *A Course in Miracles* is now my path. I guess one could say I have come full circle...back to my origins of Christ's teachings, but with greater enhancements and fully empowered.

Thank you for providing the opportunity to share this, and for all the "work" you do in bringing better clarity through your writings to *A Course in Miracles*.

## Jo Chandler

It was a dark (and stormy—ha ha) Sacramento winter’s night. The streets were deserted, and I was on my way home from work. En route, I had to pass Third and T Streets, the notorious corner where prostitutes plied their trade. I was a very sheltered young woman in my late twenties (some years back, before the sexual revolution was in full swing) who had never seen a “real” prostitute. In my mind, these were bad girls, damaged goods, dirty people—not my kind.

As I approached the mythical, sinful location, I glanced over to find a young woman about my age whose garb told me immediately she was one of them. What happened next sounds so simple, but it changed my consciousness. This beautiful person smiled at me. I smiled back. And in that moment, time shifted. It was as if a beam of golden light extended from her soul into my heart. I believe that in that split second, we both experienced the truth of who we are. We became one. It was sublime. Then it was over and I was on my way.

Of course, it will never be over. I will carry this seemingly unimpressive, yet transformative, experience with me forever. Was it vision? I don’t know. What I do know is the love we exchanged that night was the real deal. It was divine and eternal. That’s good enough for me.

## Nicola Perry

I was doing an early morning “quiet time” using one of the early lessons of *A Course in Miracles* as a focus. This lesson required us to look around the room and apply the thought of the day to those things our eyes alighted on.

As I was doing this, my perception shifted suddenly and dramatically. I could see an “inner light” to absolutely everything. Nothing was as it had appeared before. Instead, all that I saw had a translucent quality, as if it were glowing. More importantly, I could strongly sense a deeply loving consciousness within each and every object my eyes looked upon, and the intense love was directed at me! I found myself in the utterly bizarre situation of looking at all the ordinary things of everyday life that I normally basically ignored—walls, curtains, cupboard doors—and discovering this intense love that these inanimate objects had for me. It was a very personal love and it absolutely blew me away. Behind the experience of love was an understanding that everything in the room was there solely for the purpose of loving me, to be a beneficial and loving presence in my life.

I remember basking in sheer delighted amazement at the experience I was having, and thinking of new places to look, and discovering that absolutely everything I could see—even the pile of clutter on the floor—was filled with love for me, and was intentionally there to be a beneficial (loving) presence in my life.

The experience lasted about five to ten minutes and then gradually faded.

## Gregory Fillar

I have had two very clear experiences which seem to fall into the category you call “vision.”

Both occurred when I was age 50 or older. They were both related to a strong sense of loss of physical being (i.e., death). The first occurred in the fall of 2000, a few days after I had serious emergency abdominal surgery.

When I was discharged (post-op) three or four days later, I became intensely depressed and totally unable to justify my own sense of being, sobbing nearly uncontrollably. But as I got up from the chair in my hospital room and walked out the door, I suddenly was overwhelmed by an intense sense that I was intimately connected to everyone, simply wishing to share the joy of connecting with others any way I could. The next day I was overwhelmed with the desire to hear good music. So, still feeling this tremendous euphoria, I went to a record store and bought several dozen wonderful great works of classic and folk music.

This powerful sense of connection with all living beings continued uninterrupted for three to three-and-a-half days. During this time I felt as if a clear, clean sparkling rivulet of the brightest, freshest water was bubbling up and down my spine. It was an incredibly beautiful experience, and one that was totally shared; by this I mean I wanted to hug everyone.

I felt as though I had undergone a complete shift in polarity. By this I mean that I felt as if all my energy had gone from seeking to be fulfilled from the outside in, to feeling a total joy in experiencing a flow of Life from me outwards. I no longer needed to be “fulfilled”; instead, I felt totally fulfilled by all the life around me and was now able to share that sense of fulfillment with others. This was part of the flowing rivulet experience. And the sparkling spring (kundalini?) continued. But on the morning of the fourth day, my consciousness returned, quite suddenly, to “normal.”

The next time was about ten years later (June 2010). Again I had a medical crisis with severe depression and hopelessness, crying to the point of being unable to speak. I spent several days in the hospital while I was given a variety of medical treatments (antibiotics, IVs, and such). Before leaving home I had the foresight to take my copy of ACIM with me. I spent practically every conscious moment while in the hospital immersing myself in reading primarily from the

Text. This time when I left the hospital I did not feel the sense of elation I had felt ten years earlier. But instead I felt an extremely powerful clarity of thought and feeling. As I continued reading the Course, and now starting to reread the lessons, I found unprecedented comprehension in what I read. In fact all my thoughts were profoundly lucid. If my mood shifted to the negative, I simply closed my eyes for a few seconds and immediately the clarity returned, as though all I needed to do was reset my awareness so that everything I thought and felt was God centered. This continued for over a month, but even that eventually faded.

And this time I experienced a healing that occurred for someone very close to me who has been living in utter misery since the sudden death of her husband several years ago. The curious thing is that when my state of mind again returned to “normal,” I assumed that the healing would recede. But it didn’t! Truly astounding to me.

### **Steve Perry**

I have had one earthshaking, and two lesser similar experiences. The first was earthshaking. I was about 18, and hadn’t a spiritual bone in my body. I was a scientist, and if something couldn’t be validated experimentally, I wasn’t much interested in it. Obviously, this shook me to my core. I had a violent thought and, for the first time in my life, I didn’t beat myself up over it. I saw it for what it was: just a thought, not good or bad, that came and went. And the gates of heaven opened. I experienced indescribable love for every person and thing in my perceptual field. I felt as though I was floating. Time was gone. (I know it lasted about twenty minutes only because I know where I was when it started, and it I knew how long it took me to walk home afterward.) It was unquestionably beyond description bliss, yet I still felt I had to get regrounded. It was clear to me that if I didn’t “come down” I would die, as I had no interest in eating, drinking, sleeping, or anything else. (Or, at least, that’s how I “figured it out” at the time.)

The other two were much less intense, and didn’t seem to be precipitated by anything in particular, as the above was. Both times, I was in line in a grocery store, and it felt like love descended on me. Everyone in my sight was the object of my most intense love. Impossible to really describe, of course. It was as though I had an “aha” experience: “Oh... THIS is the way it is. All is love.” Something like that.

I can trigger similar experiences when I’m surrounded by strangers sometimes.

### **Janey Drye**

I am an ordinary person with a very ordinary life. I’ve studied ACIM for about seventeen years. Over the years, I’ve had several experiences that I believe were experiences of light similar to your article in “A Better Way” in August 2010.

The one I’d like to share with you now is different than the stories in your article and it was the most profound of my “light” experiences. The day of this experience I was returning from an overnight trip for my employer. I had attended a workshop for Business Women. These workshops were particularly difficult for me as I am very shy and have issues of low self-esteem. The workshop involved being around women who are extremely confident. Being in that environment made me even more aware of my insecurities.

This was one of a series of one-day events that stretched over a six-month period. This particular workshop had been unusually good for me. I had walked away from it feeling very good about myself. As I left the facility and traveled to the airport my feeling of happiness grew. It is very difficult to find the words to describe my experience. The only way I know to describe it is that I felt as though I were the “Christ.”

I felt an aura about me and felt an intense love toward everyone I met. It was as if love oozed from my every pore. The biggest difference within me was an awareness of goodness, not just goodness, but more. It was a confidence that wasn’t of the ego. When I spoke, I chose every word very carefully, as not to inflate myself (this was something I noticed as it was happening, but didn’t really seem to be driving). And I could feel whenever I spoke to anyone that they were being drawn to me. I sensed my great influence, but felt no ego. My ego was completely gone.

It was a very powerful experience. It lasted the entire trip home.

The next morning, I remembered the power of the experience, but had faded back to my normal self. I knew the being I experienced was me, but it was as if it were a “Higher” me. It was as if a part of me that existed at a higher plane had walked with me that evening. It was showing me who I really am and what I am working towards.

That happened for me about six years ago. I’ve never experienced anything like it since. It was truly a “Holy Experience.”

### **Gerry Hofstra**

I wonder whether this fits the category. I think this happened before I started ACIM.

Over the years I have found that a long walk for me is the most effective way for reflection and meditation. A number



of years ago I had an experience that may fit seeing with vision. As I was walking I became aware of a sense of presence within me, but also of the same presence in everything around me. Everything seemed to shine with that presence. The overwhelming feeling was the presence of God in all animate things. Then I wondered whether it was only in living things and focused on a dead tree and the same sense of presence was there. There was a feeling of the oneness of everything, that the presence of God pervaded everything.

## Greg Mackie

Regarding experiences of vision: My most powerful experience was the one I had while on a spiritual retreat a few years ago. I wrote about it in an article called “If You Do It, You Will See That It Works: An Experience of Universal Love.” It’s available on our website at this URL:

<http://www.circleofa.org/articles/UniversalLove.php>

An excerpt from the article:

This was when the full-blown experience of universal love really started. It’s difficult to describe exactly what happened, but it’s as if the love and gratitude that I was already feeling toward God suddenly expanded outward and encompassed all of creation. Here is part of what I wrote in my journal during the height of this experience:

*I unconditionally love everyone and everything with no reservations! I love God, my Father!...I am basking in a sea of love. Thank you Father, Jesus, the Course, everyone! I can scarce refrain from kneeling at everyone’s feet. “I love my Father and I love His Son!” This is indescribable, wonderful, very intense, spectacular, mind-boggling, I’m free, I love, I am one with all, I love everyone....This is awesome! Words fail to describe it!*

I basked in this radiant love for the next couple of hours. Yet oddly, even when I was in the midst of the experience, a part of my mind stood “outside” of it and witnessed it. So, I started doing mental experiments to test it. I brought specific people to mind and extended this deep love to them, starting with those who are closest to me. Then I brought to mind people I normally have grievances against—everyone from those who have personally “wronged” me to “evil” world figures like Hitler and Osama bin Laden. I wanted to see if I truly felt this love for them as well. I did.

I remembered that Course line that says if you were to see people truly, you could scarce refrain from kneeling at their feet (W-pI.161.9:3). I asked myself if that was true for me now, and amazingly, it was. I didn’t actually kneel, of course, but I saw such holiness in these people. In thinking of the ones I normally hold grievances against, I remained fully aware of the negative things their bodies did, but *it just didn’t matter what their bodies did*. The negative things were merely calls for help, which didn’t change my love at all. I loved these people anyway, without reservation. I even loved animals and inanimate things when I brought them to mind. And I loved God with a deep, intimate, grateful love that I had never felt for Him before. It seemed that I was partaking in the Love of God Himself, a Love that enabled me to ‘see the world anew, shining in innocence, alive with hope, and blessed with perfect charity and love’ (W-pI.189.1:7). It was an experience I never wanted to end.

## Judy Robb

I was having a difficult evening. I had some dental work done that had gone “sideways” and was in a lot of pain. So I went up to bed, snuggling into my husband. And our dog, Dougal, was snoring at the bottom of the bed. I started to read Allen Watson’s comments on lesson 239, “The glory of my Father is my own.” I felt a little calmer though my mouth was still throbbing. I glanced over at my husband who had fallen asleep with his glasses on, his heavy art book still on his chest. A millisecond later I saw Jesus superimposed on Alex’s facial features.

The next thing I knew I was back reading Allen’s commentary, “It is an outward picture of a wish” It was only when I read the words that I “recalled” or became conscious of what I had just seen. I reflected later that “we” might be seeing all the time but not computing the experience.

Since that time I have been able to see Alex in a new “light” We head off into our thirty year old marriage with joy

(well, more than usual).

## Susan Papp

I have had so many varying experiences through the years, beginning in my teens. I have been through periods of deep connection with everything in the physical world and knowing that in that connection is truth. I have had experiences where I have seen only light and the whole world has disappeared.

What I have come to realize, at least at this moment, is that I don't really operate in this world on a purely physical level—it seems to be a more vibrational and intuitive thing. Its power cannot be really expressed in words. You have to allow the experiences to happen by being open to them—no fear! Our inner visions and knowings are our true guides—it is the way of spirit—the way home.

## CIRCLE MAILBOX

*Here is some of the feedback we received about Robert's article "What Is Vision?" in the previous issue of A Better Way. Included are Robert's responses.*

Thanks for another fine article. Experiences of people that are examples of concepts of the Course provide hope, motivation, and relevance.

I was quite surprised in the article that you didn't mention the term "real world." I think it is clear in the Course, for all intents and purposes, that real world, vision, Christ's vision, seeing, and true perception (versus false perception) are all synonymous. And the term "real world" appears many times throughout the Course (sorry, of course I don't have to tell you that). They all come from changing our state of mind mainly through forgiveness. Do you think that they are not synonymous?

There is some description in the Course concerning vision or the real world, of which I am sure you are well aware and which you can probably recite from memory (like T-13.VII.1, T-20.VIII.11, W-pII.8.2, W-pI.189.1-3), but real-life experiences from others add evidence and support to what the Course teaches.

— Jan Worley

Robert's reply:

Yes, I think that all those terms are more or less synonymous. I think in the strictest sense, what vision and true perception see are the real world and face of Christ. So the experiences I included in my article would be experiences of vision in which people were seeing the real world, or least some degree of it or aspects of it.

• • •

I have just finished the latest *A Better Way*.

Again, you have answered with clarity—What is vision? It was enthralling to read—or more succinctly, to experience through your examples—the true meaning of vision. After reading the article, I opened Helen Shucman's *The Gifts of God*. It fell open to page 46 and the prayer "Arise With Me":

...fill my eyes with glory, and my heart with love that smiles forever on the world You saw, and that You love as You would have me love. For with this vision I will look on You, and recognize my Savior in all things I did not understand.

Robert, it does not get any better than this.

— Les Miller

## FROM THE CIRCLE COURSE COMMUNITY:

Robert, talk about anchoring a Course tradition! By means of “What Is Vision?” you have uncovered the key to motivating our Course world. As for me. I’m in Robert. You’ve motivated me so much more than you can know.

— Howard Westin

I loved reading your article Robert and seeing “our” vision stories—Chris’s and Ron’s and Liz’s—standing right alongside Helen’s spiritual experiences!

The night those stories first got posted, I was moved to tears by the sense of possibility and connection I felt reading them. I love this sacred little space of ours, and seeing the Course’s promises being lived out among us. I really hope you hear from more people about their vision experiences now that you’ve got the conversation going.

Thank you!

— Amy Speech

I remember your article on the simple acts of kindness Jesus labeled “miracles” in the early dictation. That had a big effect on me too. I started seeing miracles as something I could actually do.

It strikes me that perhaps now, with this article on vision, you’re helping us do the same thing with the concept of vision: see it as something that, like miracles, we ordinary human beings can actually do. Very encouraging!

— Greg Mackie

The “Vision” article inspires me. It spells out what it is, how very near this joyous perception is to any and all of us, and how we can facilitate its advent.

— John Perry

I have a few questions about Christ’s vision. I have never experienced “vision,” but I have experienced something possibly remotely similar, when something ordinary has moved me to the experience of holding back surprising tears of tenderness, when I have been struck by receiving sudden love, seemingly expressed by someone impersonally. An example of that occurred at the Cirque du Soleil circus yesterday. I found myself, more than once, moved this way as an artist came forward to perform, and I had a sense of this incredible tender gift we offer each other, so that I wanted to cry at its beauty. I have experienced that before, where love suddenly shouted its presence, but I am clear that this was not Christ’s vision, and the love was not visual, but more feeling.

I have had a profound holy instant experience about four years ago when I was in a long read of the Text, trying to find the power to forgive, which I felt I desperately needed at the time. Again it was not visual, but strong feeling.

Although I haven’t had experiences of Christ’s vision, I refuse to feel like I need to, and there is a (very) tiny resentment in that. I actually suspect that it was hard enough to write the Course so that it could convey meaning to such a variety of even Christian religious backgrounds, and different levels of enlightenment, that I could hardly expect Jesus to also make allowances for the minority of us who do not have vision as our dominant sense.

I guess I am making the point that for some of us, Christ’s vision may not be a primarily visual experience. And, probably, always the experience ends with the feeling of love being dominant in our awareness.

Having said all that, a couple of questions. The Course says that “Without forgiveness I will still be blind.” “For forgiveness is the only means whereby Christ’s vision comes to me,” (both sentences from Lesson 247.) Or as Robert quoted in his article, “Vision will come to you at first in glimpses, but they will be enough to show you what is given you who see your brother sinless.”

Forgiveness didn’t seem to be a feature of Brenda’s experience, as she described herself as a young agnostic person intent on seeing life as a way to have pleasure. And Helen’s subway experience didn’t seem to have had forgiveness as a feature. In these experiences, forgiveness was present in the vision, but not as a precedent. Robert says that the Course says to have vision you only need to ask for it. The comments about sinlessness imply that you must also be doing forgiveness work, or at least wishing to see that.

Robert’s article says near the beginning that once you see with Christ’s vision (or, dare I say, perhaps feel with Christlike understanding) God will soon take the last step. However, it seems more like these experiences are actually motivators for more forgiveness work (to catch up to the holy instant-like taste of Christ vision, showing us what forgiveness brings).

Thanks for the article and everyone's examples. They have really helped me come closer to an understanding of Christ's vision, despite my questions.

— Barb Hembling

Robert's reply:

Barb, thank you for all the great questions and issues you brought up. I think first and foremost we need to disconnect the topic of vision from physical vision, from the visual. The Course is not talking about something visual. The light that vision sees is a light the body's eyes cannot see: "Here is light your eyes can not behold. And yet your mind can see it plainly, and can understand" (W-pI.129.8:2-3). If there is a visual dimension—i.e., seeing visual light around things—Lesson 15 tells us clearly that that is not vision, it is rather a symbol of vision.

So in experiences of vision where a light is seen, what is going on, according to the Course, is this: you are seeing the real light on a mental/emotional level. The seeing, therefore, is along the lines of "Ah, I see!" and the emotional is along the lines of a feeling of deep love. And then as a symbol of that, you are visually seeing a light around things. Jesus mentioned this also in the Urtext, where he said that Edgar Cayce's seeing of auras represented "a curious compromise, in which the nonphysical attributes of the self are approached AS IF they could be seen with the physical eye." But at the same time, let's not knock the symbol.

I think that experiences of vision obviously take different forms and occur at different strengths. I think that just "seeing" someone as possessing a worthiness, an innocence, and a beauty that cannot be seen with the physical eye, based on their physical actions or appearance, is a mild example of vision.

The Workbook talks about some pure yet imprisoned aspect of your Self being released to joy when you meditate, even if you don't feel anything (see Lessons 96.11:4 and 182). Lesson 96 says, "The joy your Self experiences It will save for you, and it will yet be yours in full awareness." So just as your Self can be experiencing joy and release, while you think you feel nothing, so some part of you can be released to vision, while little seems to be happening in you consciously. And that experience will be saved for you, "and will yet be yours in full awareness." You have brought it closer to the conscious mind.

I think a lot of things can trigger vision. Clearly, it sometimes just comes over us of its own accord; or at least seemingly so. Presumably, a choice has been made somewhere that then manifests at an unexpected time. Lesson 124 asks you to meditate for a half hour, and then says that what you choose in that time may surface later: "Perhaps today, perhaps tomorrow, you will look into this glass, and understand the sinless light you see belongs to you; the loveliness you look on is your own."

In other words, as Helen shut her eyes in disgust at the revolting people she saw around her in the subway, that choice was probably not what brought on vision. I suspect it was other choices that had been made earlier, that were just manifesting in that moment.

The way to bring it on, says the Course, is to want to see with vision (see the divinity in everyone and everything) rather than to see with judgment (see the sinfulness in everyone and everything). That, of course, is the same as forgiveness. And the practice of that, says the Course, is the way to bring on glimpses—"lovely flashes"—and then eventually bring on stable, constant, full-blown vision.

And I think this journey is a very long one. If we could query today's spiritual masters and say "Do you at all times, without exception and without lessening or fluctuation, experience with direct and overwhelming certainty pure divinity in everyone and everything, to the point where you are filled with indescribable love, absolutely regardless of what they do, so that even the mildest form of anger is unthinkable, and you constantly feel like kneeling at their feet?"—I think the answer would have to be universal, or very nearly universal, "no." I really doubt anyone is there yet.

So when the Course says it will happen quickly, I think it means quickly from a higher point of view, and certainly quickly compared to how long we've been mucking around in the ego. But then, we've been doing that for fourteen billion years. If we see "quickly" from that vantage point, the word starts to look a little different.

Barb's reply:

Many thanks Robert, for that very helpful elaboration. This whole blog has been so illuminating: all the descriptions of experiences of vision, and your overview of Course teaching about vision itself. For me it was especially helpful to see that vision and forgiveness are essentially the same and to realize that this is not about physical vision, even though physical vision can be a (symbolic) feature.

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As you may already know, we are revamping the Circle website in order to massively boost our online presence, reach more people, and in the process find a clear way out of the deep financial hole we've been living in for far too long now.

Recognizing the fundamental importance of this task to our mission and, quite possibly, to our very survival a Circle friend and donor in St Louis has made us an extraordinarily generous offer:

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Thank you.



Robert