

Courting Love

By Reverend Jane Beach

Courting Love

Dear Facilitator Colleague and Friend,

I am grateful that you have chosen to facilitate this course! Its intention is to deepen and nurture each participant's personal experience of God/Spirit/Source, whatever they choose to call Him/Her/It. I have a hunch that as you do the reading and lead your students through each discussion and contemplation, you will be stirred to new depths of Knowing, as well. What a joy! Please don't hesitate to share your experiences with your students – everyone grows together.

I was an elementary school teacher for 20 years, and I love curriculum. I am aware that many of us do not have extensive training in the area of facilitation so I made the teaching agendas as easy to follow as possible. For instance, you may see an italicized section preceded by "Say:" This is your signal that the following can be read. Hopefully it will help as you lead the discussion.

I did my best to give you possible answers (in parenthesis) to questions you might ask, as well as page numbers from the readings which support your discussion points.

Logistically, I print out my teaching agendas on colored paper for easy recognition and the handouts on white paper for duplication purposes.

Please use the facilitator guides as *guides* – they are not set in stone. Pick and choose what works best for you, and let the experience be fluid.

I believe that if the facilitator is comfortable the participants will also be comfortable, opening up to their own unique relationship with the God of their understanding. It's a Divine set-up to courting a Love that is forever courting us.

If you have any questions please don't hesitate to ask! I am here to support you in any way I can.

With gratitude and love,
Jane

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Week 1 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Registration forms, payment guidelines
- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons – sometimes words cannot convey the experience (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “Love ~ The Essential Existential Fact” handout (All handouts are 3-hole punched so they can be added to the workbook)
- Experiential “Opening Your Heart to the World”

Class 1: Turning Toward Love

Evocation

Welcome

- Say: *This class is about consciously courting the Presence that has courted us for all time. It is about giving up the idea that we are not worthy. It is about walking through our fear to live lives that are God directed, fulfilling and happy!*
- *Before we begin I want to cover some class logistics – it’s important that everyone feels comfortable.*

Class Logistics

- **Introduce Teaching Assistant**
 - On whiteboard or flip chart write down TA phone number & email address
 - Explain the teaching assistant’s function in keeping all records of attendance, homework, makeup work and other requirements.

- The TA is also available to help with class work and homework questions. Feel free to call her/him/them for prayer.
- **Go over Student Agreements** Workbook pp. 3-4.
- **Take care of yourself**
 - Say: *Take restroom breaks as needed, stand if you need to, etc.*
 - *We will have a short break at around 8:00.*
- **Journal**
 - Say: *You will probably want to keep a journal for this class as new thoughts are going to come up for you. Keep your journal handy at home, too, so you can easily write down your thoughts. Even the smallest awareness is important!*
- **My Intention**
 - Say: *It is my intention to create such a safe atmosphere for you that you can relax into consciously courting the God of your understanding, walking through your fears to say yes to owning your life. The journey will be different for everyone, and every journey is perfect. In this class you will be met with acceptance, support and unconditional love.*
- **Questions or Comments**
 - Ask: *Are there any questions or comments?*

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. “Tell us your name.”
 - Classes are community-building, and making sure everyone knows each other’s names is imperative. If the class is small, students may only need to say their names for the first couple of weeks. If it is large this practice may be continued each week.
 - Nametags are good!
 2. “Tell us what you hope to get out of this class.”
- Say: *It is always okay to pass instead of sharing, but do say your name so we can get to know you.*

Sharing and Discussion – Turning Toward Love

- **Return to Love** Have volunteers read the Introduction beginning on the first page, “When we were born ...” to xxii.2 ending “ ... the meaning of life.” (xx.ii.2 means page xx.ii paragraph 2)
- Ask: *What does it mean to you, “Love is what we were born with. Fear is what we have learned here.”?*
- *Think of a time in your childhood when something happened, something was said, or you overheard a comment, that began to shape your self-image. Volunteers share.*
- Ask: *Can you think of one way that you have unlearned fear and accepted love back into your heart? Maybe you let go of the belief that you couldn’t do something and moved toward doing it, or you chose to forgive. Volunteers share.*

- Some students will want to talk about their past experiences, and others may not be ready at this point. It is important that everyone feels safe on this deep, personal journey; it is all okay!
- Re-read the portion of p. xxii that says, “*The spiritual journey is the relinquishment – or unlearning – of fear and the acceptance of love back into our hearts. Love is the essential existential fact. It is our ultimate reality and our purpose on earth. To be consciously aware of it, to experience love in ourselves and others, is the meaning of life.*” This is the basis of this class.

Handout “Love ~ The Essential Existential Fact” (meditative CD)

- Pass out the handout, re-read the quote at the top and ask students to sit in quiet contemplation for a few moments before beginning to write, letting their Inner Essence guide their thoughts.

Small group sharing

- After some students have finished writing, ask them to quietly move to the back of the room to meet up with 2 other students to form a group of 3 to share their writing and thoughts.
- Remind them that what is said in the small group remains confidential to those in the small group.
- Let them know that each student has 6-7 minutes to share and ask them to be mindful of the time.
- Let them know that the TA or you will let them know when there are about 3 minutes left so the group can finish up.

Break

- During the break write this quote from the Week 1 title page of the student workbook on the whiteboard: *No one saves us but ourselves. No one can and no one may. We ourselves must walk the path.* – Buddha

Introduction to Experiential

- Ask a student to read the Buddha quote on the whiteboard. Ask: *What does this mean to you?*
 - If it does not come up in the students’ comments about the quote, point out that as children we often had none, or very little, choice as to what happened to us. Now as adults, we do have a choice. It’s up to us as to where we put our focus.

Experiential “Opening Your Heart to the World” (Facilitator guide pp.7-8)

- It is helpful to practice reading “Opening Your Heart to the World” aloud beforehand. It’s amazing how much your intonation and pace of the reading influences how much participants get out of it.

Whole group sharing

- Ask: *What came up for you during the selective attention experiential?*
- *Why do you think we did this experiential?* (We choose where to put our focus, even when we are not consciously doing so. Where we put our focus is creative.)
- *What does our focus have to do with “turning toward love”?* (title of this week’s lesson)
 - *How will you turn towards love this week?* Volunteers share.
- Read *A Return to Love* Introduction p. xxiii paragraph 4 beginning, “Love isn’t material,” through p. xxiv paragraph 2 – the first two sentences, “Love is within us. It cannot be destroyed, but can only be hidden.”
 - Ask: *How will you come out of hiding?* Volunteers share.
 - *Where will you place your focus?* Volunteers share.
- *Any other questions or comments?*

Review Home Study for Week 2

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week’s Student Workbook information p. 16.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 15 as the closing prayer, followed by “And so it is.”

Opening Your Heart to the World

Adapted from *The Art and Practice of Loving* by Frank Andrews, Ph.D.

Selective Attention: Creating your World through Your Attention

Preparing for the experiential

Ask students to get out something to write on and to write with (the “Notes” handouts are perfect), and then set them aside for now. With nothing in their laps to distract them, listen to the following: students may choose to close their eyes for this part, or not.

Read:

A father is sitting on the sofa in the family room next to Elizabeth, who is ten. They are looking at an overturned wastebasket, kitten toys, backpack, games, playing cards, somebody’s lunch bag, scissors, snippets of paper, and two paper ornaments left over from Christmas three months ago. He says to her, “Just look at the litter in this room! It’s shocking, disgraceful!” Elizabeth says, “It looks like love to me.”

It is all a matter of how you approach the world. With your heart open to see and interpret what you find with a heartfelt yes, you can create constant wonder at the joy of living.

As the light of the world, you are like a flashlight with a colored lens, probing through the dark in a vast world of unlimited richness. You see only what you point the flashlight at, and only in the color of the lens you are using. Thus you project onto the world your own attitude or spirit.

As you project love, you experience love. There are several aspects to how you approach and move through an event.

1. What you believe about yourself
2. Where you place your focus in the event
3. Your interpretations and judgments of it

You focus your senses on particular features of the world that are important to you. If you are hungry, all your senses scan for food. If you are scared, all your senses scan for the threat.

Now we are going to practice selective attention – purposely focusing on something to the extent that we don’t see anything else.

Now close your eyes and clear your mind for a minute. (Pause) Then open your eyes and, with full determination, scan everything in sight for **straight lines**. Notice one straight line after another. There may be a few of them or hundreds. As soon as you see a straight line, leave it and look for another. Spend no time on anything else. (Pause for a minute or two) When you have exhausted the straight lines visible to you, close your eyes and rest. (Pause)

The next time you open your eyes, scan for the **color blue**. Notice every spot of blue around, jumping quickly from one to the next. Hold your attention strongly on looking for blue, so nothing distracts you. When you have done blue, rest your eyes again. (Pause)

Now, keeping your eyes closed, become aware of **your body**. Feel the chair under you, pushing up on you and supporting you. (Pause) Scan your entire body for itches. (Pause) Feel the air coming in through your nose and filling your lungs, and feel it go out as your lungs contract. (Pause)

Keeping your eyes closed, go over the surface of your body, feeling how your clothing is caressing and warming you. (Pause) Before you leave the full attention you have given your body, feel gratitude for the way in which it supports you in this lifetime ... this human experience. (Pause)

The world has far more to offer than you will ever be able to experience. Notice as you place your attention in one place, how the rest of the world disappears, how you create your world through selective attention.

When you are ready open your eyes and write your answer the questions:

- During the exercise, did you ever feel distracted? If so, what is that trying to tell you? (Wait 2-3 minutes while people write their answers)
- What did you learn about yourself and how you use selective attention in your daily life? (Wait 3-4 minutes while people write their answers)

Once most students have finished writing (and watching the time) say: *Take about two more minutes to finish your thoughts for now. You may certainly continue at home.*

Week 2 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “Explore Your Fears” handout
- “Hell and Surrender” handout

Class Two: Moving Through Fear

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. Tell us one thing you believe to be true about you.

Sharing and Discussion – Moving Through Fear

- Read p. 5.1-2 (page 5, first and second paragraph) in *A Return to Love* beginning, “What happened to my generation...”
 - Ask: *What does it mean, “We’re afraid this isn’t the right relationship or we’re afraid it is?”* (We’re afraid of failure, we’re afraid to be vulnerable, afraid of commitment.)
- Ask: *What does it mean, “We’re afraid of failure or we’re afraid of success?”* (We’re afraid to take risks, to own our life, to let go of the status quo.)
- Ask: *What does it mean, “We’re afraid of dying young or we’re afraid of growing old?”* (We have forgotten that we are eternal beings. We are afraid of pain, of being alone, of not living life fully and regretting it later).

Introduction to “Explore Your Fears” handout

- In Frank Andrews’ article “Play Life as a Game,” he asks us to explore our fears.
 - He asks us to list the events or conditions that you actually experience fear about and to write out what it is you distrust about yourself or the world that leads to this fear.
 - Right now think of a fear that is active in your life today – it may be one that you learned as a child or that you have developed as an adult. You will explore that fear in this contemplative handout.

Handout “Explore Your Fears” (meditative CD)

- Pass out the handout and read through it before asking if there are questions. Invite students to complete the handout honestly ... from a deep place of honoring this very human emotion and also from a deep place of trusting the God of their understanding.

Small group sharing (30 minutes)

- After some students have finished writing, ask them to quietly move to the back of the room to meet up with 2 other students to form a group of 3 to share their writing and thoughts about fear.
- They will take this handout, as well as the workbook exercise pp. 21-23 from “Love and Fear” by Iyanla Vanzant.
- Remind them that what is said in the small group remains confidential to those in the small group.
- Let them know each person has 5-7 minutes to share.
- Fear is certainly a call for prayer! Tell them that you will signal each group when there are 5 minutes left, at which time prayer requests can be taken. Each person in the group will hold the others, as well as themselves, in prayer this week.

Break

Discussion on Hell and God

- Say: *Chapter 1 was on Hell, in which the subject of fear was introduced and explored.*
- *Chapter 2 was called “God,” in which Marianne Williamson says, “To surrender to God means to let go and just love. By affirming that love is our priority in a situation, we actualize the power of God.” (p. 20.4)*
 - *What does that mean? How can you actually surrender to God as love in the middle of a life circumstance? Encourage sharing of very real events – how students actually held love in the situation. A suggestion might be to have them ask themselves, “What would Love do now?”*

Handout “Hell and Surrender” (meditative CD)

- Go over the handout and then ask students to spend a few minutes letting the answers come to the surface for them as they complete the handout.

Whole group sharing

- Ask for volunteers to share their insights about hell and surrender.
- Ask: *What does hell and surrender have to do with “Moving through Fear”?* (title of this week’s lesson)
- *Any other questions or comments?*

Reflections on the reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Review Home Study for Week 3

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week’s Student Workbook information p. 33.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 32 as the closing prayer, followed by “And so it is.”

Week 3 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*

Class Three: Loving the Now

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. Tell us one way you took care of yourself this week.

Chapter 3 Sharing and Discussion – “You”

- Say: *Chapter 3 in A Return to Love is entitled “You.” It is filled with profound reminders of who you truly are.*
- *Part of your homework was to be aware of which parts of the reading you were most drawn to and why. You were to meditate and journal on each throughout the week.*
- *What came up for you? Please share your insights with us.* If time permits, have each person share at least one insight from this chapter.
- Points to discuss if they didn’t come up during the discussion:
 - **Holy Spirit** p. 37.1, beginning “The power of the mind is itself neutral.” Read it aloud. Say: *How do you feel about this? It’s all well and good if your life is going along nicely, but what about the difficulties and challenges? (We must take responsibility or we become victims.)*

- **Sin** p. 37.3, beginning, “Since only God exists ...” Read it aloud. Ask: *What is sin? Think of a time when you felt as if you had sinned (or someone told you that you had sinned). How does the idea of “missing the mark” change your perception?* Be ready to share a personal story if needed.
- **Surrender** p. 39.2, beginning “The only thing lacking in any situation ...” Read it aloud. Emphasize the following, “Dear God, I am willing to see this differently. Surrendering a situation to God means surrendering to Him (It) our *thoughts* about it.” Ask students to get out their journal and write about a current situation in which they can surrender any negative thoughts, choosing not to “instinctively respond from fear” and being “responsible enough to ask for help.” After a few moments, ask for volunteers to share.
- **Workbook Say:** *After the break we will do some work with the “Loving the Now” article by Frank Andrews on workbook pp. 35-38.*
 - *Are there any other questions or comments about any of the other workbook excerpts and writings?* (Give students time to look through their workbook for portions of articles that were significant for them.)

Break

- During the break write the following on the whiteboard: “What love *should* look like vs. saying yes to what *is*.”

Small group sharing “Loving the Now” article

- Point out the sentence on the whiteboard and ask if there are any questions about what it means – it is to be the beginning focus of the sharing about the “Loving the Now” article by Frank Andrews on pp. 35-38, followed by their answers to the questions asked in the article.
- Have students break into groups of 3-4 to share their insights.
- Let them know that each person has 5-7 minutes to share.

Whole group sharing

- If time allows, practice the very last exercise in the article as a whole group. Have everyone close their eyes and remember something that they have appreciated in the last ten seconds. Give them a moment to write their thoughts.
- If time permits do it again. And again! Cultivating the power of appreciation is powerful and fun!
- Ask for volunteers to share.
- Ask: *What does it have to do with “Loving the Now”?* (title of this week’s lesson)
- *Any other questions or comments?*

Review Home Study for Week 4

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week's Student Workbook information p. 49.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 48 as the closing prayer, followed by "And so it is."

Week 4 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “What God’s Love Means to Me” handout

Class Four: Surrendering to Love

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. In what way did you accept yourself, exactly as you are, this week?

Discussion – “Surrender”

- Say: *This week’s topic in A Return to Love is “Surrender.” You did some written work on it in conjunction with the article “Living the Serenity Prayer.”*
- Ask: *How many of you were already familiar with the Serenity Prayer? Who will tell us about their background with it or perhaps an incident in which they used it as a tool to help them through a challenging time? Volunteers share.*

Small groups

- Say: *At this time we will break into groups of 4 to discuss your revelations and insights. Try to get into a group of people you do not know well.*
- *Surrender is a big topic, with lots to say. You have 30 minutes; please make sure that those who speak up easily make time for those who tend to be quiet to talk. If you are one who tends to stay quiet, please use this time to stretch a bit out of your comfort zone and let your voice be heard.*
- *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left.*
- *Are there any questions?*

Whole group sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share insights about surrender in your life.*
- When everyone has finished, ask: *Does anyone have any final questions, comments or revelations that may have come up as others were sharing? Surrender is a very big topic!*

Break

Guided Meditation “What God’s Love Means to Me” (meditative CD)

- Pass out “What God’s Love Means to Me” handout, read the quote at the top and ask students to set it aside in preparation for a guided mediation.
- Guide students through the mediation using the “What God’s Love Means to Me” guided meditation notes on pp. 19-20 of the facilitator guide.
- Read slowly, with plenty of time in the silence.
- Give students time to write or draw their responses to the mediation.
- Afterward ask: *What came up for you? What does God’s love mean to you?* Volunteers share.
- Remind students that they can take this feeling of deep love into their willingness to surrender as their faith continues to grow.

Review Home Study for Week 5

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week’s Student Workbook information p. 68.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 67 as the closing prayer, followed by “And so it is.”

What God's Love Means to Me

A Guided Meditation

Read:

In this sacred space, take a moment to get comfortable in your chair.

Take a deep cleansing breath in, exhale and relax.

As your breath slows and deepens, notice any tension you are holding in your body and gently let it go.

Know that you are in a safe, calm place.

You are peaceful and you are loved.

And knowing this absolutely, without a doubt, let your mind wander to a place deep within your self. Go to the place where Spirit resides within you. The place that is pure, perfect and complete.

As your eyes gaze upon this place, they become struck with the brilliant light of beauty.

As your ears listen to the rhythm of this place, they are enchanted with joy.

As your heart embraces this place, it becomes filled with the essence of pure loving-kindness.

As your body succumbs to this place, it becomes relaxed in perfect peace and harmony.

Immerse yourself completely in this place now. *(Allow a few moments of silence)*

And as you leave any and all fear, worry and anxiety far, far behind, notice what it feels like to surrender completely to Spirit's embrace. To feel the warmth of Spirit's energy wrapped around you and flowing freely through you. To trust knowingly and completely the path of your highest good that Spirit reveals to you through your own inner guidance.

Notice what it feels like to be loved by a God that adores you completely and forever. *(Allow a few moments of silence)*

What does this love look like? *(1-2 minutes)*

What does it sound like? *(1-2 minutes)*

Where are you? *(1-2 minutes)*

Who are you with? *(1-2 minutes)*

What are you doing? *(1-2 minutes)*

What is it like to just be? *(1-2 minutes)*

What is it like to be Divinely loved? *(Allow 3-4 minutes of silence)*

Know that the glorious magnificence of the energy you have touched is within you, through you, and everywhere around you, always.

Know that you are a powerful, creative being, and the love you have envisioned is yours in any way you desire it to be.

And when you are ready, bring yourself back to this room, open your eyes and either write or draw about your experience.

Week 5 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “Thank You Life” handout

Class Five: Forgiving What Is

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. In what way is life a miracle to you?

Discussion – Miracles and Forgiveness

- Say: *Chapter 5 is called “Miracles” and the very first topic is forgiveness. What does forgiveness have to do with miracles?*
 - You may want to read p. 65.1-65.2 beginning, “Miracles occur naturally as expressions of love.” Forgiveness is an expression of love which often occurs when we change the way we hold an experience in our mind.
- Ask: *Why is it important “to constantly seek a greater capacity for love and forgiveness within ourselves.”? (p. 69) (When we can forgive ourselves its easier to forgive others.)*
- *What is “selective remembering”? (p. 69) “...A conscious decision to remember only loving thoughts and let go of any fearful ones.”) In your day-to-day life,*

- how challenging is this? When are you most able to consciously let go? (when you are having a good day, well rested, at peace with yourself)*
- *Why is forgiveness a gift to yourself? (You are the one who is released from the pain of the past.)*

Small group discussion – “The Gift of Forgiveness” exercise

- *Say: You did some written work on it in conjunction with the article “The Gift of Forgiveness” by Debbie Ford.*
- *At this time we will break into groups of 4 to discuss your revelations and insights. Try to get into a group of people you do not know well.*
- *You did a lot of work with this exercise! You have 30 minutes; please make sure that those who speak up easily make time for those who tend to be quiet to talk. If you are one who tends to stay quiet, please use this time to stretch a bit out of your comfort zone and let your voice be heard.*
- *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left, and that might be a good time to take prayer requests.*
- *Are there any questions?*

Whole group sharing

- *Say: I’d like to go around the room and have each person share whatever you choose about forgiveness.*
- *When everyone has finished, ask: Does anyone have any final questions, comments or insights that may have come up as others were sharing?*

Reflections on the reading

- *Ask: Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Break

“Thank You Life” Forgiveness and Gratitude Contemplation (meditative CD)

- *Pass out the “Thank You Life” handout and then ask students to set it aside until after the contemplation – they will have time to journal their thoughts.*
- *Follow the directions on the “Thank You Life” Forgiveness and Gratitude Contemplation on facilitator workbook pp. 24-26*
- *As students are writing their thoughts, write the following on the whiteboard:*
 1. *How does gratitude foster forgiveness? (Look for the good – release negativity)*
 2. *How does gratitude foster miracles? (Opens up greater possibilities)*

- Ask students to contemplate and write about these two questions at the end of their journaling.

Whole group discussion

- Ask for volunteers to share any thoughts they might have with the group.
- At the end have each person share something they are grateful for in this moment.

Review Home Study for Week 6

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week's Student Workbook information p. 85.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 84 as the closing prayer, followed by "And so it is."

Thank You Life

Forgiveness and Gratitude Contemplation

Read:

Letter to God Say: Take a few moments to reread your letter to God (workbook p. 76) in which you asked for help in releasing the prison of your resentments, grudges and disappointments, and sit in silence as you feel the Presence of the Divine within and all around you, supporting your decision. (2-3 minutes of silence).

Feel how incredibly loved you are (pause). You are here by Divine appointment. You are bringing the gift of Spirit to this time and space in a way that only you can do. You matter in this world. (pause) You have a purpose. (pause)

Ernest Holmes says, “Praise and thanksgiving are salutary. They not only lighten the consciousness, lifting it out of sadness and depression; they elevate consciousness to the point of acceptance. They are attitudes of the Divine Presence, the Divine abundance and the Divine givingness.”

Allow yourself now to become receptive to praise and thanksgiving ... to be in a full, receptive state of gratitude. (pause)

And now listen to the following with a heart full to overflowing with gratitude for who you are, exactly as you are. Whatever came before this moment contributed to who you are today, and who you are today is a beautiful thing.

Read “Thank You Life” slowly.

Thank You Life

Thank you for this breath
Thank you for this inhale
Thank you for this exhale
Thank you for this Life

Thank you Heart
Thank you for this pounding
Thank you for this pulsing
Thank you for this Love

Thank you feet
Thank you for this walk
Thank you for this run
Thank you for the Dancing

Thank you Eyes
Thank you for the Sunrise
Thank you for the Sunset
Thank you for all the Colors

Thank you Ears
Thank you for The Music
Thank you for the Rhythm
And Thank you for the Stillness

Thank you Hands
Thank you for the Caressing
Thank you for the Clapping
And Thank you for the Holding

Thank you Mouth
Thank you for the nourishment
Thank you for the Wine
Thank you for the Kisses

Thank you Nose
Thank you for the Flowers
Thank you for the Pines
Thank you for the Sniffles

Thank you Arms and Shoulders
Thank you for the Carrying
Thank you for the Burdening
And Thank you for the Hugging

Thank you Voice
Thank you for the Expression
Thank you for the Word
Thank you for the Gift of Creation

Thank you for this Day
Thank you for the Light
Thank you for the Stars
Thank you for the Night

Thank you Self
Thank you for the Laughter
Thank you for the Play
Thank you for You

Thank you for the Emotions
Thank you for the Joys
Thank you for the Tears and Sorrows
Thank you for the Richness

Thank you for the Abundance that is.
Thank you for the Abundance that is given.
Thank you for the so many experiences and so many things
Thank you for this Dance.

Thank you Life

By Gary van Warmerdam

And now, with a heart filled with gratitude, take a few moments to journal your feelings, thoughts and insights on the “Thank You Life” handout.

Week 6 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “Ten Things I Like About Myself” handout

Class Six: Choosing to Love

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. How does the Power Within bless your life?
 3. How do you, in turn, bless others? (from Week 6 Spiritual Practice)

Discussion – Relationships

- Say: *Chapter 6 is called “Relationships” and one of the first topics is again forgiveness.*
 - Read p. 93.1 beginning, “A Course in Miracles ...”
 - Ask: *What does this paragraph mean to you?*
 - *Why is it so difficult to follow the path of the Holy Spirit, which is our Truth, instead of our ego? (Our ego is the part of us that knows our fears and shame and reminds us of them. It is often difficult to remember our perfection when we are sitting in our human-ness.)*
 - *Why is it so hard to accept other people as they are? Why is it so hard to do the same for ourselves? (We tend to judge others and ourselves – it’s our ego at work again.)*

- *It's a choice to love.* (p. 101) *Why is it sometimes so hard?* (It is often easier to judge than it is to accept. It is sometimes easier to be negative rather than positive. It is easy to get caught up in race consciousness – middle of teaching symbol – rather than choosing Love – top of teaching symbol.)
- *What other concepts in this chapter were significant for you and why?* As students share ask them to point out the page number so everyone can turn to it.

Small group discussion – “Compassion” exercise

- Say: *You did some deep written work on it in conjunction with the article “Compassion” by Frank Andrews pp. 92-96.*
- Put on whiteboard: “What does compassion mean to you and what are you going to do about it?”
- *At this time we will break into groups of 4 to discuss your revelations and insights gained from your work from this article. I'd like you to also contemplate and discuss your answers to the questions on the whiteboard (read them). Any questions?*
- *Again, try to get into a group of people you do not know well.*
- *You have 30 minutes; please make sure that those who speak up easily make time for those who tend to be quiet to talk. If you are one who tends to stay quiet, please use this time to stretch a bit out of your comfort zone and let your voice be heard.*
- *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left, and that might be a good time to take prayer requests.*
- *Are there any questions?*

Whole group sharing

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share what compassion means to you and what you intend to do about it.*
- When everyone has finished, ask: *Does anyone have any final questions, comments or insights that may have come up as others were sharing?*

Reflections on the reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Break

“Ten Things I Like About Myself” handout (meditative CD)

- Pass out the “Ten Things I Like About Myself” handout
- Go over it with them, reminding them to freely and easily look for the qualities within themselves they admire. If they have difficulty getting started

say: *If asked, what would your friends or loved ones say about the qualities that make you special?*

- As most people finish up say: *Take about 2 more minutes ...*

Whole group sharing

- At the end have each person stand up and read all ten things they like about themselves – remember, no playing small!
- After each person shares everyone enthusiastically says, “And so it is!”

Review Home Study for Week 7

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week’s Student Workbook information p. 102.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 101 as the closing prayer, followed by “And so it is.”

Week 7 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “God’s Will” handout

Class Seven: Owning Our Life

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. Name
 2. What one part of your dream are you living today? (from this week’s Spiritual Practice of contemplation and journaling, “What is my dream?”)

Discussion – God’s Will

- Say: *For many people the idea of God’s will is scary. What if it doesn’t match what I want to do?*
 - Read *A Return to Love* p. 181.2-181.4, beginning, “Some people have said ..”
 - Ask: *Does this help change your mind about trusting that God’s will for you will bring you to your greatest happiness?*
 - *Do you have hesitations in believing it?*

- *Where do you think your resistance comes from? What might help change it?*
- Encourage volunteer responses after each question.
- **Our Deepest Fear**
 - Read *A Return to Love* p. 190.4-191.1 beginning, “As I interpret the Course ...”
 - *What does this mean to you? How does it show up in your life?*
- **Money**
 - Read *A Return to Love* p. 192.3 “*Do what you love. Do what makes your heart sing. And never do it for the money. Don’t go to work to make money; go to work to spread joy.*”
 - Ask: *How did you feel when you first read those statements? What questions did they bring up? What old beliefs (probably left over from family values) did they bring up?* (see *A Return to Love* p. 196.2, beginning, “The Bible says it’s harder ...”
 - Have students read *A Return to Love* p. 197.4-199.3 Say: *Here we are again surrendering to God’s will for us, this time around money. What is scary about it? What is the benefit?*

“God’s Will” handout (meditative CD)

- Quickly go over the handout and ask if there are any questions.

Dyads

- As students finish the handout, ask them to quietly move to the back of the room to partner up with the next person who finishes to discuss the handout, as well as anything else in this week’s reading that had relevance for them.

Break

Small group discussion – “The Privilege of Owning Yourself” exercise

- Say: *Everything changes, all the time, and that includes us. In the article “The Privilege of Owning Yourself” by Jane Beach, you looked at how you are changing today.*
- *At this time we will break into groups of 3 to discuss your revelations and insights gained from your work from this article.*
- *You have 30 minutes; please make sure that everyone has an equal time to speak.*
- *I will let you know when there are 5 minutes left, and that might be a good time to take prayer requests.*
- *Are there any questions?*

Whole group sharing (if time)

- Say: *I'd like to go around the room and have each person share one insight about themselves as a result of this discussion or any other discussion tonight.*

Reflections on the reading

- Ask: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Break

Review Home Study for Week 8

- As you share the Home Study for next week, have students turn to the last page of the week's Student Workbook information p. 124.
- Guide them through their Home Study, answering questions they might have.

Closing

- Student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 123 as the closing prayer, followed by "And so it is."

Week 8 Teaching Agenda

Pre-class Checklist:

- Whiteboard, markers
- Name tags, markers
- Extra pens and “Notes” handouts (3-hole punched) on table at door entrance – available each week for general note-taking
- Candles, flowers, colorful Post-it notes for marking special pages in textbook or workbook, colored pencils and crayons (make sure colored pencils are sharpened)
- Meditation CD, CD player
- Chime to call students back from small groups
- Facilitator copy of *A Return to Love*
- “The ABC’s of Happiness” handout
- “Living My Dream” handout

Class Eight: Being the Dream

Evocation

Introductions / Sharing

- Write on the whiteboard:
 1. “Name
 2. In what way have you lived God’s will for you this week?”

Discussion – Happiness

- Say: *A Return to Love* says, “*The key to happiness is the decision to be happy.*” p. 271
 - Ask: *What does happiness look like in a challenging situation? (stay peaceful, know it’s all going to work out, ability to be centered and make better decisions)*
 - Ask for volunteers to share when they have been able to be happy/okay/peaceful in a challenging situation. Be ready to give a personal example.

- *How does happiness affect health?* (What we think about manifests in our body)
 - *Has anyone had an experience of improved health because of a change in attitude?* Be ready to give a personal example.
- Read *A Return to Love* p. 272.1, beginning “But we need support...”
 - Ask: *Why do we need support in feeling our positive feelings?* (It is the experience of genuine emotion of any kind that the ego resists – p. 272.1. Also, sometimes others resist our happiness – they expect us to be upset, disappointed, etc.)
- Ask the following questions:
 - *What have you done in the last **month** that brought you happiness?* Give people a moment to think of an answer and then go around the room – everyone answers (emphasize doing this quickly)
 - *What have you done in the last **week** that brought you happiness?* Go around the room – everyone answers.
 - *What have you done in the last **day** that brought you happiness?* Go around the room – everyone answers.
 - *What have you done in the last **hour** that brought you happiness?* Go around the room – everyone answers.
- *Happiness is a choice. It is clear that we are choosing it!*

Small groups: “The ABC’s of Happiness” handout (meditative CD)

- This exercise is fun! Go over the handout quickly
- Break up into groups of 4 or 5. The purpose of the group is twofold: 1) If you are completely stuck on a letter, you can ask the group what they came up with. 2) When everyone is done, everyone shares their ABC list.

Reflections on the reading

- Say: *Are there any other comments or questions about your reading, either in the workbook or the textbook?*

Break Light desserts are served and enjoyed!

“Living My Dream” handout (meditative CD)

- Say: *As this class comes to a close, this is the perfect opportunity to look back to see how far you’ve come.*
- Go over the handout and give the students time to complete it.

Whole group sharing

- Say: *Please share one of your answers with the whole group.*
- If time, go around again and ask them to share another answer.

Closing

- Holding hands in a circle, one student reads the prayer by Ernest Holmes on workbook page 140, followed directly by:
- Say: *Think of one thing that you absolutely know is true.*
- *I will say what I know to be true, and then I will squeeze the hand of the person on my right. They will say what they know to be true, and then they will squeeze the hand of the person on their right. We will keep going around until everyone has spoken and it comes back to me.*
- Once everyone has spoken say: *Together, with great love and gratitude, we affirm these Truths for ourselves and each other by saying, 'And so it is.'*
- Joyous hugs all around!

The following pages contain the handouts.

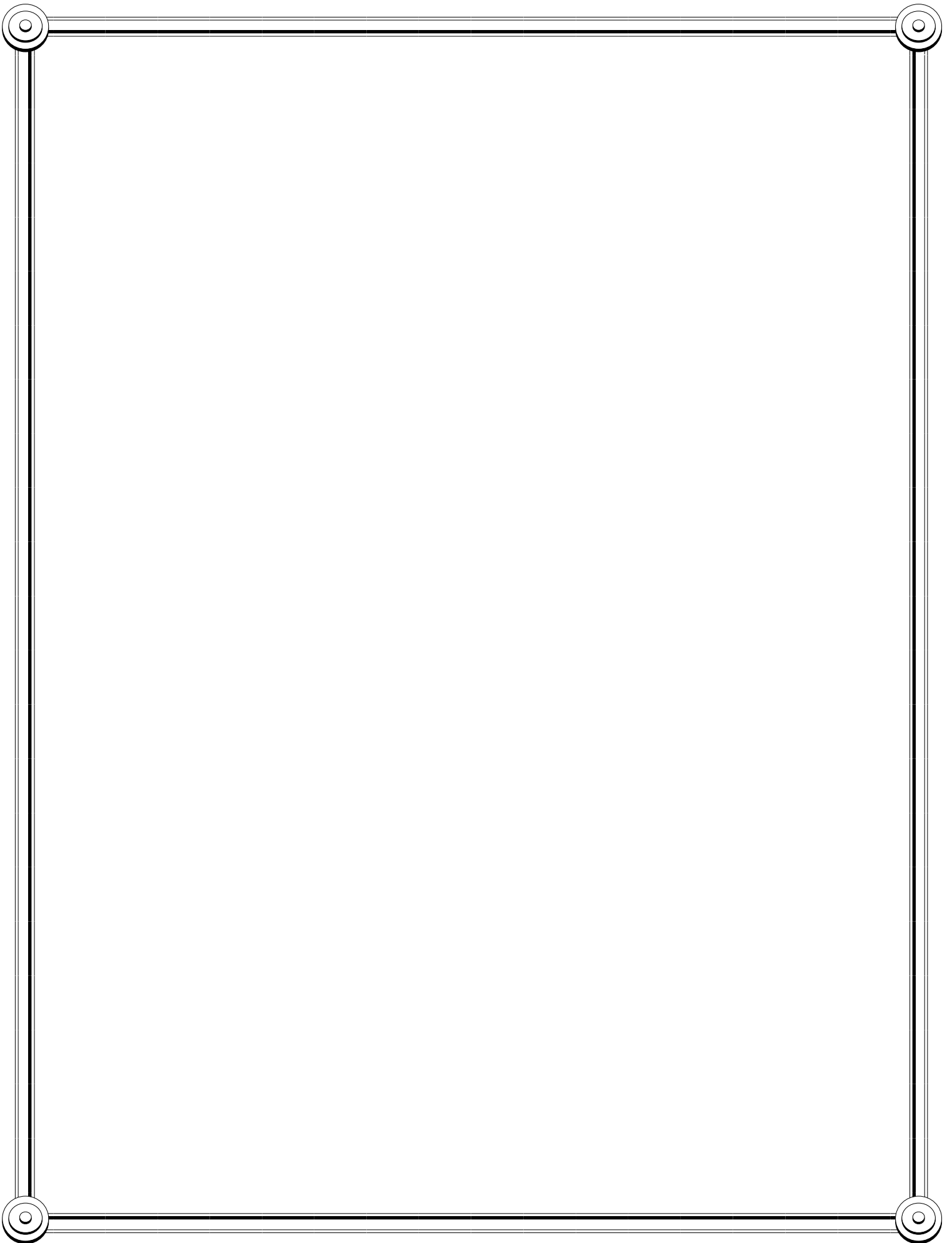
Love ~ The Essential Existential Fact

Love is what we were born with. Fear is what we have learned here. The spiritual journey is the relinquishment – or unlearning – of fear and the acceptance of love back into our hearts. Love is the essential existential fact. It is our ultimate reality and our purpose on earth. To be consciously aware of it, to experience love in ourselves and others, is the meaning of life.

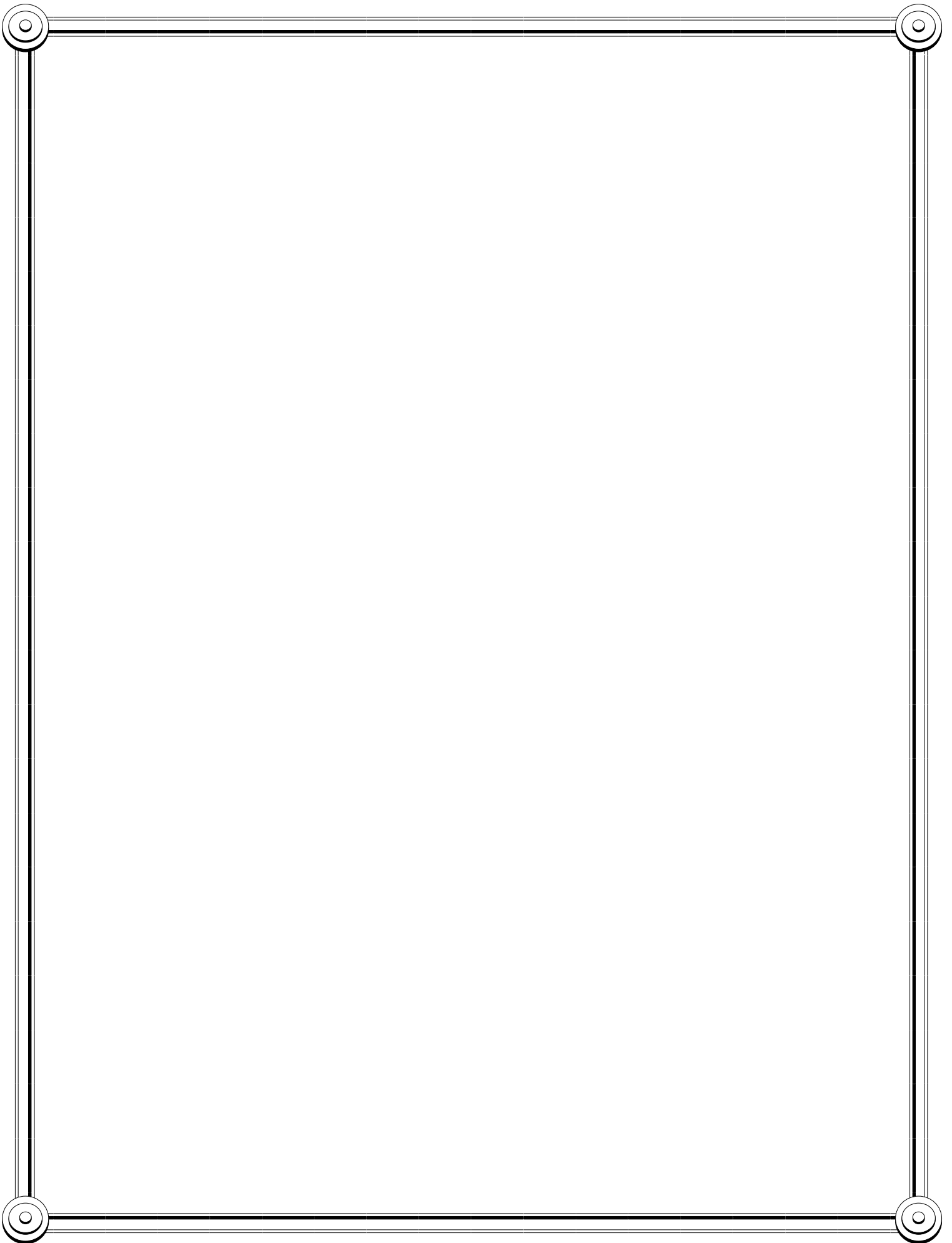
A Return to Love p. xxii

In what area(s) of your life did you learn fear?

How have you “unlearned” fear and accepted love back into your heart?



Notes



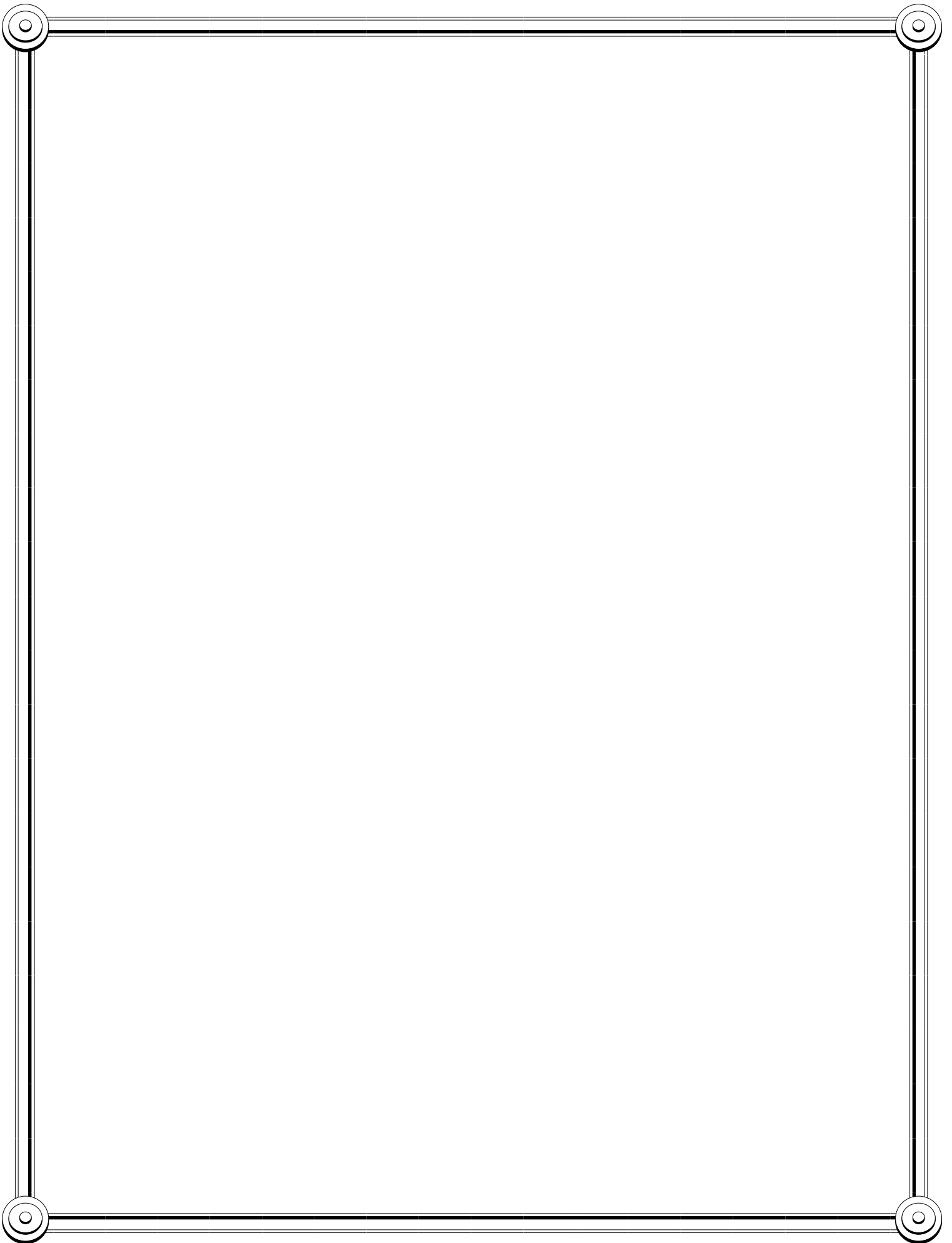
Explore Your Fears

What do you actually experience fear about?

What is it you distrust about yourself or the world that leads to this fear?

What would it take for you to trust what you do not trust now?

What actions could you take that would make it easier to trust?



Hell and Surrender

Hell We're just afraid, period... We're afraid of failure or we're afraid of success. We're afraid of dying young or we're afraid of growing old. We're more afraid of life than we are of death.

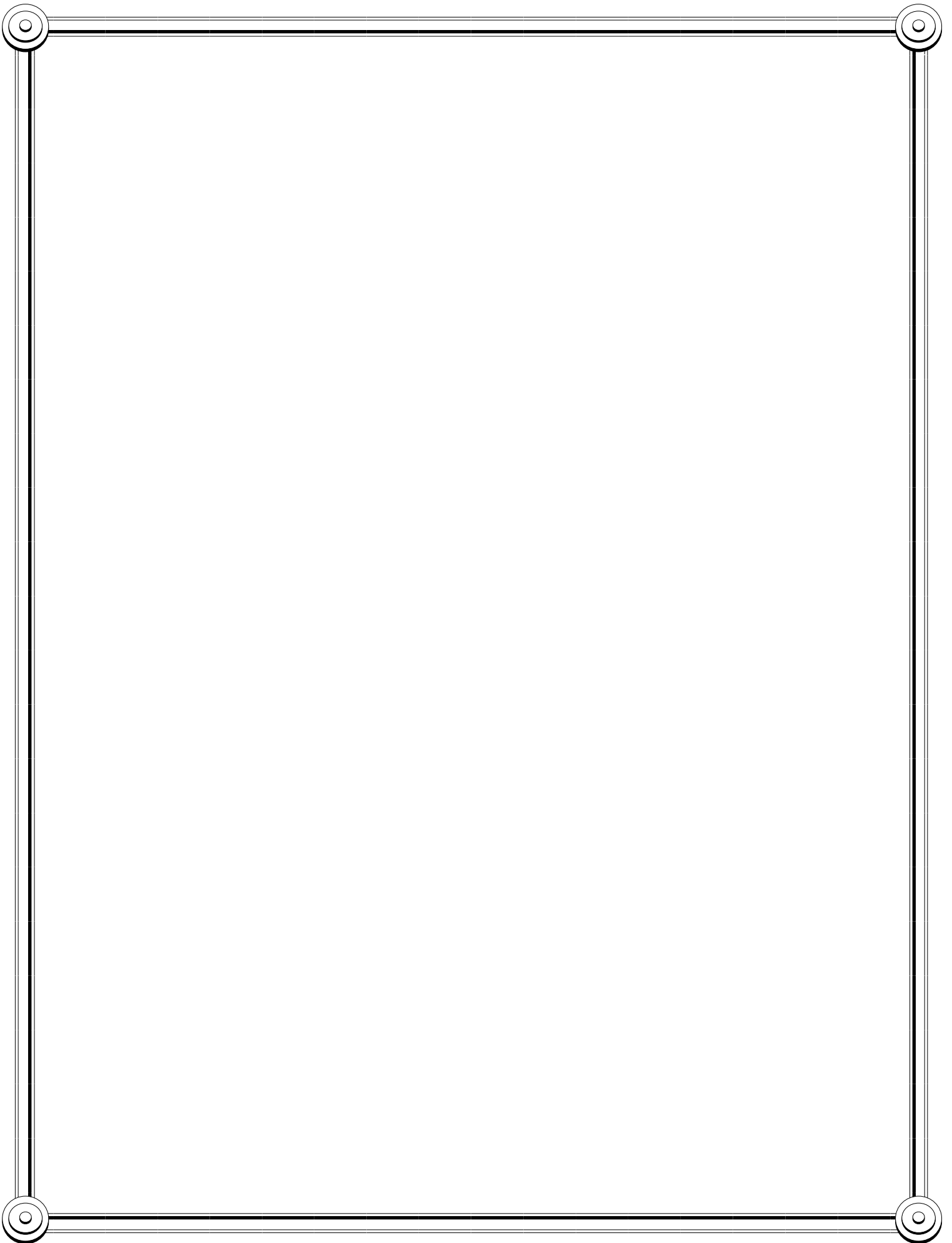
A Return to Love p. 5

What does hell mean to you?

Surrender How ironic. You spend your whole life resisting the notion that there's someone out there smarter than you are, and then all of a sudden you're so relieved to know it's true. All of a sudden, you're not too proud to ask for help. That's what it means to surrender to God.

A Return to Love p. 13

What does surrender mean to you?



What God's Love Means to Me

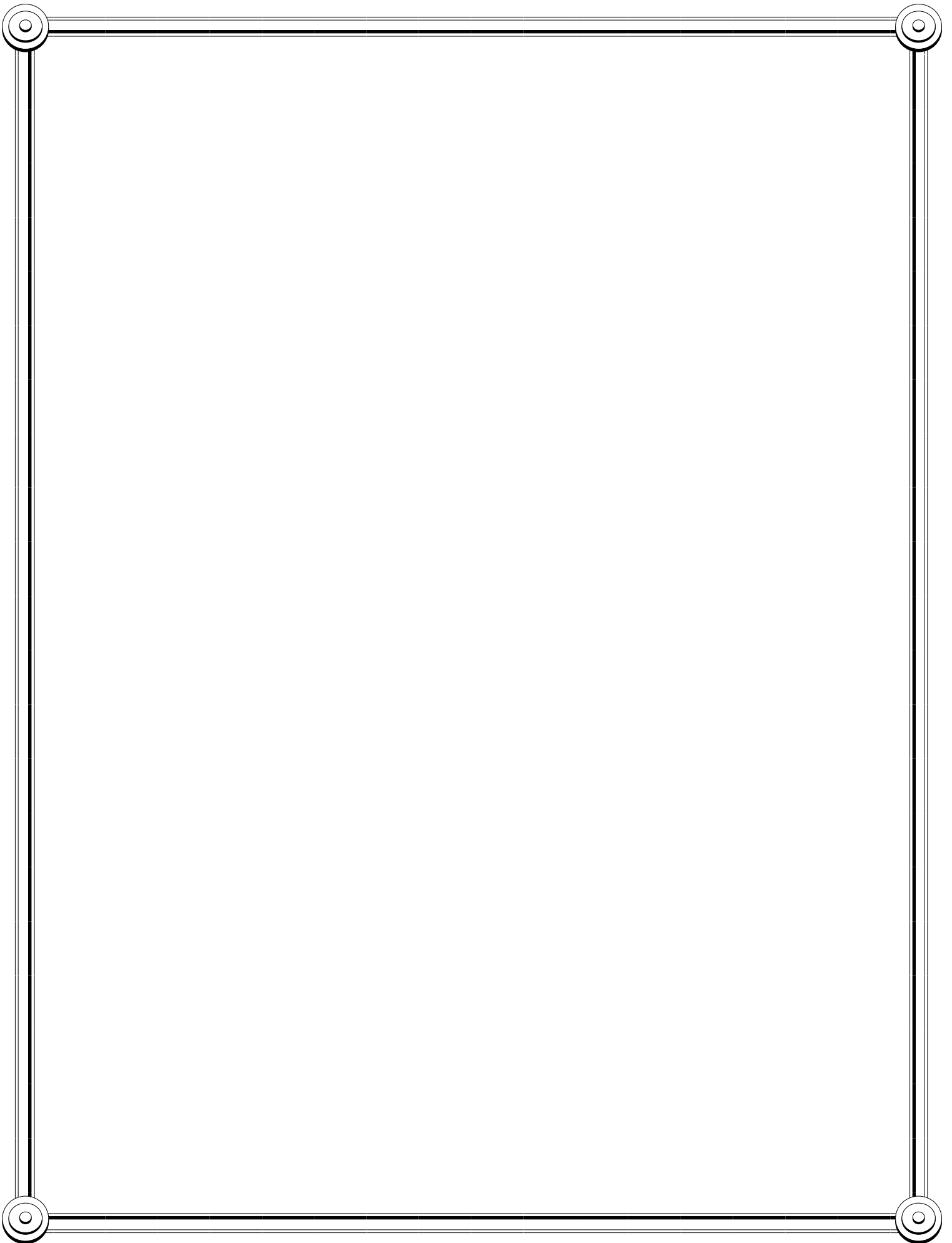
What if we truly believed that there is a God – a beneficent order to things, a force that's holding things together without our conscious control? What if we could see, in our daily lives, the working of that force? What if we believed it loved us somehow, and cared for us, and protected us? What if we believed we could afford to relax?

A Return to Love p. 51

Thank You Life Contemplation

“Praise and thanksgiving are salutary. They not only lighten the consciousness, lifting it out of sadness and depression; they elevate consciousness to the point of acceptance. They are attitudes of the Divine Presence, the Divine abundance and the Divine givingness.”

Ernest Holmes



Ten Things I Like About Myself

“The fundamental change will occur with the change of mind in the thinker.”

A Course in Miracles

Our primary relationship in life is with ourselves. Take this time to see yourself openly and honestly and come up with ten things you like about yourself. It is not time to play small! When you experience yourself the way you experience someone you love and admire, you become your own best companion.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

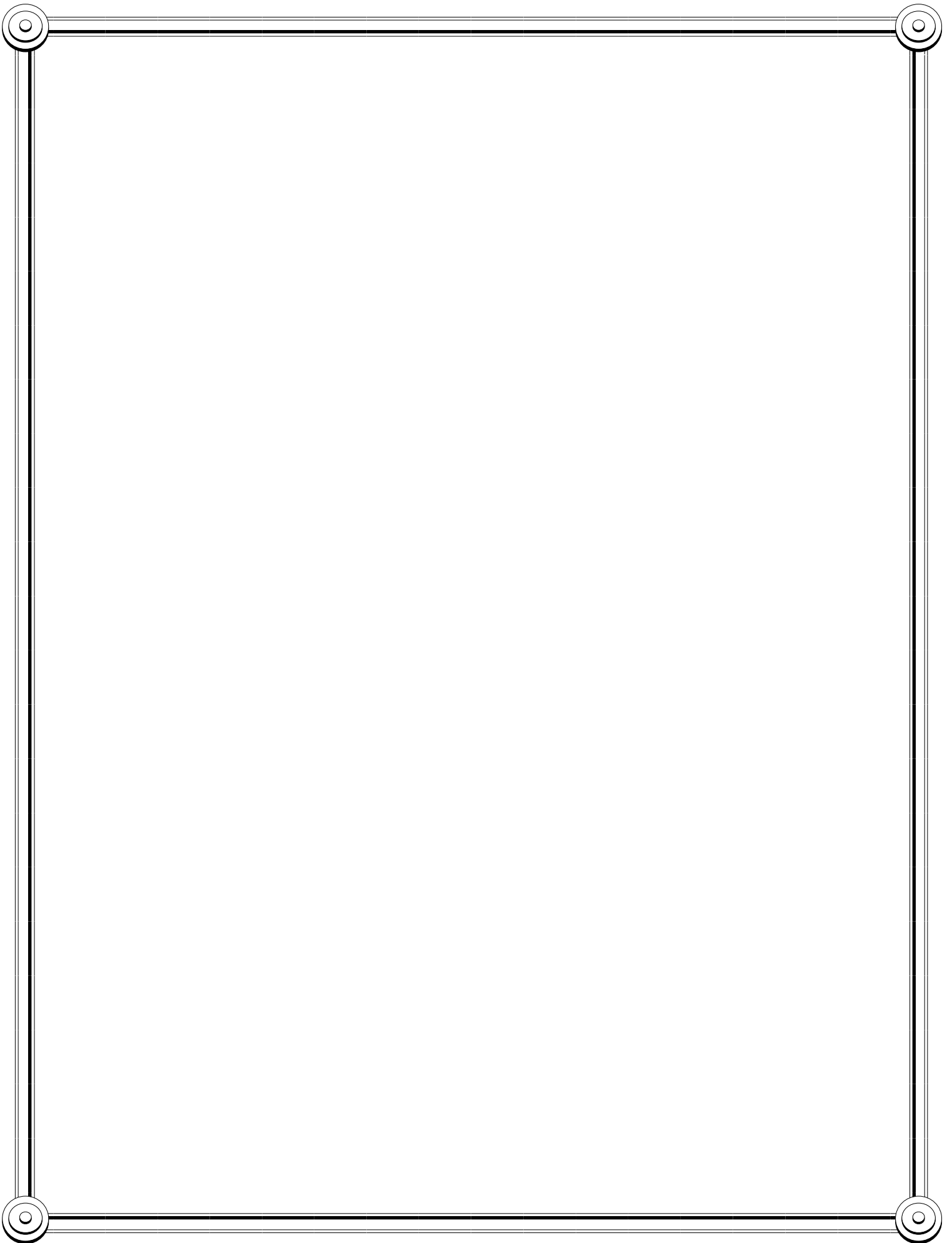
6.

7.

8.

9.

10.



God's Will

Today, to what extent am I willing to follow God's will for me?

What am I actually willing to do to follow God's will for me in the area of career / creative expression?

What am I actually willing to do to follow God's will for me in the area of my finances?

Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented and fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There's nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We were born to manifest the glory of God that is within us. It is not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

- Marianne Williamson

What does this mean for me today?

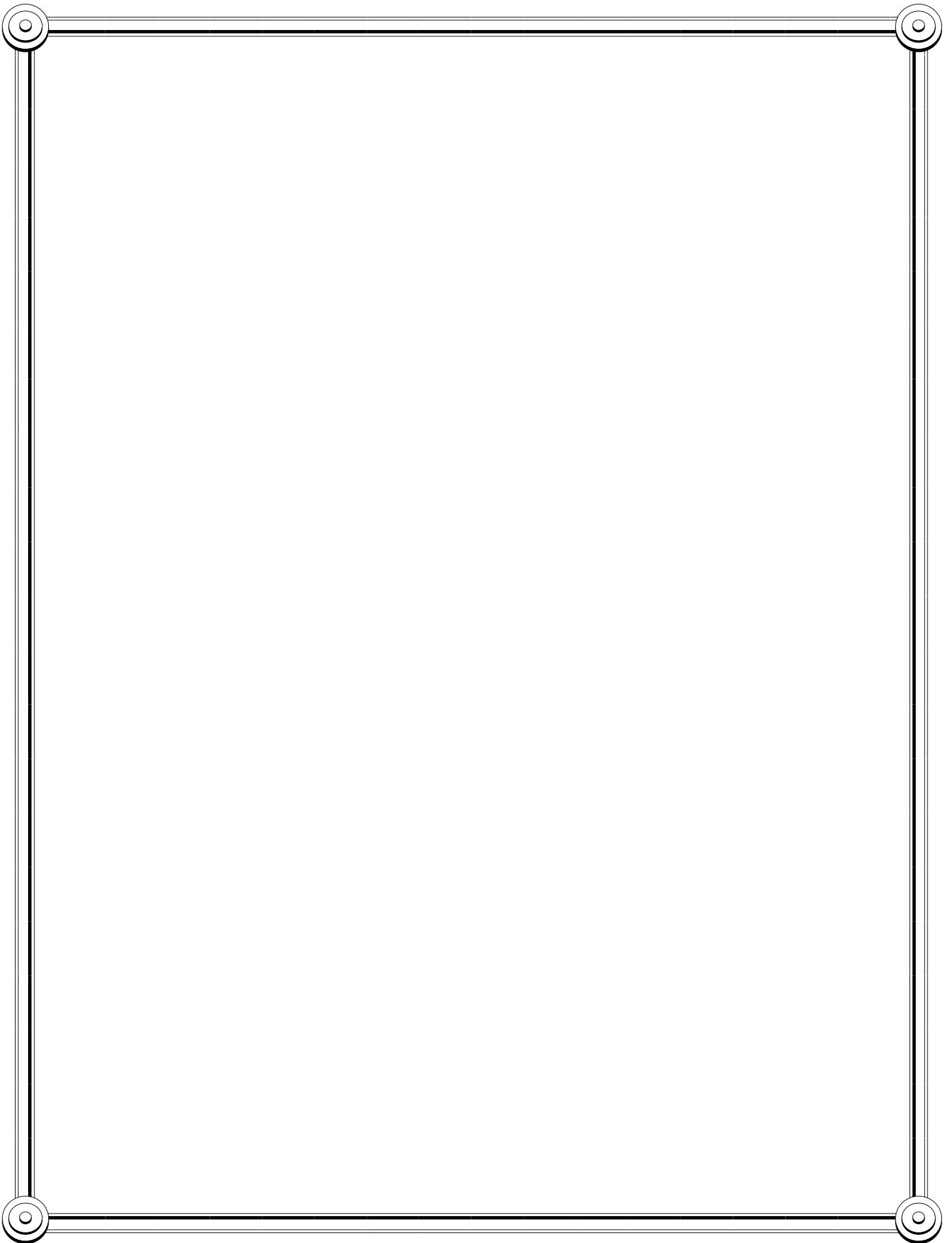
Living My Dream

During the course of this class:

How has my relationship with the Divine changed?

How has my relationship with myself changed?

How has my relationship with life changed? How am I living the dream of my life?



The ABC's of Happiness

It is not only our right, but in a way, our responsibility to be happy. God doesn't provide any of us with happiness that is meant for us alone. When God sends us happiness, he does so in order that we might then stand up more fully in the world on His behalf.

Happiness is a sign that we have accepted God's will.

A Return to Love p. 275

One way to cultivate happiness is by seeing miracles everywhere. Make an alphabetical list of things that make you happy (and are certainly miraculous!). Begin with the letter A ...

A

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

I

J



K

L

M

N

O

P

Q

R

S

T

U

V

W

X

Y

Z