

Class #6

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM Text, Sections 1.IV & V The Escape from Darkness Wholeness of Spirit

IV. The Escape from Darkness

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The escape from darkness involves two stages [, one lower and one higher]: First, the recognition that darkness cannot [*cannot*] hide. ²This step usually entails fear. ³Second, the recognition that there is nothing you want [*want*] to hide even if you could. ⁴This step brings escape from fear. ⁵When you have become willing to hide nothing, you will not only be willing to enter into communion but will also understand peace and joy. [*Your commitment is not yet total. That is why you still have more to learn than to teach. When your equilibrium stabilizes, you can teach AS MUCH as you learn. This will give you the proper sense of balance. Meanwhile, remember that NO EFFORT IS WASTED. Unless you remember this, you cannot avail yourself of MY efforts, which are limitless.*]

• Study Question •

1. The paragraph clearly identifies "two stages" in the escape from darkness, which is synonymous with our spiritual journey, or the content of the Course's curriculum for us. Make careful note of the two stages that are mentioned, and write them down. .

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This is one of my favorite passages, because it summarizes the entire spiritual journey in two steps.

A. Recognizing our inability to hide

Most readers at first suppose that we are trying to hide our guilt. They think that we try to hide ourselves from God's wrath in the obscurity of darkness. It may be that we actually *believe* that is what and why we are hiding. The truth, however, is more complex. According to T-1.IV.2:1, what we are truly hiding is our *holiness*. We think we are hiding our sin with darkness; on a

deeper level, however, the sin *is* the darkness, and we are using it to hide our holiness. The underlying motivation is to hide that holiness; we use our thoughts of sin and guilt to do so. Then, we fear to look at the sin and guilt. The real reason for that fear is that we do not want to discover the sin and guilt are false, but the reason we give ourselves is that the guilt is too awful to contemplate.

It is as though we had chosen to hide some deep, dark secret thing in a green box, and forever after, we have an aversion to the color green. We make up all kinds of reasons for our aversion to the color, but none of them are the true reason. We are not afraid of green; we are afraid of what green hides. Likewise, we are not afraid of our sin and guilt; we are afraid of what it hides.

If we are aware of fear when we look within, we often attribute the fear to our belief that we are going to find something awful! The Course tells us, in Workbook Lesson 93, that we think we are the home of evil; that our true being is as repulsive as a poisonous snake (W-p1.93.1:1-3).

Yet still deeper than that dark layer lies the reality of our Self: the holy Son of God, pure, innocent, and perfect, exactly as created by God. And *that* is what we are hiding with the darkness. What we are actually afraid of, the Course tells us (T-13.III.1-2), is our holiness. We think we are hiding our darkness because darkness is our reality; in truth, we are hiding it because we secretly fear that it is *not* our reality!

Why? Because if we were to recognize that we remain as holy as God created us, we would have to give up any notion that we have created ourselves. We would have to give up our illusory independence. We would have to give up our egos.

The early stages of spiritual growth, therefore, are often fearful. We must look within, and we are afraid of what we are going to see. At first we are terrified of discovering our guilt. Beyond that, we are afraid to discover the illusory nature of our egos because we identify with them; it feels like admitting that we, ourselves, are illusions. Peeling away the layers of self-deception can be a very scary process. But learning that we cannot hide what we are is the foundational part of the process.

B. Recognizing that we have nothing to hide

The second step should now be obvious. Once we become aware that the thing we thought we were hiding—our awful, sinful and guilty self—is just an illusion we have made up, and that in truth we are magnificent beings of light, we realize that we have nothing we would *want* to hide, even if we *could* hide it. Two layers are buried beneath consciousness: the first, consisting of our ego darkness, is fearful to uncover; the second, our holiness, fills us with gratitude. We need to penetrate past that dark layer to reach the light; we need to bring our holiness up to the level of conscious awareness.

When I meditate on the idea of being willing to hide nothing, I get chills up and down my spine. Or maybe it's kundalini energy, I don't know. There is something immensely appealing to me in

the thought of being totally, absolutely exposed, completely laid bare, *and feeling perfectly safe in being that way!* What an amazing thought! Being *willing* to hide nothing, because I don't have anything to hide. No guilty secrets, no covert shame. "Come on in to my life, and look around to your heart's content." Who among us is that free of guilt? But that is what the second step brings, that is what is involved in the higher levels of spiritual life to which the Course is leading us.

As I meditate on that I begin to understand what these lines tell me, that I will be willing to enter into communion, that I will understand peace and joy. How could I be willing to enter into communion with God or with *any* other being while I think I am like a poisonous snake, poised to strike anyone who gets close? How could I be at peace, or know any real joy, while I believe that what I am is something I must hide? But when that awful self-condemnation ends, *then* I am able to enter into communion; *then* I begin to understand what peace and joy really are.

Paragraph 2

2. [Ur: God's Creations cannot lose their holiness, although it can be hidden. The miracle uncovers it, and brings it into the light where it belongs.] ¹Holiness can never be really hidden in darkness, but you can deceive yourself about it. ²This deception makes you fearful because you realize in your heart [in your heart you *know*] it is a deception, and you exert enormous efforts to establish its reality [Ur: validity]. ³The miracle sets reality [Ur: validity] where it belongs. ⁴Reality [Ur: Eternal validity] belongs only to spirit, and the miracle acknowledges only truth [Truth]. ⁵It thus dispels illusions about yourself, and puts you in communion with yourself and God. {Miracle principle 32 came here} [The Soul never loses its communion with God. Only the mind and body need Atonement.] ⁶The miracle joins in the Atonement by placing the mind in the service of the Holy Spirit. ⁷This establishes the proper function of the mind and corrects its errors, which are merely lacks of love. {Miracle principle 33 came here, with other omitted material.} ⁸Your mind can be possessed by illusions, but spirit is eternally free. ⁹If a mind perceives [Ur: creates] without love, it perceives [Ur: can create] an empty shell and is unaware of the spirit within. [Ur: This *can* be possessed by evil.] ¹⁰But the Atonement restores spirit to its proper place. [Ur: Unless there is emptiness there is no danger, and emptiness is a false creation.] ¹¹The mind that serves spirit is invulnerable.

• Study Question •

2. If "reality belongs only to spirit," what do you suppose the "illusions about yourself" are that a miracle dispels?

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You cannot really hide your holiness, the Course tells us, but "you can deceive yourself about it" (1). You can tell yourself lies about what you are, which is all that our ego is—a lie to ourselves about ourselves, an illusion that has possessed our minds (5, 8). Doing that makes us

afraid because part of our mind *knows* it is deceiving itself (2). Haven't you ever had that dynamic going on in your mind? You are kidding yourself about something. Another part of you knows you are kidding yourself and keeps trying to tell you, so you get very defensive around that topic; "you exert enormous efforts to establish its reality" (2). That enormous effort of maintaining the ego is where all our stress comes from. (For more on this idea see M-8.2 and T-7.IX.2:1-3.)

When the Course says, "Reality belongs only to spirit" (4), it means that what is not spirit is not real. The entire physical universe, all matter, and especially our bodies and egos, are not real by this definition. The illusion of sin lives in egos and bodies. The miracle "acknowledges only truth" (4), that is, only what is real, or spirit. "It thus dispels illusions about yourself, and puts you in communion with yourself and God" (5). The illusion being dispelled is that bodies and egos are what we are. We are not bodies, not egos, and not sinful; holiness is the truth about us, spirit is the truth about us. This is what the miracle acknowledges.

We seem to exist in multiple levels: spirit, mind and body. The truth is:

- Spirit is the only reality, and is eternally free (4, 8).
- Our mind can make mistakes, but mistakes can be corrected.
- The body is merely an empty shell.

The mind can perceive without love and see only the body's empty shell (9), but miracles bring the awareness of love and spirit back to our minds. Miracles remind us of the natural order, remind us of the reality of spirit's eternal freedom, and restore the awareness of who we really are (3, 5, 10). As our minds come under spirit's direction, instead of the body's direction, they become invulnerable (11). Thus, correction at the body level does nothing, and spirit does not need it. The work to be done is a work of correcting our minds.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Darkness is lack of light as ~~sin is lack of love~~. ²It has no unique properties of its own. ³It is an example of the "scarcity" belief [**fallacy**], from which only error can proceed. ⁴Truth is always abundant. ⁵Those who perceive and acknowledge that they have everything have no needs [**Ur: no need for driven behavior**] of any kind. [**6pgs**] ⁶The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you; or rather, to restore it to your awareness. ⁷You were given everything when you were created, just as everyone was.

• Study Question •

3. In T-1.III.1, the Atonement was depicted as a "great crusade to correct [error]" or to cancel out error. Here, we are told that, "The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you."

Assuming these are two descriptions of the same thing, what would you say is the general nature of error that Atonement corrects? (T-1.I.41 and T-1.IV.2:5 also had a hint of the same thing.)



If we must escape the darkness, what is darkness? What is the nature of our fundamental error? As I have said before, it is an error in self-appraisal, a belief that we are less than whole, or lacking. Darkness is just a lack of light, with “no unique properties of its own.” Think about that in terms of physical darkness for a moment. In physics, light is an actual “thing” that exists in particles or in waves. It can bounce off a mirror; it can be manipulated, directed, and generated; and its speed can be measured. None of those things is true of darkness. There are light particles and light waves; there are no darkness particles or darkness waves. You cannot beam darkness at someone or bounce it off a mirror! Darkness is not a thing in itself. It is only the absence of light.

Darkness has no unique properties of its own. If you have a dark room you can turn on a light and darkness is gone. Where did it go? Nowhere; it had no independent existence. The light did not push darkness out; there was nothing to push. Darkness *is* a nothing, a lack, an absence.

Likewise, sin—which is shorthand for the belief we somehow fall short of perfection—is merely a lack of love. It is a nothing. It has no independent existence. When love comes in, sin does not go anywhere; it just ceases to seem to exist. Sin was never anything more than the absence of love.

Our self-concept is one of darkness, or of sin; but that sinful self is just as nonexistent as physical darkness. When the truth about ourselves dawns on us, we immediately see we have no needs. The miracle is a step in that direction, and the overall direction is the Atonement process. Notice what Atonement does: “The purpose of the Atonement is to restore everything to you; or rather, to restore it to your awareness” (6). It reminds you of what you are and always have been. It corrects your errors about yourself. It strips away the layers of negative, condemning self-deception to reveal the abundance of Christ within.

Make note of how sentences 4 and 5 equate abundance with having “no needs of any kind.” We are so permeated with the idea of lack that when we think of abundance we are likely to think of it as “having a lot,” but still somehow having needs. “No needs of any kind” is pretty unequivocal.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The emptiness engendered by fear must be replaced by forgiveness. ²That is what the Bible means by “There is no death,” and why I could demonstrate that death does not exist. ³I came to fulfill the law by reinterpreting it. ⁴The law itself, if properly understood, offers only protection. ⁵It is those who have not yet changed their minds who brought the “hell-fire” concept

into it. ⁶I assure you that I will witness for anyone who lets me, and to whatever extent he permits it. ⁷Your witnessing demonstrates your belief, and thus strengthens it. ⁸Those who witness for me are expressing, through their miracles, that they have abandoned the belief in deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned belongs to them.

Death is a human affirmation of a belief in hate. That is why the Bible says “There is no death,” and that is why I demonstrated that death does not exist. Remember that I came to *fulfill* the law by *reinterpreting* it. The law itself, if properly understood, offers only protection to man. Those who have not yet “changed their minds” have entered the “hellfire” concept into it.

Remember, I said before that because “nature abhors a vacuum”, it does *not* follow that the vacuum is filled with hell fire. The emptiness engendered by fear should be replaced by love, because love and its absence are in the same dimension, and correction cannot be undertaken except *within* a dimension. Otherwise, there has been a confusion of levels....

The important thing is that elsewhere in the Bible it also says “Those who represent (or plead for) Me to men will be represented (or pleaded for) *by* Me before God.” (Note: This quotation is also not the correct Biblical phrasing, but it *is* what it means.) Note that one who represents also “witnesses for.” The quotation thus means that you represent or “witness for” the authority in whom you believe.

Your witnessing *demonstrates* your belief, and thus strengthens it.

I assure you that *I* will “witness for” anyone who lets me, and to whatever extent he himself permits it.

Those who witness for me are expressing, thru their miracles, that they have abandoned deprivation in favor of the abundance they have learned *belongs* to them.

I have included the entire Urtext passage (actually two) on which this paragraph is based just because it is very difficult to get back to the original meaning otherwise.

• Study Question •

4. From sentence 5 it is fairly clear that the concept Jesus means to correct in this paragraph is “the ‘hell-fire’ concept” in regard to God’s law. What do you think is meant by this phrase?

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This paragraph contains one very clear example of how editing out some personal material created gaps and obscurity in the resulting Text. In the original material, which can also be read in *Absence From Felicity*, pages 240–241, there were a couple of paragraphs of material addressed to Helen that were deleted; they came just before sentence 2 and, unfortunately, contain the referent to the opening phrase of that sentence: “That is why....” If you have a copy of the book you can look it up. To summarize as briefly as I can: Jesus refers to a Jewish superstition about calling a sick person by a name other than his real name confuses the angel of death, who cannot find him. He then says this idea, that changing the name averts death, was a

distortion of a true revelation, which was that changing one's *mind* about hatred averts death. "Death is a human affirmation of a belief in hate." Then follows the sentence we have in the Text: "That is why the Bible says, 'There is no death.'" In this context the line makes sense; following sentence 1 of the paragraph in the Text; it makes almost no sense at all. We can see that what it means is that since death is our belief in hate given concrete form, and since hate is simply love's absence—like darkness, not anything real in itself—in reality, there is no hate, and therefore, there is no death.

Once you know the missing context, it is possible (with considerable effort!) to make a connection between the remark about "no death" and the opening line that says "the emptiness engendered by fear must be replaced by forgiveness" (1). Our emptiness arises from our guilt, and the attendant fear of punishment. The ultimate punishment is death. Jesus, in his resurrection, demonstrated that death does not exist, because sin does not exist. Jesus overcame death through forgiveness and in so doing reinterpreted the law; law does not bring a threat of punishment but a promise of protection. Rather than saying, "If you do not have love in your mind you will die," it is saying, "If you choose to have love in your mind you will *never* die." Only "those who have not yet changed their minds" (5; note the reference to the deleted material about changing the mind) perceive hell-fire in God's laws.

The general principle presented here gives significant guidance in how to interpret the Bible. It tells us that God's intended message was, "Change your mind and you will be liberated from the human condition." This, in the Bible and traditional understanding of its teachings, was distorted by the ego into, "Change your forms (or behavior) and God will not punish you." To me this suggests that, in reading the Bible, when it seems to be "laying down the law," I need to reinterpret it; I need to see how it is a positive message of the freedom from fear that is available to me, rather than a threat of God's wrath.

When Jesus begins to speak of "witnessing" for us, I think he is using the image of a courtroom and an imaginary trial concerning our "law-breaking." He is saying he will gladly testify on our behalf, if we let him. He will defend our innocence, not prosecute our guilt. It is as if he were saying, "You think you are on trial for your life. Well, let me tell you something; I am on your side. I'm not against you. I am the one who truly knows your innocence." If we are willing to turn to him for help in escaping from darkness, in escaping the sentence of death we believe is coming to us, he will take our side and proclaim our true innocence.

When, in turn, we witness or bear testimony (in word, thought or deed) to our belief in innocence rather than guilt, the act of witnessing strengthens our belief (7). We bear witness to innocence whenever we refuse to judge another. Thus, our escape from darkness is born in accepting forgiveness for ourselves, and increases as we extend forgiveness to others.

V. Wholeness and Spirit

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The miracle is much like the body in that both are learning aids for facilitating a state in which they become unnecessary. ²When spirit's original state of direct communication is reached, neither the body nor the miracle serves any purpose. ³While you believe you are in a body, however, you can choose between loveless and miraculous channels of expression [creativity]. ⁴You can make an empty shell [Ur: (see previous reference) in 2:9], but you cannot express [does not create] nothing at all. ⁵You can wait, delay, paralyze yourself, or reduce your creativity almost to nothing[, and even introduce a real developmental arrest or regression]. ⁶But you cannot [cannot] abolish it. ⁷You can [can] destroy your medium of communication, but not [not] your potential. ⁸You did not create yourself. [Ur: He was not created by his own free will. Only what he creates is his to decide.]

• Study Question •

5. We are told that both the miracle and the body are temporary learning aids which become unnecessary once we have learned what they have to teach. Where before have we read about something similar, called a "teaching device" or "learning device"? And what was it?

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The Course repeatedly emphasizes its own temporary nature. It comes to you "while you believe you are in a body" (3), and it therefore deals with your body and how you use it, even though the body serves no purpose when you are restored to "spirit's original state." It is leading you beyond the body to spirit, but it uses the body to get you there. You have the power to choose what will be expressed through your body: lovelessness, or miracles of love. You have made yourself into an empty shell—the body (see T-1.IV.2:9)—but that shell has to express *something*. Although you can destroy your body ("your medium of communication"), you cannot entirely abolish your creativity (which is your God-like-ness in spirit); you cannot lose that potential because you did not create yourself.

Putting it in my own words, "You must choose to use your body for love or for lovelessness; you cannot express nothing. Yet, whatever you do to sabotage your holiness, you can't erase it because God created it. Maybe you chose not to use your body to express love; maybe you even choose to die. But eventually, no matter what you do, you will come around to using your body to learn that what you are, and what you have always been, is love. That is the only thing the body is really good for."

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The basic decision of the miracle-minded is not [*not*] to wait on time any longer than is necessary. ²Time can waste as well as be wasted. ³The miracle worker, therefore, accepts the time-control factor [*of the miracle*] gladly. ⁴He recognizes that every collapse of time brings everyone closer to the ultimate release [*release*] from time, in which the Son and the Father are [*are*] one. ⁵Equality does not imply equality [*Ur: homogeneity*] now. ⁶When everyone [*everyone*] recognizes that he has everything [*everything*], individual contributions to the Sonship will no longer be necessary.

• Study Question •

6. In 1:5 and 2:1-3, what is the basic attitude towards time encouraged by the Course (put this in your own words)? Do you share this basic decision of the miracle-minded? Think about how your life might be different if you were firm in this decision.

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The fundamental decision is not to waste any time; to take only whatever time is necessary. (Apparently, some time *is* necessary for us to become willing to accept what is already so; see T-15.I.11:4.) This is similar to the notion in T-1.I.15: “Each day should be devoted to miracles.” Some time is necessary, but our “fundamental decision” is to make it as brief as possible and not to waste any lessons as they come to us. Every day is full of learning opportunities; the dedicated student is poised, alert, ready to learn in every moment.

Every miracle collapses time and “brings everyone closer to the ultimate release from time, in which the Son and the Father are One” (4). That longing for the ultimate release of all beings, and for hastening that day in every moment, is something we all need to cultivate. Since the miracle is our tool for collapsing time (T-1.I.48:1), this means we dedicate each day to offering miracles to those around us, wanting everyone to share in our healing. This is similar to the Buddhist concept of *bodhisattva*, one who has taken a vow to help all sentient beings and to not enter nirvana until everyone else has gone on before—to leave no one behind. The Course tells us:

Think you...that you will rest without [all your brothers]? You could no more leave one of them outside than I could leave you, and forget part of myself. (T-20.IV.7:5-6)

Time remains only to let the last embrace of prayer rest on the earth an instant, as the world is shined away. This instant is the goal of all true healers, whom the Christ has taught to see His likeness and to teach like Him. (S-3.IV.2:5-6, my emphasis)

Paragraph 3

3. ¹When the Atonement has been completed, all [*all*] talents will be shared by all [*all*] the Sons of God. ²God is not [*not*] partial. ³All His children have His total Love, and all His gifts are freely given to everyone alike. ⁴“Except ye become as little children” means that unless you fully recognize your complete dependence on God, you cannot know the real power of the Son in his true relationship with the Father. ⁵The specialness of God’s Sons does not stem from exclusion but from inclusion. ⁶All [*all*] my brothers are special. [*He {i.e. Bill} should stop interpreting this as “all except Bill.” This is ridiculous!*] ⁷If they believe they are deprived of anything, their perception becomes distorted. ⁸When this occurs the whole family of God, or the Sonship, is impaired in its relationships.

• Study Question •

7. See 2:5-6 and 3:1-3. (a) In what sense are we all equal, including equal with Jesus? (b) In what sense are we not equal?

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This paragraph is pieced together from three different discussions and so is a bit hard to read.

“Equality does not imply equality now” (2:5). We are all equal because we are all whole, in spirit, but we are not all equal now, meaning “in time.” Some of us temporarily have more; some of us temporarily have gifts that others do not have. Temporarily, Jesus seems to be greater than us, and more advanced. But temporarily means “in time,” and when time is over, all of us will be equal. Equality is the reality; inequality, or differences, are just part of the temporary illusion. Compare this paragraph with Principle #8, “Miracles...are performed by those who temporarily have more for those who temporarily have less.”

We all have God’s “total Love”; “all His gifts are freely given to everyone alike” (3). That is a pretty amazing thing to think about! Try repeating to yourself, “I have God’s total Love. All His gifts are given to me.” Then think of someone else, and try it with that person: “Jack has God’s total Love,” and so on. Try it with a number of people.

The emphasis in this section is on our wholeness. We seem to be limited bodies. We seem to have different abilities, some seem farther along than others, but fundamentally, in spirit, we are all the same, we are all equal, and we are all whole, fully gifted, and totally loved. That is the reality we are always being reminded about.

Jesus here explains the Bible’s words about becoming as little children as meaning recognizing our complete dependence on God. It is not the innocence of children he has in mind, but their dependence (as opposed to their independence!). It is depending on God that makes us powerful, just as a prince derives his power and authority from the fact of being the King’s son. We have power *because* we draw our life from God. Being included in God’s life is what make us

“special,” or what gives us what power we have. “Special” is totally redefined here because if all of Jesus’ brothers are special, they are all equal. This is a kind of specialness that does not mean “different” or “exclusive,” but simply that each of us is totally loved.

{Robert Perry observes that:} The third part, about the family of God, came from a miracle principle about child-rearing, which was omitted from the published Course. It said, “Children do not belong to parents, but they [parents] do need to share their greater abundance [with their children, by giving them miracles]. If they [the children] are deprived [by their parents not sharing their greater abundance], their perception becomes distorted [and we all know what that’s about]. When this occurs, the whole family of God...is impaired in its relationships.”

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Ultimately, every member of the family of God must return. ²The miracle calls him to return because it blesses and honors him, even though he may be absent in spirit. ³“God is not mocked” is not a warning but a reassurance. ⁴God *would* be mocked if any [*any*] of His creations lacked holiness. ⁵The creation is [*is*] whole, and the mark of wholeness is holiness [Ur: not holes. The Sonship has no holes anywhere]. ⁶Miracles are affirmations of Sonship, which is a state of completion and abundance.

• Study Question •

8. What theme from T-1.IV.4 is echoed here by the discussion of the meaning of the words, “God is not mocked”?

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Notice how the words, “God is not mocked,” are tied into the idea that ultimately every child of God must return. It would mock God if any child of His did *not* return. When I began to question my orthodox Christian theology, I began to wonder how it could honor God to have the majority of the human race ending up in hell! It seemed to me that if most people chose the devil, God was captain of the losing team. More specifically, I asked myself how I could be in perfect joy when those I loved were suffering eternal torment. And if I, with my limited, conditional love, was bothered by such a thought, how could God, with His unconditional love, possibly be satisfied or content when those He loves are undergoing hell forever? If hell exists, *that* is the mockery of God! But God’s creation is whole; none of His creations lacks holiness. That is what miracles affirm.

Paragraph 5

5. [Ur: Bill’s very proper emphasis on “changing your mind” needs clarification.]
¹Whatever is true is eternal, and cannot change or be changed. ²Spirit is therefore unalterable

because it is already [*already*] perfect, but the mind can elect what [*the level*] it chooses to serve. ³The only limit put on its choice is that it cannot [*cannot*] serve two masters. [Ur: While the ballot itself is a secret one, and the right to vote is fully protected, voting *always* entails both election *and* rejection. If two candidates are voted for, for the same position, the machine cancels the ballot automatically. This is necessary, because a split vote does not represent *any real* allegiance. Free will is the attribute of the mind, *not* the Soul. The Soul always remains changeless, because it never leaves the sight of God. The Creation of the Soul is already fully accomplished.] ⁴If it elects [Ur: votes] to do so, the mind can become the medium by which spirit creates along the line of its own creation. ⁵If it does not freely elect to do so, it retains its creative potential [*ability*] but places itself under tyrannous rather than Authoritative control. ⁶As a result it imprisons [*what it creates is imprisonment*], because such are the dictates of tyrants. ⁷To change your mind means to place it at the disposal of *true* Authority.

The notion of our reality as eternal, unchangeable spirit continues. Yet, “Mind can elect what it chooses to serve” (2), just as we can give our body to miracles or to lovelessness. The choice of what we serve is up to us, *but we must serve something*.

Robert Perry wrote to me about this paragraph, “What strikes me here is that the mind is going to serve a master either way. But that master will either be true Authority, which allows the mind to express all of its potential and be truly creative (which implies free), or the master will be a tyrant that imprisons the mind's creative impulses, and causes the mind to imprison others.”

I love thinking of mind as “the medium by which spirit creates along the line of its own creation” (4). I get the sense of a mind that has become a channel for God into this world, with love and power flowing into it and through it to bless everyone around it.

When a mind has only light, it knows only light. Its own radiance shines all around it, and extends out into the darkness of other minds, transforming them into majesty (T-7.XI.5:1-2).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The miracle is a sign that the mind has chosen to be led by me in Christ's service. ²The abundance of Christ is the natural result of choosing to follow Him. [P.S. The reason you have been late recently (for work) because you were taking dictation is merely because you didn't remember to ask me when to stop. This is an example of the “indiscriminate or uncontrolled” miracle-working we already spoke of. It is well-meant but ill-advised.] ³All [*all*] shallow roots must be uprooted, because they are not deep enough to sustain you. ⁴The illusion that shallow roots can be deepened, and thus made to hold, is one of the distortions [*corollaries*] on which the reverse of the Golden Rule rests [*referred to twice before, is balanced*]. ⁵As these false underpinnings are [Ur: uprooted or] given up, the equilibrium is temporarily

experienced as unstable. ⁶However [But the fact is], nothing [nothing] is less stable than an upside-down orientation. ⁷Nor can anything that holds it upside down be conducive to increased [greater] stability. [Ur: The whole danger of defenses lies in their propensity to hold misperceptions rigidly in place. This is why rigidity is regarded as stability by those who are off the mark.]

• Study Question •

9. What do you think is meant by "shallow roots" in sentence 3 and sentence 4?

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Robert Perry comments on a portion about sexuality that was omitted here:

The comments about shallow roots was originally part of the discussion of sex. Jesus was talking about the superficiality of sexual attraction, which involves "disrespect for the individuality of others." He then said that the real solution is not just self-control: "It must be understood, however, that the underlying mechanism must be uprooted." Ultimately, the mechanism of sexual attraction, and all attractions to externals as a source of salvation, must be uprooted. This sounds scary, but his point is well-taken: These roots are *shallow*, and shallow roots provide neither sufficient sustenance nor sufficient stability. When have our various attractions really done for us what they promised to do?

The ideal state for our mind held out by the Course is that we have "chosen to be led by [Jesus] in Christ's service" (1). We have joined that great crusade to correct error he spoke of in Section III. We have devoted our days to miracles, and have become unwilling to exclude any of our brothers and sisters from healing and forgiveness. We have decided not to spend any longer than necessary to finish our healing. We have become miracle workers. "The abundance of Christ is the natural result" (2).

To inherit our abundance we must be totally committed to Christ's service. The "shallow roots must be uprooted" (3). Any dependence on something besides God for nourishment and stability has to be uprooted; that is, we have to give up any alternative means of salvation. As Workbook Lesson 71 counsels, "Only God's plan for salvation will work." We think we can find stability and nourishment from our egos and our bodies. We suffer from the illusion that these shallow roots can be deepened somehow and made to work. We spend most of our lives trying to deepen them. And because of that delusion, we think we have to operate on the opposite of the Golden Rule, which would be: Do unto others what you would *not* want them to do to you, or perhaps, do unto others *before* they do it unto you!

In seeking satisfaction through our separate bodies and egos, we are naturally in competition with every other body and ego. It appears that the only way to have anything is to take it from, or keep it from, others. That is exactly what we do not want them to do to us, but it seems what we have to do in order to survive. That entire orientation is upside down; the exact opposite of the

truth—the only way to have anything is to give it away.

As the false roots are torn up or abandoned, we experience a brief, frightening sense of instability. It's natural when we give up our imagined roots that we will feel temporarily at sea, unanchored. If you have ever stood on your head a while and then turned suddenly right side up, you know that you briefly feel dizzy and disoriented. Actually, "nothing is less stable than an upside-down orientation" (6). The truly unstable position is the one we were in before we gave up the false underpinnings; we are now on our way to true stability, and anything that tries to keep us from changing is actually opposed to our stability.

Answer Key

1. Recognizing our inability to hide; and recognizing we have nothing to hide, even if we could.
2. The illusions of being something besides spirit, such as being a body, or being a mind confined to a body (an ego).
3. If the Atonement is a crusade to correct error, and the Atonement restores everything to our awareness, then the nature of the error must be a mistake about what we have, a false perception of lack. We mistakenly believe we have less than everything.
4. The idea that God's law is fearful because it is backed up by the threat of burning in the fires of hell if you disobey it. The fear we feel, referred to in the first paragraph of the section, stems from our belief that God severely punishes anyone who violates His laws. Our mistakes or errors lie uncorrected because we are afraid to look at them; we fear to look at and own them because we think they will call down hell-fire if we expose them.
5. In T-1.I.15 and 1.I.47, we read about *time* as a teaching device and the miracle as a learning device. The body, like them, is also a temporary learning device. Remember the analogy of training wheels on a bicycle. You only need them until you have learned to ride, and then they can even get in your way.
6. The basic attitude the Course encourages in us is a strong desire to minimize the time we spend in reaching the goal, and in having *everyone* reach the goal and remember God.

We urge you to bear witness to the Word of God to hasten the experience of truth, and speed its advent into every mind that recognizes truth's effects on you. (W-pI.169.4:3)

For now we would arise in haste and go unto our Father's house. We have been gone too long, and we would linger here no more. (W-pI.193.11:2-3)
7. (a) We are equal in eternity but not necessarily now. When Atonement is completed we will share all talents; we also have God's total Love, and have been given all gifts. (b) This is not necessarily true in our experience in time. We do not all have all talents now. Likewise, in spirit we are one with God Himself, but we are not "equal" to God as we seem to exist in time. We must deal with what *seems* to be real to us now.
8. The discussion here says these words are "not a warning but a reassurance." Earlier, it said that the law of God is not a threat (warning) but a protection (reassurance). Same basic idea; God is not some fearful monster waiting to punish us but a loving God, waiting to embrace us.
9. "Shallow roots" are anything besides God and Christ's service that we think can offer us sustenance. This would include anything in the physical world: money, fame, pleasure, romance, or anything we try to use to attain satisfaction. This is what was called "magic" in an earlier

section. All of this boils down to a belief that the body and the ego are where we will find satisfaction, rather than in spirit, which was created by God.