

# An Excerpt from Lorri Coburn's *Breaking Free: How Forgiveness and A Course in Miracles Can Set You Free*

Local interfaith minister, psychotherapist and spiritual teacher Lorri Coburn, M.S.W., released her new book *Breaking Free* in August of 2011. For the past six years, Lorri has been writing and teaching on the popular metaphysical text *A Course in Miracles* that first found a wide audience when it was published in the 1970s. In *Breaking Free*, she explores the main ideas of *A Course in Miracles* and relates its lessons of forgiveness to her life and the stories she has encountered in her practice.

## Chapter Three: The Dream

***There is no world!***

***This is the central thought the Course attempts to teach (W-p.I.132.6:2-3).***

I was at a coffee shop with my sixteen-year-old niece Catherine. One of Catherine's friends died of cancer at age fifteen, and Catherine's reaction was, "I hate God!" Catherine suffers terribly from migraines, and she has had a constant headache for over a year. She has missed a lot of school, as she is unable to get up in the morning because of her excruciating pain. She was hospitalized for several weeks in a head pain clinic, but she still did not improve. She cannot understand why God allows her to suffer so. I explained the concept that this world is a dream, but that we still seem to suffer within the dream. She surprised me by saying that she and her boyfriend had just been discussing the dream idea. She said, "What if we just think we're living this life, but we're really only having a dream? Wouldn't that be weird?" I complimented her for thinking outside the box and told her that her inner wisdom was revealing the truth to her.

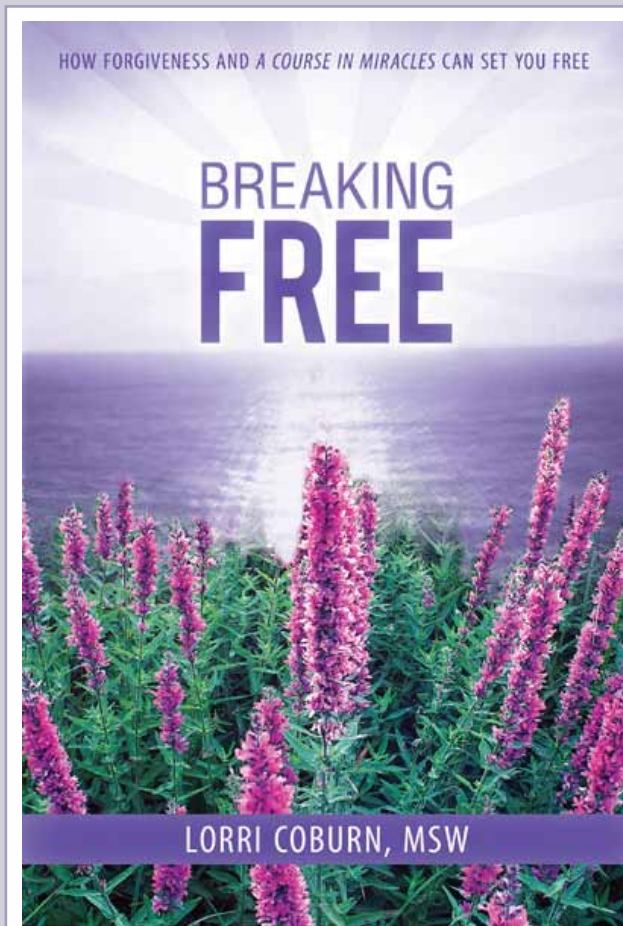
While the dream concept may seem foreign to many Westerners, the idea has been around a long time in the East. The Hindus call this world "Maya," which means "illusion." The Gnostics and many early Christians also believed that the world was a dream. Buddhism perceives this world as an illusion as well. When I first heard the idea that this world is an illusion, it was in a book about Hinduism. The author was asking God why people have to suffer, and God's answer was to not worry about it since it was only a dream. This author implied that God created this earth, and placed us here to experience the dream. This angered me. I hollered at God, "I don't care if it's simply a dream; I'm still here and I don't like where You put me!"

This issue of whether God created this world and sent us here is the question *A Course in Miracles* answers clearly. God neither created this earth, nor did He put us here. We are not really here; we are just *imagining* that we are. We are asleep, dreaming this world, but our *experience* is that it is real. In order to change the experience, we need to awaken from the dream. The first step in awakening is to *allow* the idea that this is a dream, and not resist this concept. We have a choice about whether to wake up, and we need to make a decision to do so for awakening to occur.

***The world you see is an illusion of a world.***

***God did not create it . . . (C-4.1:1-2).***

My client Gary is a passionate musician, full of life, emotional, and charismatic. Gary raises an objection to the term "illusion." He makes a good point that simply calling this life an illusion seems to invalidate our experiences. He recently met a woman who appears to be his soul mate. They met at a music festival far from their respective homes, and the energy, love, and acceptance between them is mesmerizing. How could this not be real? Gary's right — it is real. In fact, love is the only thing that is real and never dies. It is their separate physical bodies that aren't real. Physical bodies always decay and die, but the spiritual love between them remains. That's why this love feels so profound, so otherworldly, because it is a symbol of the oneness we have with God. It is the belief in separation, the belief that love can possibly die, that is the illusion.



Lorri Coburn will talk about her new book, and answer questions, at the Crazy Wisdom Tea Room on Tuesday, April 24<sup>th</sup>, at 7pm, as part of our winter/spring Local Authors' Nights. She is a psychotherapist and interfaith minister.

***You are at home in God, dreaming of exile but perfectly capable of awakening to reality. Is it your decision to do so? You recognize from your own experience that what you see in dreams you think is real while you are asleep. Yet the instant you waken you realize that everything that seemed to happen in the dream did not happen at all. You do not think this strange, even though all the laws of what you awoken to were violated while you slept. Is it not possible that you merely shifted from one dream to another, without really waking? (T-10.I.2:1-6) The choice is not between which dreams to keep, but only if you want to live in dreams or to awaken from them (T-29.IV.1:5).***

Notice the above comment that we do not think nighttime dreams are strange. This is because we see them as normal. Likewise, we see our so-called waking lives as normal, when in reality they are as ephemeral as our dreams at night. God made us with all the creative powers of Himself, and we have free will to do whatever we want with that creativity. Because our imaginations are so creative and powerful, we made this incredible world with its array of fascinating delights and horrors. If we want to keep dreaming of exile, we can do that. If we want to wake up and realize our true nature, we can do that as well.

***There Is No Death***

***Death is the central dream from which all illusions stem.***

***Is it not madness***

***to think of life as being born, aging, losing vitality, and dying in the end?***

***Without the idea of death there is no world.***

***All dreams will end with this one***

***(M-27.1:1-2; 6:3-4).***

It is said that there are no atheists in foxholes. Certainly war provokes terror, as fear of death and bodily destruction are at their peak. Soldiers pray for safety and loved ones at home pray for their safe return. Impending death brings to many a sense of aloneness and panic. However, we can connect with a power of love greater than us, which allows us to find our way to peace. Feeling this connection has brought peace to many in the midst of war. There is a sense of gentle calm that things are okay no matter what happens.

One of my clients, John, found peace during the Vietnam War by carrying the Prayer of St. Joseph with him. He carries it with him to this day, grateful for how

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it helped him. John describes an intriguing incident when his buddy Dan was severely wounded by shrapnel in his leg. Dan went into shock and asked John if the bees were still around. Puzzled, John said, "Bees, what bees?" "The bees that stung my leg," Dan replied. John saw shrapnel holes, while Dan saw bee stings. John was awed by the power of the mind to trick itself. As he read *The Disappearance of the Universe*, he kept recalling Dan's illusory bee stings. This helped John understand how we fool ourselves by believing our dreams.

Whether the problem is war or something seemingly less serious, the answer is the same. When we remember our oneness with God, the problem will no longer be a problem. When we remember it is a dream, we can no longer be upset with it. The more we remember that we are at home in heaven *now*, the more we will experience serenity.

Lorri Coburn, M.S.W., worked as a psychotherapist for 25 years and is now an interfaith minister who has been writing and teaching on *A Course in Miracles* for six years. Her book, *Breaking Free: How Forgiveness and A Course in Miracles Can Set You Free*, published in August 2011, is available through her website: [www.lorricoburn.com](http://www.lorricoburn.com). She can be reached at 734-646-6585 or at: [lorricassie@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lorricassie@sbcglobal.net).