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A Return  
to Love

**Marianne Williamson**

# ***A Return to Love***

***Reflections on the Principles of A COURSE IN MIRACLES***

***Marianne Williamson***

*“Be not afraid, but let your world be lit by miracles.”*

—A Course in Miracles

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*For both my fathers,  
who art in Heaven.*

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## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

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Thanks to every person who has attended my lectures since I began giving them.

Thanks to my parents for all they've given me, and to my daughter for bringing a sweetness to my life that soars way beyond words.

And most of all, thanks to all the many people who have read *A Return to Love* since it was first published and shared with me such powerful testimony of its value their lives. Their support for my efforts means more to me than I can express on this page.

## **FORWARD TO THE NEW EDITION**

*A Return of Love* has had a life of its own, as does any book. An author is like a mother who brings a child into the world and then watches it live its own life story.

This particular book has had a wonderful life so far, and I have been privileged to receive countless testimonials to its positive effect on readers. Because I am not the author of *A Course in Miracles* but merely an interpreter of its principles, I cannot take credit for the best things about *Return to Love*. The ideas in the Course had, and continue to have, a miraculous effect on my own life, and thus I understand the excitement that others feel upon coming across “miracles” for the first time.

I’m the older than I was when I wrote this book, and in some ways I am less innocent. I have tasted more of love’s oppositions. Yet having seen as much as I have now seen of the world’s resistance to the ways of love, I realize more deeply than ever the responsibility which each of us has to embrace it more fully and express it effectively. Hatred is the spiritual malignancy of our species and, like any other form of cancer, does its most terrible work not outwardly but within us. The fear behind it literally eats us alive, destroying minds, bodies, cultures, nations. External remedies can manage its effects, but only love has the power to undo it.

Undo it we must. From foreign wars to domestic catastrophes, our work is the work of casting fear from the world. We do this not only to serve ourselves but, most important, to serve our children. They shall inherit what

we bequeath to them, and there is no greater gift to future generations than that we do the work God has asked us to do: love one another, that the world might be made right.

Fear unchecked grows exponentially. Love poured forth has the power to remove it. Thus is the power of God in our lives. If *A Return to Love* makes one iota of difference in anyone's ability to experience that power, then I am exceedingly glad I wrote it. I wish you miracles. I wish you love.

Marianne Williamson  
January 1996

## **PREFACE**

I grew up in a middle-class Jewish family, laced with the magical overtones of an eccentric father. When I was thirteen, in 1965, he took me to Saigon to show me what war was. The Vietnam War was beginning to rev up and he wanted me to see bullet holes firsthand. He didn't want the military-industrial complex to eat my brain and convince me war was okay.

My grandfather was very religious and sometimes I would go to synagogue with him on Saturday mornings. When the ark was opened during the service, he would bow and begin to cry. I would cry too, but I don't know whether I was crying out of a budding religious fervor, or simply because he was.

When I went to high school, I took my first philosophy class and decided God was a crutch I didn't need. What kind of God would let children starve, I argued, or people get cancer, or the Holocaust happen? The innocent faith of a child met the pseudointellectualism of a high school sophomore head on. I wrote a Dear John letter to God. I was depressed as I wrote it, but it was something I felt I had to do because I was too well-read now to believe in God.

During college, a lot of what I learned from professors was definitely extra-curricular. I left school to grow vegetables, but I don't remember ever growing any. There are a lot of things from those years I can't remember. Like a lot of people at that time—late sixties, early seventies—I was pretty wild. Every door marked “no” by conventional standards seemed to hold

the key to some lascivious pleasure I had to have. Whatever sounded outrageous, I wanted to do. And usually, I did.

I didn't know what to do with my life, though I remember my parents kept begging me to do *something*. I went from relationship to relationship, job to job, city to city, looking for some sense of identity or purpose, some feeling that my life had finally kicked in. I knew I had talent, but I didn't know at what. I knew I had intelligence, but I was too frantic to apply it to my own circumstances. I went into therapy several times, but it rarely made an impact. I sank deeper and deeper into my own neurotic patterns, seeking relief in food, drugs, people, or whatever else I could find to distract me from myself. I was always trying to make something happen in my life, but nothing much happened except all the drama I created around things not happening.

There was some huge rock of self-loathing sitting in the middle of my stomach during those years, and it got worse with every phase I went through. As my pain deepened, so did my interest in philosophy: Eastern, Western, academic, esoteric. Kierkegaard, the I Ching, existentialism, radical death-of-God Christian theology, Buddhism, and more. I always sensed there was some mysterious cosmic order to things, but I could never figure out how it applied to my own life.

One day I was sitting around smoking marijuana with my brother, and he told me that everybody thought I was weird. "It's like you have some kind of virus," he said. I remember thinking I was going to shoot out of my body in that moment. I felt like an alien. I had often felt as though life was a private club and everybody had received the password except me. Now was one of those times. I felt other people knew a secret that I didn't know, but I didn't want to ask them about it because I didn't want them to know I didn't know.

By my mid-twenties, I was a total mess.

I believed other people were dying inside too, just like me, but they couldn't or wouldn't talk about it. I kept thinking there was something very important that no one was discussing. I didn't have the words myself, but I was sure that something was fundamentally off in the world. How could