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SACRED SUCCESS



A COURSE IN
FINANCIAL MIRACLES

EXCLUSIVE EXCERPT

INTRODUCTION

And So It Came to Be

"You do not ask too much of life but far too little."

—A Course in Miracles

When My World Fell Apart

One lovely spring day, in the sleepy suburb of Prairie Village, Kansas, as the robins were busily announcing their arrival, I lay curled up like a baby on the orange shag-carpeted floor of our bedroom, sobbing and shaking uncontrollably. I was a young housewife, in the early seventies, trapped in a terrible marriage with no one to turn to.

My husband, a compulsive gambler, was burning through our money—well, to be precise, *my* money, my inheritance—like a fire out of control. When I confronted him, he told me not to worry, swore he'd never do it again.

Those words, "Don't worry," were exactly what my dad used to say whenever I asked about finances growing up. My father (the R of H&R Block) genuinely didn't want me or any of his "girls" (my mom and two sisters) to ever worry. I trusted my father. I did the same with my husband. I insanely continued to believe his reassurances, even as things worsened. I had no other choice. I didn't understand finances, didn't know where my money was, how much I had, or even how to find out. He managed everything. My parents, who knew about my husband's gambling, were furious with me that I couldn't stop him. But I felt helpless.



Eventually, my husband stopped trying to reassure me. Instead, when confronted, he'd get defensive, talk in circles. And I'd walk away feeling like I was the one who'd done something wrong. Maybe if we had another baby, I thought, things would get better. Our precious daughter, Melissa, was almost six months old. But my body rebelled, and I was told I'd never have more children. Devastated, I fell deep into depression.

I thought I'd hit bottom, though that was still a long way off. My grief was unbearable. I had to do something. So I did what any crazed, codependent wife of an addict would do. I found an addiction of my own—work!

Betty Friedan's new book, *The Feminine Mystique*, had just come out. Women were reentering the work force in droves, hordes of eager housewives searching for more fulfilling lives. I was right there among them. Armed with a master's degree in counseling psychology, I found a job at the local university's women's center, helping these very women become employable.

I knew immediately that working with women was what I was meant to do. A few years later, I started my own company, The Career Management Center, which I believe was the first career counseling firm in Kansas City. I rented an office, hired a secretary, and found a graphic artist to design my logo. I passed out my cards like a Las Vegas dealer, and clients came, lots of them. Media began calling with interview requests. I was asked to speak, first to local groups, then to organizations across the country. And they actually paid me! For the first time in my life, I felt important, professional, competent, like I was finally becoming my own person.

Life was looking up. We adopted a beautiful baby girl we named Julie, and since I was rarely home, I found a fantastic nanny. I was thoroughly enjoying—and totally hooked on—this delicious new feeling of being a career woman. In the heady swirl of constant activity, my husband's gambling problem ceased to concern me.

Work can be a powerful narcotic. It numbed my pain just enough that I actually believed I was happy and all was well. Until one night,



as I tucked Melissa, who was now six years old, into bed, she looked up at me with tears pooling in her big brown eyes.

"What good is it having a mommy," she said, gulping back a sob, "if she's always with clients?"

I froze. Her words felt like ice picks piercing my heart. I vowed to work less. And I did for a while. But gradually I slipped back into busyness. I was an addict, after all. I needed my fix to feel important, to deaden the pain, to let me pretend my life wasn't spiraling out of control.

Meanwhile, my secretary, Anne, was studying to be a Unity minister. She'd bring books to the office for me to read, books by Eric Butterworth, Catherine Ponder, and other Unity leaders. I devoured them like a famished lion consuming fresh meat. I was starving for the spiritual nourishment those books offered. Each page gave me hope. I wanted more.

Unity headquarters was located just outside Kansas City. When I announced one Sunday morning that I was leaving for church, my Israeli husband looked at me like I was nuts. I didn't care. I may be Jewish, but I was hurting and Unity seemed like a place where I might find solace.

Though I would never describe myself as "religious," I always considered myself "spiritual," believing in a faraway God figure. But that morning at Unity, I had an experience that forever transformed my personal connection to the Divine. During the service, the minister had us close our eyes. Then he asked, "If you had six months to live, where would you be, who would you be with, and what would you be doing?"

Instantly, I was there, I mean *really there*. I was no longer in a church pew. I was sitting on the side of a hill, overlooking water, and I was writing. I was writing a book! The experience was so real, the vision so vivid, I couldn't dismiss it. There wasn't much water and even fewer hills in Kansas City, so clearly we had to relocate. The fact that I'd never written anything other than college papers, which I never much enjoyed doing, didn't deter me a bit. I knew this vision was the answer to my prayers.

I raced home, grabbed my husband from the kitchen floor, where he was playing a game with the girls, and dragged him into the bedroom.



"We have to move," I gasped, almost breathless. "We have to live near water and I'm going to write!" Surprisingly, my husband readily agreed. Maybe he was swept away by my enthusiasm. More likely, he saw the move as an escape from reality, or at least a welcome diversion, perhaps even a chance to magically improve his perpetual losing streak.

Things fell into place surprisingly fast. Six months later, we piled into the station wagon, our girls and their hamsters in tow, en route to San Francisco. January 1, 1982, we crossed the Golden Gate Bridge into Marin County, headed for our rental home in the Tiburon hills. I'd sold my business to a friend from graduate school, Janice, who had joined me as a partner in the company. We decided we'd self-publish a job-hunting book. I'd write it. Janice would edit and handle the details.

And now, here I was, sitting on the side of a hill, overlooking water, working on a book, home for my kids. Living an answered prayer.

My husband was ecstatic too. He'd bought a seat on the Pacific Stock Exchange, which was akin to an alcoholic becoming a bartender. His drug of choice was puts and calls, complicated stock options none of which I understood. He was constantly on the phone with his bookie . . . er, broker . . . shouting orders to "Sell!" "Buy!" "Hold!" It didn't matter where we were; he'd instinctively scope out the nearest phone booth—this was before cell phones and internet investing. He didn't really care about the money. For him, trading was all about the adrenaline rush.

In the meantime, I made sure my financial blinders were firmly in place, fastened tight. I saw only what I wanted to see. I was too afraid, felt too stupid, to admit to myself that my husband's reckless behavior was putting our family at risk.

Soon after we settled in, I was standing in the checkout line at the local market. The woman behind the woman behind me was telling her companion about *A Course in Miracles*. Apparently, she'd just purchased it. My ears perked up.

"What's *A Course in Miracles*?" I asked, leaning back so I could see her.



"I'm not really sure," she said, "but it's published right here in Tiburon."

She told me where to go to buy a copy, which was only a few blocks from where I lived. Within an hour, I was the proud owner of all three volumes: the *Text*, the *Workbook*, and the *Manual for Teachers*. I'll never forget standing outside the home where I purchased them, looking reverently at the thick, heavy volumes with their dark blue hardcovers, *A Course in Miracles* embossed in gold lettering. I felt like I was holding the holy grail.

I rushed home and began reading. It quickly became apparent that this was not an easy read. The writing was dense, old-fashioned, obtuse, steeped in Christian terminology, using only male references. Yet, despite those drawbacks, I was compelled to keep going. I've been reading the *Course* almost every day now, for over thirty years.

A Course in Miracles has a beautiful backstory. Helen Schucman and William Thetford, professors of medical psychology at Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons, both atheists, had grown weary of the anger, tension, and strain in their department. In frustration, Bill said to Helen, "There must be another way."

His plea was like an incantation. She agreed to help him find it. Not long after, Helen sat down with pencil and paper and wrote: "This is a course in miracles. Please take notes."

The words came from what Helen called "the Voice." The Voice continued dictating to her for seven years as Bill typed what she wrote. In June of 1976, the twelve hundred pages he had transcribed were published in three separate volumes by the Foundation for Inner Peace.

In the beginning, I would randomly open one of the volumes and read, if not a whole page, at least various passages. Slowly bits and pieces started making sense. The *Course*'s stated goal for me was "*happiness and peace*," which seemed preposterous at that point. But over time, the *Course* taught me how to shift the way I see the world, transform fear into love, and ultimately experience forgiveness.

I don't know how I would have lived through what happened next if it wasn't for the profound wisdom I found on each page.

"Every situation, properly perceived," the Course assured me, "becomes an opportunity to heal." Oh, how I longed for healing. But my husband's problem, and our marriage in particular, kept getting progressively worse.

The End of Denial

One summer day, as I stood in front of the local ATM waiting for sixty dollars in cash, the screen flashed "insufficient funds." What? I pulled my card out, shoved it back in twice, three times. The message didn't change: Sorry, no money.

That instant, I wrote a decade later in my book, *Prince Charming Isn't Coming*, was a defining moment, the moment I came out of denial.

Well, that's not quite accurate. It was merely a fleeting instant of temporary sanity before denial returned and my blinders were back on. I didn't have the courage then, when I was writing *Prince Charming*, to tell the whole story. Now I do.

That incident at the ATM would repeat itself over and over again. Each time, I'd come home enraged, and my husband would respond with gibberish. I'd stand there, my brain reeling, relying on my blinders to bring me some relief. But after numerous bouts at the ATM, those blinders began slipping off.

Between my rage and his despair, the tension at home grew intolerable. I finally asked for a divorce. He convinced me to go to counseling. Counseling didn't work. But I got pregnant. Talk about miracles! Twelve years earlier, I'd been told I'd never have more children. The divorce went on hold. My miracle baby, Anna, was born. The blinders went back on.

I stayed with him for another year, until the night he became physically abusive. That's when I left and never went back, though believe me,



I wanted to badly. I felt sorry for him. I missed him. I missed our family being together. Divorce felt wrong. I told my lawyer I only wanted a legal separation.

"Nice Jewish girls don't get divorced," I explained. She burst out laughing until she realized I was serious. She filed for divorce anyway, and I signed the papers.

My ex sued me for alimony, but my lawyer made sure that never happened. He moved back to Israel and quickly remarried.

I was left with three children, one just a baby, to raise. Fortunately, I found out my irrevocable trust fund was protected, so that even though my ex had squandered all the income, he hadn't been able to touch the principal. I still had a monthly cash flow. The financial blinders were back on in a flash. The last thing I wanted to deal with was money.

As I've said many times since, if you don't deal with your money, your money will deal with you. Sure enough, I soon found out I owed more than a million dollars in back taxes my ex hadn't paid and for illegal deals he got us into. My signature was on everything. I always signed whatever he gave me. My ex had left the country. I didn't have a million dollars. My lawyers pleaded "innocent spouse."

I begged my ex, a former lawyer, to write a letter to the judge explaining that I had no part in his shady deals. Instead, he sent the judge a legal brief explaining who my father was and that, of course, I was aware of everything.

The day I called my dad to ask for a loan, there was a total eclipse of the sun. Just as I heard my father's stern, unyielding "No," an eerie stillness filled the air, bathing the hills in a weird shade of green. I was sick to my stomach and utterly terrified. I felt as if I'd been abandoned by God.

Reaching for the blinders, however, was no longer an option. I wasn't going to raise my daughters on the street. But I hadn't a clue what to do. So I turned to the *Course*. It lovingly scooped me up, softly reassuring me, "*Discomfort is aroused only to bring the need for correction into awareness.*"

That made sense. There was a lot in my life that needed correcting. But, as I came to see, money was just the tip of the iceberg. The *Course* said, "A sense of separation from God is the only lack you really need to correct."

From that minute on, my financial education became a spiritual journey. There were many pitfalls along the way, but I did my best to stay the course, leaning on those thick blue books as if they were walking sticks.

"You have no problem that He cannot solve by offering a miracle," the Course promised. "You are entitled to miracles."

That sounded good on paper. But where were the miracles when I needed them? I was struggling to keep my sanity intact and my family afloat, figure out my finances, and move forward with my life.

As I got further into the *Course*, however, I learned that miracles were nothing more than a change in perception.

Above all else, I began to pray, using words straight from the *Course*, *I want to see things differently*. Eventually I did, though it took some time, a lot of therapy, and many twelve-step meetings, like Al-Anon, Debtors Anonymous, and Co-Dependents Anonymous.

The miracle came when my eyes fixed on this passage: "You are doing this unto yourself. That is your salvation." As if I'd quickly turned a kaleidoscope, I saw everything in a drastically new light. This mess wasn't solely my husband's fault. I was as culpable as he. I'd given him the keys to the kingdom, abdicating all responsibility. What did I expect from an addict? I was the one enabling him.

The Course told me, in no uncertain terms: "I am responsible for what I see. I choose the feelings I experience, and I decide upon the goal I would achieve. And everything that seems to happen to me I ask for, and receive as I have asked." Quite a harsh pill to swallow, but I finally accepted that, regardless of my husband's actions, my choice to don the blinders, to be a passive victim, had created my problems. I had to start taking control.

Over time, I was able to genuinely forgive my ex and my father. Years later I actually thanked them both and truly meant it. After all, it was because of them that I discovered my calling. Once I assumed personal



responsibility, my passage to financial empowerment shifted into high gear. *Prince Charming Isn't Coming* describes my entire journey, a two-pronged process combining the *Outer Work of Wealth* (learning the mechanics of money) and the *Inner Work of Wealth* (overcoming the emotional blocks).

But what I wasn't brave enough to mention in that earlier book is the prominent role the spiritual, or *Higher Work of Wealth*, played. While I steadfastly did the *Outer Work*, reading and studying, I was also lapping up every crumb the *Course* had to give me.

One night, at a Debtors Anonymous meeting, a man in a brown plaid shirt asked the group with such poignancy: "Why is it so hard? I can turn over my life to my Higher Power in every area but money."

Heads nodded in agreement, including mine. Then, a miracle occurred, a moment of clarity. Suddenly I saw my past realization—when my father refused to loan me money—much differently. God had not abandoned me. I had abandoned God. "When you think God has not answered your call," declares the Course, "you have not answered His."

I Can See Clearly Now

One evening when the kids were at their friends' and I had the house to myself, I decided it was time to look at my financial statements. I'd been intentionally avoiding these documents. Even with all the studying and reading I'd been doing, just glancing at them was agonizing. My eyes would glaze over, my brain would fog up. I'd feel hopelessly stupid.

This time, however, I did as the *Course* instructed. "Learn to be quiet, for His Voice is heard in stillness." I sat quietly in meditation for a very long time, perhaps hours, praying for help, reminding myself, "I need do nothing except not interfere."

When I was done, I took a long bath, put on my favorite cream-colored chenille robe, lit some vanilla-scented candles, and sat down with the papers. I understood everything. Everything! It was like the veils had lifted. I saw that if I sold all my stocks and bonds, I could pay

the tax bills, which my attorneys had negotiated down significantly. I still had real estate providing enough income to live on. I also realized if I continued to do nothing, there'd be more tax bills—or worse.

Slowly I took the financial reins, and shockingly, I started to enjoy the process.

"Remember," the Course declared, "no one is where he is by accident, and chance plays no part in God's plan." That got me thinking. Could all the hardship I'd suffered have happened for a reason?

Around that time, I bumped into a friend I hadn't seen in ages. Before I'd even finished updating her, she interrupted me: "If I had your experience, I'd write a book for women about how not to get ripped off by men."

I loved the idea! By then, I'd already written *How to Become Happily Employed*, which had been picked up by Random House. I was now working as a business journalist, gaining the skills to write and, with all the studying I'd done, the knowledge to teach women about money, though I still had plenty more to learn. But as the *Course* repeatedly instructs us: "*Teach what you need to learn. No one learns more than the teacher.*" That's exactly what I longed to be doing, teaching women about money. But I didn't know where to start.

I grew impatient. I kept reminding myself what the *Course* promises: "*There is no problem in any situation that faith will not solve*." My faith was shaky, but I clung to it as best I could. Sometimes I was barely hanging on.

Then out of the blue, I got a call from a woman at JFK University in Pleasant Hill, California. She'd heard I had a great personal story and wanted me to speak at a women's financial conference the university was hosting. You could have knocked me over with a feather. I have no idea how she found me or knew my story. I wrote for the *San Francisco Business Times* about workplace issues, not economics or finances, and definitely not my private ordeals.

I took my friend Carol Adrienne, a successful author, with me for moral support. She ran up to me after my speech, beaming with



excitement. "You've got a book in there," she exclaimed, grabbing my arms, jumping up and down.

That's what I was hoping she'd say, though the idea of going public with my personal story, exposing my private humiliations, filled me with terror. Later, I randomly opened the *Course* to read: "God's Voice asks one question only: Are you ready yet to help Me save the world?"

Yes, I replied, I am ready. And I meant it. I had no idea at the time where this journey would take me, but I buckled up for the ride, which has been full of surprising twists and unexpected turns.

I've come a long way since then. I've touched the lives of thousands of women. Now with this, my seventh book, I stand ready again, this time ready to come out of my spiritual closet and to share what I believe to be true: the moment you inject faith into finances, the instant you invite the Divine into your relationship with the "almighty dollar," your experience with money grows deeper, richer, and more meaningful, and the results are truly profound.

I've even coined a word for this work, metafiscal—that which blends financial know-how with metaphysical principles; a melding of the spiritual and the practical in regard to money.

You don't have to be religious to be *metafiscal*. I'm certainly not. But I do agree with Deepak Chopra, who said, "We need a more spiritual approach to success and to affluence." Even our founding fathers made sure "In God We Trust" was emblazoned on our currency. God can be whatever you're comfortable with—a personified deity, a Higher Power, your inner wisdom, or an all-encompassing energy far greater than our earthly selves.

For some of you, it may seem odd, if not off-putting, to say the word "money" in the same breath as God. After all, the Bible tells us that the love of money is the root of all evil. But the fact is, money itself is not bad. Nor is it good. As the *Course* reminds us, "*Money is not evil. It is nothing.*" Money is just a bunch of paper and metal. Money can't shoot a gun. Or bandage a wound. Only people can. It's not the love of money that's the problem. It's the lack of self-love that leads to trouble. Evil

stems from fear, insecurity, and self-hatred. Prosperity is a by-product of self-love, self-worth, self-respect.

I truly believe money is God made visible. When you treat your money with the reverence and respect it deserves, it will shower endless blessings upon you, allowing you to serve others for all your days and beyond.

My intention in writing this book is to help you create financial miracles. And to show you that, even with money, *especially* with money, when you develop a deep sense of trust in the inexplicable forces of the Universe, along with learning the practical facts, everything changes. Financial success becomes a transformational journey, a personal healing, a sacred initiation, empowering you to become all you're meant to be and to do what you're put on this planet to do.

Sacred Success wasn't easy for me to write and took over seven years to complete. Yet it never occurred to me to give up, at least not for very long. I couldn't. I'd said "yes" to God.

Best-Laid Plans

Actually, the book I started writing was worlds away from what you're reading now. Initially, I intended to write about women who make millions. The idea came when I set a new goal for myself: "Make millions, help millions, give millions."

Sure, the thought of making seven figures was a bit daunting. But I knew exactly what to do. I'd start by interviewing women who were making millions. That was how I had finally made six figures, by interviewing high earners, then writing a book, *Secrets of Six-Figure Women*.

Buoyed by my impressive new goal—*make millions, help millions, give millions*—I plunged into the research, eager to uncover the keys to the seven-figure club. Finding ultra-high earners was surprisingly easy. Interviewing them was fascinating. I was totally smitten with this

project. I wrote a proposal, submitted it to publishers, and waited with eager anticipation for their replies. Every editor turned it down.

Just as the country was beginning to rebound from the Great Recession, I slipped into my own emotional slump. Nowhere near my lofty goal, devastated by the rejections, I admitted defeat. But the book wasn't ready to give up on me. My intuition kept stubbornly insisting that something in those interviews needed to be shared, but either I wasn't expressing it adequately or I'd missed it completely.

I was stuck, bordering on burnout, but not in the classic sense. I wasn't exhausted or depressed. I was just "blah," as if there was no creative juice left in this orange. I'd lost my passion for my work, which threw me for a loop. Mine was more than a career, it was a labor of love, a spiritual calling, a personal ministry.

When I shared this with my business coach, Martha Lynn Mangum, she suggested I take a break. "You're too into doing, Barbara," she said. "You need time for just being." I knew she was right. I made reservations that afternoon for a much-needed four-day getaway.

The next morning, I headed to a cozy lodge overlooking the waters of the Hood Canal, about a two-hour drive from my home. I arranged spa appointments for every afternoon. Otherwise, I stayed in my room, curled up on the window seat, rereading my interviews, praying for guidance, ordering room service.

"A healed mind does not plan," the Course explains. "It carries out the plan it receives through listening to Wisdom that is not its own."

I was hoping to receive some of that Wisdom. But I figured, at the very least, I'd return home with relaxed muscles, painted nails, and freshly waxed brows.

Giving Birth

Four days later, I departed with far more wisdom than I ever could have imagined. Something totally unexpected occurred on the very



first morning, kept happening throughout my stay, and continued for months after I returned home. I started receiving what I fondly referred to as "Downloads from the Divine."

Sometimes these messages came through a hushed voice in my head; other times, they showed up while I was writing in my journal. There were mornings I'd awaken at the crack of dawn with a flood of fully formed, though brand-new-to-me, concepts careening through my brain.

I recorded everything in my journal. Seeds were being planted that, given time, would sprout into a new body of work. I called this work *Sacred Success*, the name courtesy of one of those Divine Downloads. Much of what I wrote during those four days appears throughout this book, beginning in Chapter 3.

While most of my ideas were far from fully developed, the blahs vanished, and my energy returned. I came back from my retreat with a whole new respect for downtime. I began looking at my life with fresh eyes, through the filter of *Sacred Success*, and I began applying what I'd learned to my own experiences. Less than a year later, I was giving teleclasses and lectures to test out the material. Eventually I was offering four-day *Sacred Success* retreats on both coasts.

Two things became exquisitely clear. I saw how profoundly transformational this work was, for me and for my students. And I knew *Sacred Success*, the book I would be writing, had absolutely nothing to do with making millions. It wasn't even really about money, for that matter. At its very core, *Sacred Success* was about power.

What This Book Is Really About

In observing my own progress, studying my interviews, and working with my clients and students, I came to realize that financial success, for women, is a Rite of Passage into our power (more about this in Chapter 2). Historically, Rites of Passage were used to mark and give meaning to a person's transition from one status to another. The transition we're

marking is the shift from dependency to autonomy, from reliant child to responsible adult. In the transition ritual, sacred wisdom was passed on by a tribal elder.

I, the tribal elder, have written *Sacred Success* for every woman—from full-time moms to management executives, from solopreneurs to CEOs—who hungers for more. Not just to make more money, but to live a more meaningful life.

My purpose, in writing this book, is threefold. I intend to:

- 1. Reveal the Feminine Face of Power, giving you permission to raise your sights higher, stay true to yourself, and stimulate discussion on the impact you can have and the legacy you wish to leave.
- 2. Guide you through this Rite of Passage, step by step, with powerful exercises and guided visualizations that I use in my retreats, to take you deeper into the process. Throughout the book, you'll be accompanied by others who've taken the journey. These women will tell you, in their own words, how they transformed their lives and how you can do the same.
- 3. Ask you the question that was so provocative for me: *Are you ready yet to help save the world?* I truly believe our hope for the future lies with powerful women: women who know who they are and express that in the world, women who speak up instead of holding their tongues, women who do what they fear instead of staying where it's safe, women who are financially responsible and economically independent.

The fact that this book found its way into your hands suggests that you've already answered the question—yes, you are ready for *Sacred Success*.

I predict that as the tenets of *Sacred Success* become more widely known and practiced, we'll see women's levels of influence soar exponentially. And because of women's increasing impact, in partnership

with enlightened men, it will be fascinating to watch how the global landscape shifts.

I recall the late New York congresswoman Bella Abzug's prediction: "In the twenty-first century, women will change the nature of power rather than power changing the nature of women." That's exactly what *Sacred Success* sets out to do.

Thank you for checking out this exclusive excerpt of

SACRED SUCCESS

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BARBARA STANNY is the leading authority on women and finance. Her mission: revolutionize women's relationships with money. As a bestselling author, sought-after speaker, workshop facilitator, and money/ wealth coach, Barbara has helped millions take charge of their finances and their lives.





