

Class #8 Study Guide and Commentary ACIM Text, Section 1.VII Distortions of Miracle Impulses

Where the previous section was talking about false needs that have replaced the one true need (to correct our sense of separation from God), this section talks about “misdirected miracle impulses,” or distorted urges produced by the twisting of valid impulses. The basic idea, of a valid desire being replaced by a bogus one, is pretty much the same. The primary difference is that Section VI was talking about our attempts to draw something to ourselves, while Section VII is talking about our attempts to express something towards others.

This section teaches that we all have “miracle impulses” within us. Since in truth we all are love, love must be constantly motivating us from within to heal, to join with others, to extend peace to everyone, or to do God’s Will, as 1:4 puts it. However, these miracle impulses get blocked by our egos and distorted, so that these miracle impulses, the very expression of our true nature, show up in our experience looking like something quite different.

The first three paragraphs deal with how miracle impulses, which we all experience, are distorted into physical impulses or fantasies; the last two paragraphs really present a separate topic: The nature of the Course itself, and how important it is to study the earlier sections carefully before reading the rest.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Your distorted perceptions [Ur: unconscious distortions (above the miracle level)] produce a dense cover over miracle impulses, making it hard for them to reach your own awareness [Ur: consciousness]. ²The confusion of miracle impulses with physical [Ur: sexual] impulses is a major perceptual distortion. ³Physical impulses are misdirected miracle impulses. ⁴[I want to finish the instructions about sex, because this is an area the miracle worker MUST understand. Inappropriate sex drives (or misdirected miracle-impulses) result in guilt if expressed, and depression if denied. We said before that] All real pleasure comes from doing God’s Will. [Ur: Whenever it is *not* done an experience of lack results.] ⁵This is because *not* doing it is a denial of [Ur: lack of] Self. ⁶Denial of Self results in illusions, while correction of the error brings release from it. ⁷Do not deceive yourself into believing that you can relate in peace to God or to your brothers with anything external. [Ur: It {sex} is *not* truly pleasurable in itself. “Lead us not into Temptation” means “Do not let us deceive ourselves into believing that we can relate in peace to God or our brothers with *anything* external.”]

The above passage is a pastiche of lines taken from various places in the Urtext. One such passage contains interesting remarks that never made it into the Course, so I quote it here:

The confusion of miracle impulse with sexual impulse is a major source of perceptual distortion, because it INDUCES rather than straightening out the basic level-confusion which underlies all those who seek happiness with the instruments of the world. A desert is a desert is a desert. You can do anything you want in it, but you CANNOT change it from what it IS. It still lacks water, which is why it IS a desert... The thing to do with a desert is to LEAVE.

• Study Questions •

1. Miracle impulses seem to be, simply, the inherent inner prompting to extend miracles to others. When such impulses arise from deep within us, they are perceived by us through the "dense cover" of our distorted perceptions, which arise from and are nearly synonymous with our belief in separation and lack (see T-1.V.3:7; T-1.VI.1:8-10; T-1.VI2:2). These natural impulses to extend and join become distorted into something else. How do we experience them in our awareness? Speculate on what forms this might take.
2. If you have not already noticed it, the Course talks an awful lot about "perception" in this first chapter, showing us that correcting our perceptions is its primary focus. You might want to use a colored pencil to mark every occurrence of the word "perception" or its various forms, such as "perceptions," "perceive," "perceptual," or "perceiving." It occurs thirty-six times in Chapter 1.



It is worthwhile noting that, according to the account given by Ken Wapnick in his book, *Absence From Felicity* (page 252), the wording of sentence 2 in the original dictation was, "The confusion of miracle impulses with sexual impulses...." We can state with certainty, then, that the phrase, "physical impulses," includes sexual ones. The more general phrase was chosen while editing for publication because the concept being presented here applies not only to sexual impulses, but to all physical impulses, which include things such as the desire to be touched, the desire for food, and so on. Sentence 4 would seem to indicate that it is meant to include any craving for pleasure that derives from a physical source, or that attributes the pleasure to some physical cause.

The picture painted by this paragraph is fascinating. The true source of all pleasure, we are told, is "doing God's Will" (4), because to do God's Will is to express our true Self, which was created by God to express Itself as God expresses Himself. As the Course says a bit later:

Think you that you can judge the Self of God [the Self That God created as His Son]? God has created It beyond judgment, out of His need to extend His Love. With love in you, you have no need except to extend it. (T-15.V.11:1-3)

The only *actual* need we have, if it could be called a need at all, is the need to extend love. This is a need to give, rather than the usual sense of "need" which implies getting something. "Mira-

cle impulses” and the need to extend love are the same thing. When we are identified with our Self, we are identified with Love, and our only pleasure is then to extend love.

This impulse to extend love is constantly operative in us. It is our nature, a part of us. However, in our distorted perception of ourselves we have seen ourselves as weak, separate, and deprived. We have perceived great lack in ourselves. We see those around us as separate beings who possess things that we lack and need. When the desire to extend love or to join with those around us arises within us, it passes through the filter of these distorted perceptions of lack so that the impulse to give gets transformed and twisted into a perverted desire to *take* something. An impulse to experience and know oneness becomes sexual lust. A desire to share all the other person has and is becomes a desire to possess or to use that person. And so on.

I have found the teaching of this section to be quite comforting, personally. Like most men I have, on occasion, experienced a surge of unexpected sexual desire under less than appropriate circumstances—towards a woman who is in a committed relationship with a friend, or who has come to me for counsel, or whom I have casually encountered in a public place. It has been helpful for me to realize that such sexual desires are merely distorted miracle impulses. There is no need to feel guilty, or even to fight them. The miracle impulse is a good thing, not a bad one. I don't act on or nurture the sexual desire, because it is a distorted form; the physical form needs to be transformed back into its original spiritual form. But I don't need to condemn myself; I don't need to tell myself, “No! Bad man!” When such a thing crops up I can mentally tell myself, “Yes, of course I want to join with this being. Of course I want to extend love to her!” To extend love is always appropriate. The ego has a real battle on its hands, because our loving nature is always rising up and reaching out. So the ego is busily perverting these holy desires into baser cravings. We can respond by translating them back into what they were originally, and opening our hearts to love and to miracles. We do not relate to God, or to our brothers and sisters, “with anything external” (7). We do not join with one another by joining bodies.

“Do not overlook our earlier statement that faithlessness leads straight to illusions. For faithlessness is the perception of a brother as a body, and the body cannot be used for purposes of union. If, then, you see your brother as a body, you have established a condition in which uniting with him becomes impossible.”
(T-19.I.4:1–3)

Notice here that what brings about this distortion of our impulses is our denial of Self (6). We have denied that we are the complete and perfect creation of God, as loving as God, and instead have seen ourselves as lacking. Therefore, we interact with others on that basis, taking rather than giving and sharing. We have the illusion of needs. Correction of our error about our Self brings release from the error and its effects.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Child of God, you were created to create the good, the beautiful and the holy. ²Do not forget this. [Ur: You were right in telling B. to invite Me to enter anywhere temptation arises. I will change the situation from one of inappropriate sexual attraction to one of impersonal miracle-working.] ³The Love of God, for a little while, must still be expressed through one body to another, because [Ur: the real] vision is still so dim. ⁴You can use your body best to help you enlarge your perception so you can achieve real vision, of which the physical eye is incapable. ⁵Learning to do this is the body's only true usefulness [Ur: the only real reason for its creation].

• Study Question •

3. Although bodies cannot be used to effect actual union, they are still useful for something. For what? And why?
4. Is there a parallel here between this purpose for the body and what is said in T-1.VI.4:1?



There is something moving in being told that God created me in order “to create the good, the beautiful and the holy” (1). Jesus tells us not to forget this; it is important, therefore. I like the phrase, “the good, the beautiful and the holy.” It speaks of morality, of aesthetics, and of spirituality. I’m glad to know that creating beauty is part of my purpose; it isn’t all some kind of heady, cold spirituality without aesthetic values. Yet I don’t think creating beauty primarily means that we create physically beautiful things; it is not by means of the external that we relate to God and one another. This is talking about a beauty not seen by the body’s eyes, such as the beauty of a particularly moving thought of love.

As God’s creation I have a powerful creative drive, and that is what is constantly trying to express itself through me in miracle impulses. That creative purpose cannot be completely realized in this world because this world is only a dream. The Course tells us that creation is our function “in Heaven” (T-12.VII.4:7–8), but it cannot be carried out on earth (T-17.IV.2:1); the nearest we can come to it is in forgiveness or miracles (W-pI.192.3:1–2). While we are here (or while we think we are!), dependent on our body’s eyes for seeing, we need to use our bodies as a means to express God’s Love. The body can be used in ways that lead us to “achieve real vision, of which the physical eye is incapable” (4).

How does the way we use our body enlarge our true vision? The body can be used to transmit miracles. By “transmit miracles” I mean “to express love and forgiveness.” It can speak loving words and perform loving acts, and in this way, love is communicated “through one body to another” (3). As we express love—that is, miracles—through our body, the loving perception that gave rise to them is reinforced in our minds.

There are several themes here that the Course will expand on in later sections. The idea that creation is our heavenly purpose, and that what we can do in this world is only a reflection of that heavenly purpose, recurs again and again. The notion that the only valid use for the body is to go beyond the body comes up over and over. The idea that the body is not an end in itself, but a means to a higher end, has an entire section devoted to it (T-8.VIII). The concept that the body's eyes cannot achieve real vision becomes a major theme in later sections, particularly in T-18.IX and T-22.III.

What is nearly unique to this section is the explanation of the need to, “for a little while” (3), express the Love of God through the body. “Learning to do this is the body's only true usefulness” (5). “This” refers, I think, both to expressing God's Love and to enlarging our perception so that we can achieve real vision. So although the Course will teach quite clearly and strongly that the body is not real, that it is a dream or illusion, it also teaches that—for a little while at least—we need it, and that it is useful as a means to help us escape from the dream.

I think it is important for us to realize that the “vision” the Course is talking about is something “of which the physical eye is incapable” (4). This vision is not simply a recasting of what our physical eyes see, or even a reinterpretation of it; it is sight of an entirely different order. Think of Superman's X-ray vision. Think of night-vision goggles that translate heat emissions into light, so that one can seemingly see in the dark. Those are two examples of a different kind of sight, but they are not as different from what unaided eyes see as spiritual vision is. X-ray vision and infrared goggles are still operating in the physical realm; spiritual vision is “seeing” spirit, and not anything physical.

The Urtext material beginning with, “You were right...”, suggests a useful practice to transform inappropriate sexual impulses back into miracle impulses. Simply put, whenever you feel an inappropriate sexual impulse, ask Jesus to change it into a miracle impulse, and then allow him to guide you in expressing this purified miracle impulse, resulting in true joining with the other person.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Fantasy is a distorted form of vision. ²Fantasies of any kind are distortions, because they always involve twisting perception into unreality. ³Actions that stem from distortions are literally the reactions of those who know not what they do. ⁴Fantasy is an attempt to control reality according to false needs. ⁵Twist reality in any way and you are perceiving destructively. ⁶Fantasies are a means of making false associations and attempting to obtain pleasure from them. ⁷But although you can perceive false associations, you can never make them real except to yourself. ⁸You believe in what you make. ⁹If you offer miracles, you will be equally strong in your belief in them. ¹⁰The strength of your conviction will then sustain the belief of the miracle receiver. ¹¹Fantasies become totally unnecessary as the wholly satisfying nature of reality becomes apparent to both giver and receiver. ¹²Reality is “lost” through usurpation, which produces tyranny. ¹³As long as a single “slave” remains to walk the earth, your release is not complete.

¹⁴Complete restoration of the Sonship is the only goal of the miracle-minded.

• **Study Question** •

5. This paragraph moves from impulses to the topic of fantasy. (a) In what three different ways does this paragraph define or describe "fantasy?" (See 3:1, 3:4 and 3:6.) (b) Do you think the term includes more than things like daydreams and sexual imaginings? Why or why not?



With the context of "physical impulses" from the preceding paragraph and its original form, "sexual impulses," it is easiest to understand this paragraph as referring to ordinary fantasy, such as sexual fantasies and commonplace daydreaming. It certainly does apply there. Just as physical impulses are a distorted form of miracle impulses—not something inherently bad, just a misapplication or misuse of something good—so fantasies are a distorted form of true vision, a positive thing put to an improper or pointless use. Reaching out for pleasure is not an improper thing, but, as we are told here, "All real pleasure comes from doing God's Will" (1:4), which is creating "the good, the beautiful and the holy" (2:1). To seek pleasure in lesser things is a distortion of that desire.

Because of our false needs we fantasize, trying to satisfy ourselves by mentally creating a reality that is to our liking. When we strive to bring something into reality by mentally envisioning it, we are using a form of true vision. Apparently true vision does something very much like this: It perceives reality, extends it, and impels it towards manifestation. When we apply true vision to our brothers and sisters, we see their reality and we reinforce it (see sentence 10), thus bringing their reality closer to expression. Fantasy perverts the extending, miracle-producing power of vision into a thing aimed at private gratification.

As you think about this, you might apply it to some particular fantasy of your own, and let it hit home. "This fantasy I indulge in is a distorted form of vision. I am perceiving destructively because I am attempting to twist reality."

I believe, however, that the paragraph has an even broader application, in the context of what we have read in the previous section, VI. The Illusion of Needs. I have several reasons for this opinion: First, Section VI spoke about the unreality of all aspects of fear: "If there is fear, it produces a state that does not exist" (T-1.VI.5:8). One word for a state that does not exist is, "fantasy." Second, when we are fearful we try to control what we see, but we cannot do it (T-1.VI.4:2). The "attempt to control reality according to false needs" is what this paragraph is calling "fantasy" (T-1.VII.3:4). Third, the first paragraph in Section VII has emphasized that our vision is dim, and that achieving true vision is a primary goal of our training program; this seems to be directed toward more than overcoming daydreams, and leads me to expect what follows to carry on that theme in some way. (Incidentally, the next section, T-2.I, continues with this theme of attempting to fill our imagined emptiness through "the inappropriate use of extension, or projection" (T-2.I.1:7).)

The published version of the first paragraph changed “sexual impulse” to “physical impulse,” giving a specific reference a broader application. I think, likewise, that although the most common form of fantasy that springs to mind is sexual fantasy, a broader meaning is not only implied but intended. Sexual fantasy fits the description here, but it is only representative of a vastly wider meaning of the term “fantasy.” This is why the paragraph refers to “fantasies of any kind” (3:2), clearly leading us to a broader interpretation of the word. I believe what this innocuous sentence (“Fantasy is a distorted form of vision”) is actually saying is that our current form of perception, which uses the body’s eyes and sees persons as confined within bodies, is nothing more than a fantasy, in which our perception has been twisted to perceive an unreality (2). When we respond to any situation while basing our actions only on such limited, physical perception we literally don’t know what we are doing.

If you are familiar with the Gospels, you may recognize the phrase, “know not what they do,” as the words spoken by Jesus on the cross about those who crucified him: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). Imagine seeing those who persecute or attack you in this way! Seeing them as blinded and ignorant in their limited perception, not understanding their own actions, and therefore wholly deserving of forgiveness. And think, too, that when we react to people based only on our physical perception of them, we are behaving just as those who crucified Jesus did, even when our actions do not take such a violent turn. We are as blind as they were, and too, we are just as deserving of forgiveness.

Our material world is our attempt to control reality so as to meet our “false needs,” which is a clear reference to the illusion of needs discussed in the last section (see especially T-1.VI.1:8– 10). We have perceived ourselves as lacking, so we manufactured a world in an attempt to fill that lack—an attempt doomed from the start because the needs were not real to begin with. Any distortion of reality is destructive (5) and so our fantasies are all attack-based. A later passage in the Text observes, “There is no fantasy that does not contain the dream of retribution for the past” (T-16.VII.4:2), and that is very often, quite unconsciously, retribution on ourselves for our imagined guilt. An early Workbook lesson contains similar teaching:

The world you see is a vengeful world, and everything in it is a symbol of vengeance. Each of your perceptions of “external reality” is a pictorial representation of your own attack thoughts. One can well ask if this can be called seeing. Is not fantasy a better word for such a process, and hallucination a more appropriate term for the result? (W-pI.23.3:1–4)

The focus in the chapter we are studying, however, is more on the attempt to control reality to meet our needs, “attempting to obtain pleasure from them” (6). We make “false associations” (7). In a sexual fantasy such false association is a key factor; I am falsely associating myself, physically, with someone, and obtaining pleasure from the association. In other fantasies, we may actually fantasize about vengeance, imagining ourselves extracting exquisite retribution on some supposed enemy, and relishing the experience (I often get caught up in imagining myself brilliantly arguing some opponent into the dust). In the larger sense of fantasy, we falsely associate our pleasure with various external objects, persons or situations. We believe something outside of us will bring us completion and satisfaction. Or we take delight in finding someone else guilty so we can appear innocent. Look at the in-

tense delight of the American people when some public figure, such as O. J. Simpson or Bill Clinton, is publicly dragged through the mud; we are fascinated by the guilt of others.

Whatever we believe in we make real to ourselves (even if no one else experiences it as real). This is what makes our fantasy of this world seem so real. Yet, it can be turned around and used for truth. We can offer miracles, and when we do, we will believe in miracles. Our belief, our “conviction” (10), will then transfer to “the miracle receiver,” the person to whom we are offering the miracle. Note the phrase “miracle receiver” here; it clearly shows that the Course has in mind miracles being extended from a miracle worker to a miracle receiver. To me this extension of conviction or belief is what is meant by the interpersonal nature of miracles. If I am a healer, I am not giving anyone a physical healing, for instance. I am sharing with them my conviction in the reality of the wholeness of our being, and they are being sustained in their belief by what I share. It is their own belief that brings about the change in their circumstances, not what I do. The *Manual for Teachers* explains the function of healers in just this way: “The truth in their minds reaches out to the truth in the minds of their brothers, so that illusions are not reinforced” (M-5.III.3:6; see all of M-5.III for more information). Sentences 11–14 are hard to understand; sentences 12–14 even seem as if they don’t belong here. I think they do. For one thing, they mention tyranny; there was a reference to tyranny resulting from the misuse of our creative potential in the last section, and I think that is what is being talked about here:

If it elects to do so, the mind can become the medium by which spirit creates along the line of its own creation. If it does not freely elect to do so, it retains its creative potential but places itself under tyrannous rather than Authoritative control. As a result it imprisons, because such are the dictates of tyrants. (T-1.V.5:4–6)

In other words, if we usurp God’s creative Authority, and use our creative ability simply to meet our imagined, private needs—as we do in any fantasy, whether it be common fantasy or fantasy in the broader sense of any kind of twisted perception—we produce tyranny. Our mind becomes tyrannized by the ego, and we, in turn, tyrannize others, attempting to exploit them for our own benefit, thus making them into “slaves.” That ties in exactly with the idea in this paragraph that, “Fantasy is an attempt to control reality” (3:4). The “slave” referred to in 3:13 is in quotes because he is not talking here about literal slavery; a “slave” must be a person who is imprisoned by the ego’s tyranny, and perhaps oppressed by our fantasy attempts to exploit them. As long as we are enslaving anyone in this way, we are not free ourselves. In 3:10, we are pictured as offering miracles and helping to free those to whom we offer them; in 3:14, we cannot be content until everyone so imprisoned has been freed. I summarize the meaning of the closing sentences like this: My attempts to distort reality in fantasy produce tyranny. That is, I am trying to control reality, including controlling others, attempting to dominate and exploit others to meet my imagined needs. In trying to enslave others, my own mind becomes enslaved to the ego. As long as anyone is so enslaved, my own release is not complete. Therefore, as a miracle-minded person, the healing of the Sonship, which is my true Self, is my only goal. That means releasing everything and everyone around me from the tyranny of my fantasies of self-gratification, and offering them a miracle instead.

Now that you’ve considered the published version, I’ve included the entire Urtext version of this

passage here, since it contains a lot of important omitted material. I hope we can find time to discuss it in class:

Fantasies are distorted forms of thinking, because they always involve twisting perception into unreality. Fantasy is a debased form of vision. Visions and Revelations are closely related. Fantasies & projection are more closely associated, because both attempt to control external reality according to false internal needs. "Live and let live" happens to be a very meaningful injunction. Twist reality in any way, and you are perceiving destructively. Reality was lost thru usurpation, which in turn produced tyranny. I told you you were now restored to your former role in the Plan of Atonement. But you must still choose freely to devote your heritage to the greater Restoration. As long as a single slave remains to walk the earth, your release is not complete. Complete restoration of the Sonship is the only true goal of the miracle-minded.

Sexual fantasies are distortions of perception by definition. They are a means of making false associations, and obtaining pleasure from them. Man can do this only because he *is* creative. But although he can perceive false associations, he can never make them real except to himself. As was said before, man believes in what he creates. If he creates a miracle, he will be equally strong in his belief in that. The strength of his conviction will then sustain the belief of the miracle receiver.

No fantasies, sexual or otherwise, are true. Fantasies become totally unnecessary as the Wholly satisfying nature of reality becomes apparent. The sex impulse *is* a miracle impulse when it is in proper focus.

In the interests of saving time, I'm including Greg Mackie's comments on these paragraphs. These remarks are purely for use by our study groups:

Again we are presented with two alternatives, which here could be summed up as "fantasy" or "reality." This paragraph could be applied to any kind of fantasy, but as you can see, the original dictation referred mainly to sexual fantasies. In fantasies, we make up images of others to gratify our false needs, "making false associations, and obtaining pleasure from them." The way out of fantasy and into reality is miracles, which are rooted in true vision. We extend them to others, and thus acknowledge the reality of others and ourselves, a reality that is far more satisfying than any fantasy could ever be. In this context, "Live and let live" means "Don't fantasize about your brother, since this is the making of a false image of him, and therefore an attack on who he really is. Instead, extend a miracle to him and let him 'live' by acknowledging his reality. If you do so, you will 'live' as well—you will rediscover your own reality."

Paragraphs 4 & 5

With these paragraphs the Course makes an abrupt change in topic. These final two paragraphs, clearly, are comments by the author about the Course itself, and how we should make use of it. They

seem to arise from the preceding discussion in the sense that the transformation of our thought and perception that has been discussed is obviously not a simple task; "This is a course in mind training" (4:1). Therefore, we need to approach it in a certain way.

4. ¹This is a course in mind training. ²All learning involves attention and study at some level. [Ur: Good students assign study periods for themselves. However, since this obvious step has not occurred to you, and since we are cooperating in this, I will make the obvious assignment now.] ³Some of the later parts of the course rest too heavily on these earlier sections not to require their careful study. ⁴You will also need them for preparation. ⁵Without this, you may become much too fearful of what is to come to make constructive use of it. ⁶However, as you study these earlier sections, you will begin to see some of the implications that will be amplified later on.

5. ¹A solid foundation is necessary because of the confusion between fear and awe to which I have already referred, and which is often made. ²I have said that awe is inappropriate in connection with the Sons of God, because you should not experience awe in the presence of your equals. ³However, it was also emphasized that awe is proper in the presence of your Creator. ⁴I have been careful to clarify my role in the Atonement without either over- or understating it. ⁵I am also trying to do the same with yours. ⁶I have stressed that awe is not an appropriate reaction to me because of our inherent equality. ⁷Some of the later steps in this course, however, involve a more direct approach to God Himself. ⁸It would be unwise to start on these steps without careful preparation, or awe will be confused with fear, and the experience will be more traumatic than beatific. ⁹Healing is of God in the end. ¹⁰The means are being carefully explained to you. ¹¹Revelation may occasionally reveal the end to you, but to reach it the means are needed.

• Study Question •

6. As you read these paragraphs, apply them to yourself. Complete the following sentence: "As I read the Text, the best way for me to proceed is...."



Notice what is said about **the early sections of the Text**. They:

- are foundational for later parts (4:3)
- contain implications that will be amplified later (4:6)
- explain the means to the end (5:10)
- are needed for preparation (4:4)

Notice what is said about **how we should approach the Course**:

- we need to train our mind and learn through attention and study (4:1–2)
- we need to carefully study the early sections (4:3,6)
- we need to get a solid foundation (5:1)
- we need to be prepared before starting on later parts (5:8)
- we need to acquire the means (5:11)

Notice what is said about **the later parts of the Course**:

- they rest on these earlier sections (4:3)
- they amplify the earlier sections (4:6)
- they involve a direct approach to God (5:7)

Some form of the word “careful” appears four times in these two paragraphs (4:3, 5:4, 5:8, 5:10). Clearly, the author wants us to do more than skim lightly over his writings; he wants us to study them, to dwell on them, to be careful to absorb all the meaning, and to think of the implications of what is said. That is my belief in writing this kind of commentary; that is how I believe we should approach the Text. To derive the most benefit, we need to pay careful attention to what is said and how it is said, and to study it in a linear fashion, from beginning to end, so that the earlier sections can properly prepare us for the later steps of the Course. I believe that everyone who takes the Course as her or his spiritual path owes it to themselves to engage in a careful, systematic study of the entire Text. It takes time, yes. It takes lots of time. It isn't always easy. But the benefits are beyond counting!

The discussion about awe being confused with fear should remind us of the earlier references to awe, in T-1.I.31 and T-1.II.3, in which we were told that awe is not an appropriate response to miracles or to Jesus or to any brother, but that it is an appropriate response to God, our Creator. (Incidentally, the words “to which I have already referred” were not part of the original dictation, but were added during editing. In fact, there is no earlier reference to the confusion of awe with fear.) This seems to relate to the earlier remarks about revelation and miracles (see 5:11 and compare with T-1.II.2). Those earlier remarks indicated that miracles were more desirable or useful now than revelation. Revelation is direct communication with God, and this section is telling us that such “direct approach to God Himself” (5:7), which is introduced in “some of the later steps in this course” (5:7), may be unwise now because “awe will be confused with fear” if we are not properly prepared to approach God directly (8). At first we should focus on the means (miracles within the context of human relationships) rather than striving for direct experiences of God, or revelation. Experiences of the miracle, which are introduced and “carefully explained” by the earlier part of the Text and Work-

book, are “the means” (5:10) that will lead us, eventually, to more experiences of revelation. Such experiences of direct approach to God are a feature of the second part of the Workbook.

When he read this over, Robert Perry added these thoughts:

I really got the feeling that the material recounted in Paragraph 5 (about God and awe and Jesus and our role) was also part of our preparation. Somehow that material, properly understood, is supposed to help us experience revelation without fear. Here is how I understand that:

We have been told that we are all Sons of God, equal to Jesus. Jesus has a role in the Atonement, but his role doesn't negate our equality with him. We in fact have a similar role.

We have been told that awe is natural in God's Presence.

This amounts to the following: You should feel awe in God's Presence. That is natural. Don't be afraid of it. But you are not a worm who should quiver in His Presence. You are His Son and should stand before Him unafraid. So, as you stand before Him feeling awe, recognize it for the natural experience that it is, and don't confuse it with fear.

Answer Key

1. As the miracle impulses reach our awareness through our distorted perception of lack, we experience them as various “physical impulses.” This phrase could include such things as sexual desire, hunger, addictions, and even simple physical pleasures such as hugging or cuddling an infant.
2. I'm not going to list all the references to “perception” here. Finding them is up to you; looking for them is part of the benefit of this question. By the way, some form of the word “perceive” occurs over 900 times in the entire Course.
3. Bodies are still useful as a means of expressing the Love of God, through one body to another. The reason the body is still required for this is that our vision is still so dim; we are still limited to physical sight and do not yet know how to exercise spiritual vision. So we work with what we have.
4. Yes, it is connected. In VI.4:1 it said the only purpose of the world is to be used to correct our unbelief. Here, it says the only true usefulness of the body is helping us enlarge our perception to transcend physical sight. Both of these purposes have to do with removing the blocks to our awareness of Love's presence, or becoming aware once more of the spiritual realm. We are using the world, and bodies within the world, in order to transcend the world of bodies.
5. Two parts:
 - a. Three descriptions of “fantasy:” 1) “a distorted form of vision” (3:1). They twist perception into unreality. 2) “An attempt to control reality according to false needs” (3:4). Re-

- lated to “The Illusion of Needs.” We see false needs, and attempt to control reality to meet them. 3) “A means of making false associations and attempting to derive pleasure from them” (3:6). Sexual fantasy is a good example, but this applies equally well to things we think of as real, such as special love relationships, power trips, etc.
- b. “Fantasy,” in my opinion based on the above descriptions of it, includes not only the imaginary fabrications of our mind that never appear in the physical world, but also the entire physical world, which we have manifested in an attempt to meet our imaginary needs. Some (including my partner, Robert Perry) feel that the real emphasis here is on what we would normally call fan-tasy—daydreaming, or sexual fantasies. Robert agrees that the word “fantasy” often has a broader meaning in the Course, one that includes the entire physical world, but he feels that this paragraph is, in his words:

...a penetrating commentary on this everyday phenomenon [of daydreaming and fantasizing]. It says that when you fantasize, you are twisting perception into unreality. You are trying to control reality (at least mentally) according to false needs (you are trying to make up a reality in your mind that meets your false needs). You are twisting reality and so perceiving destructively. You are making false associations--associations which exist nowhere but in your mind--and attempting to obtain pleasure from them. In short, you are making up your own false reality and trying to have it meet your private needs; you are disconnecting from reality and disappearing into your own private world.

My reasons for giving it the broader interpretation are touched upon in the commentary.

6. As I read the Text, the best way for me to proceed is to study the Course pretty much in the order it is written, paying careful attention to the earlier sections before proceeding to the later ones. The ideal outcome is to carefully study the earlier sections, to get a solid foundation, to be prepared, so that in later parts of the Course we can approach God and make constructive use of the experience, experiencing awe, not fear.