

# A Precious Gift

by Bob Hoekstra

Ever since I can remember, I have been a spiritual seeker. Whether at first I called it God or not, it was still my search for joy and peace that motivated, and still motivates, most of my movements through the world.

My earliest official guide was my mother, who led me to her beloved Catholic church. Through the stories, teachings and rituals of the church, I was introduced to the idea of the ultimate mystery. Nothing that the world could ever offer was said to compare to the ultimate prize that waited with the realization of Heaven and the knowing of God. What a great mystery!

I eagerly pursued every avenue available to a normal kid growing up in the Midwest through the church, the Bible and whatever other books that I could come across. I had largely succeeded at filling my head with high ideas and aspirations, and developing a way of living that I felt would eventually lead me to Heaven. Yet, I had only small success at realizing any true sense of knowing God or experiencing Heaven.

All this changed dramatically two years after my graduation from college. During one evening with close friends, I had what I feel was a revelation of God. As the Course defines it, a revelation is a direct experience of the nature of God. As hippies might describe it, "It was like everything was Love and Light and everyone was included in the All." I don't mean to trivialize the experience (in fact, the experience was indescribable), for that moment changed my life forever. I now knew that the Heaven that I was promised was very real, and I had gotten to taste just a little of the ultimate experience.

Then, I nearly went insane. Here I was, knowing this great potential existed, but having no means of returning to it. My deepest yearning and constant desire was to return to that Holy instant and remain forever. But how?

I began a fervent search and exploration, first of all to validate my experience and then to find a means to actually return Home. As I searched with a burning heart, the path began to appear. New ideas and experiences found their way into my life. I found meditation, writings of the Christian mystics, mind training techniques, Samadhi tanks, near-death stories, metaphysics, eastern philosophies and hope.

Eventually the trail led to a move to San Francisco where I was greeted with a dizzying array of religions, practices, gurus, seekers, cults and churches. My one prayer that I remember praying almost constantly was, "Please show me the path back to You, and please make it the express lane."

That prayer was finally answered several years later through a dear friend. One day this friend, who always had this quality of light about him, came to me and said, "You should read *A Course in Miracles*," and walked away.

Three days later, I was walking through the streets of San Francisco and heard, "Turn here". The Voice directed me into a book store and then continued by directing me to a copy of *A Course in Miracles* sitting on the shelf. As I pulled the book from the shelf I heard from deep within, "This is what you asked for."

Little to say, I held the book very tightly with great joy and also with some fear. I knew that this was to be my path. I knew the search was over, and the real work was just beginning.

For the past fourteen years I have kept the Course at my side. It has been a constant source of comfort when I feel lost and a profound director for my spiritual growth. This is truly the most precious worldly gift that I have ever received, and I am forever grateful.