

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM Text, Section 2.VI

### Fear and Conflict

The theme of fear runs all through this chapter; it is mentioned sixty times. This section and the next focus on fear. It would be good to read over Section VII along with VI; the two are closely connected. Every section in this chapter reiterates the message: The remedy for fear is the Atonement.

This section seems to ascribe fear to several different causes. Since the section tries to explain what causes fear, the multiple causes may seem confusing. Four fairly distinct causes for fear are mentioned:

- choosing out of accord with Jesus (paragraphs 1–4)
- a conflict between wanting and doing (paragraphs 5–6)
- choosing against love (paragraphs 7–8)
- the ability of your own thoughts to cause harm (paragraph 9)

Each of these brings out something different about fear. They can also be seen in a more unified manner, as variants of the same thing.

### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>Being afraid seems to be involuntary; something beyond your own control. <sup>2</sup>Yet I have said already that only constructive acts should be involuntary. <sup>3</sup>My control can take over everything that does not matter, while my guidance can direct everything that does, if you so choose. <sup>4</sup>Fear cannot be controlled by me, but it can be self-controlled. <sup>5</sup>Fear prevents me from giving you my control. [Ur: Fear is always associated with what does not matter. It prevents Me from controlling it.] <sup>6</sup>The presence of fear shows that you have raised body thoughts to the level of the mind. [Ur: The correction is therefore a matter of *your* will, because its presence shows that you have raised the *unimportant* to a higher level than it warrants. You have thus brought it under your will, where it *does not* belong.] <sup>7</sup>This removes them [Ur: it] from my control, and makes you feel personally responsible for them [Ur: it]. <sup>8</sup>This is an obvious confusion of levels.

• Study Questions •

1. *Jesus says that his control can take over “everything that does not matter,” while his guidance can direct “everything that does” (1:3). The meaning of these phrases is not clear from this sentence alone. Look through the section and find other mentions of things that do and do not matter, or things that Jesus controls or guides. See if you can identify what matters and what does not.*
2. *What is the difference between “guidance” and “control”?*



I believe that the “constructive acts” (1:6) which should be “involuntary” refer to miracles, because of two connections. For “constructive,” see T-2.V.5:4: “By denying your mind any destructive potential and reinstating its purely constructive powers, you place yourself in a position to undo the level confusion of others.” For “involuntary,” see T-1.I.5:1 (the only previous use of the word): “Miracles are habits, and should be involuntary.” The constructive acts our minds can carry out in this world are miracles, and should not be under our conscious control (T-1.I.5:3), but under Jesus’ control (T-1.III.4:3). Jesus puts miracles in the class of “behavior” here, in the sense that they are the outward expression of loving thoughts, or acts of extension toward others, and behavior is what he desires to control.

In sentence 3, Jesus says that if we allow him to guide our thoughts, he can control “everything that does not matter”; from sentence 2, we can deduce that what “does not matter” are our “acts” or behavior, that is, what our bodies *do*. (This is confirmed later, in paragraphs 2 and 4. See T-2.VI.2:7–9 and T-2.VI.4:6–7.) What he is saying here, then, is that if we will place our minds under his guidance, he will control our behavior. *We* are the ones who have brought behavior under our will and made it a matter about which we must decide; therefore, the correction is also a matter of our will, our choice (1:6 Urtext).

Fear takes many forms. I experience fear, for instance, when it looks like I might not have enough money to pay my bills, or when I am driving and see a nearby car swerving dangerously. Such fears seem to be involuntary. I may believe I want the fear to go away, particularly a fear that arises while I am trying to go to sleep. It seems beyond my control.

The message of this paragraph is that fear is *not* involuntary, and “can be self-controlled” (1:4), if I choose to do so (1:3). Yet this does not call for iron will and grit-the-teeth courage; it isn’t about “facing your fears.” The Course advocates controlling fears, but indirectly, by addressing fear’s *causes*.

Fear is a symptom; it has causes. The first cause is that I have “raised body thoughts to the level of mind” (1:6). To avoid fear, then, just avoid raising body thoughts to the mind level. But what does *that* mean?

What are “body thoughts”? The phrase is used only one other time in the Course, in the Workbook, with a different meaning. Let’s see if we can determine the meaning here from the recent context. The Text mentions things *similar to* “body thoughts.” T-2.IV.2 speaks of our belief that the body can miscreate in the mind,

which sounds similar to raising body thoughts to the level of mind. And in T-2.V.6, we read about our mistaken belief that the body can teach and can learn, which only minds can do. The meaning of raising body thoughts to the mind level, then, is that we are falsely attributing powers to our bodies which belong only to the mind, placing the body on the level of mind. This is the same “confusion of levels” (1:8) Jesus has mentioned earlier (T-2.IV.2:2–3; T-2.V.1:5–6; T-2.V.5:4), and can be healed in the same way: by realizing that only the mind can create (T-2.IV.2:9–10).

Jesus says that fear prevents us from placing something—“them” (1:7)—under his control (1:5, 1:7), but what is this *something*? It must refer to “body thoughts” in 1:6, particularly since “them” is plural. Since he wants to *control* them, it must refer to what our bodies do (rather than actual thoughts) because our acts are what he controls (1:2–3). The idea is that we need to place the body and its actions—to which we falsely attribute independence and creative powers, and which we are mistakenly trying to direct and control *by ourselves*—under Jesus’ control. Attributing mental powers to the body obscures the link between mind and body, and raises the body to mind level, thus removing it from Jesus’ control. Thus, to paraphrase:

The presence of fear shows that you have mistakenly endowed your body with independent creative power, which is limited to the mind. This removes your body’s actions from my control, and makes you feel personally responsible for them.

When we discuss paragraphs 2 and 3, we’ll come back to the startling idea that is implied here: that we are not “personally responsible” for the actions of our bodies!

Ideally, our bodies and their activities ought to be controlled by Jesus, with miracles flowing forth from us spontaneously, as seemed to be the case with him when he was physically present. When we remove our bodies from his control, we become afraid. Suppose, for a moment, you were on a Boeing 767 jet with just the pilot, flying across the country, when suddenly the pilot has a heart attack. He was flying the plane, so you were relaxed and confident; now, suddenly, flying the plane is up to you! You would be terrified. Well, we feel a similar fear when we think *we* are responsible for controlling our bodies and what they do, because we aren’t sure of how to do it.

Let me repeat for emphasis what I said before: *If we will place our minds under his guidance, he will control our behavior.* Doing this is the key to freedom from fear.

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>I do not foster level confusion, but you must choose to correct it. <sup>2</sup>You would not excuse [tolerate] insane behavior on your part by saying you could not help it. <sup>3</sup>Why should you condone insane thinking? <sup>4</sup>There is a confusion [Ur: fallacy] here that you would do well to look at clearly. <sup>5</sup>You may believe that you are [are] responsible for what you do [do], but not for what you think [think]. <sup>6</sup>The truth is that you are [are] responsible for what you think [think], because it is only at this level that you can exercise choice. <sup>7</sup>What you do comes from what you think. <sup>8</sup>You cannot separate yourself from the truth [Ur: separate truth] by “giving” autonomy to behavior. <sup>9</sup>This [behavior] is controlled

by me automatically as soon as you place what you think under my guidance.  
<sup>10</sup>Whenever you are afraid, it is a sure sign that you have allowed your mind to miscreate and [Ur: i.e.,] have not allowed me to guide it.

• Study Question •

3. *If all fear is a “sure sign that you have allowed your mind to miscreate and have not allowed me [Jesus] to guide it” (2:10), then what would a reasonable antidote to fear consist of?*



Although Jesus does not support our level confusion and the fear it generates, he can't contravene our choice: If we choose to confuse body and mind he cannot stop us. Correcting our fear is up to us (2:1). “I can't help it” is not a valid excuse (2:2–3) because it isn't true. Believing we *can* correct our behavior, but *can't* correct our thinking, shows that we are very confused (2:4). We think we are responsible for what we do, and not responsible for what we think. In reality the reverse is true. We are responsible for what we think because only at the level of thought can we exercise choice (2:5–6).

The clear implication is that we are *not* responsible for what we do (not directly, at any rate) because in truth, at the body level, we cannot exercise real choice. What we do comes from what we think (which we *are* responsible for), and therefore *actions cannot be dealt with as if they were something existing apart from mind*. That, I think is what Jesus means by “‘giving’ autonomy to behavior”: treating behavior as if it were something that happens apart from our thoughts, and attempting to correct it without correcting our thoughts. This is the same thing that the first paragraph called raising “body thoughts to the level of mind” (1:6). Our egos are trying to maintain their illusory separation from truth (ego autonomy) by seeing our bodies as if *they* were autonomous (2:8).

*The illusion of the autonomy of the body...is but the working of the ego's plan to establish its own autonomy.* (T-15.VII.12:1)

When we try to correct things on a behavioral level—trying to change what we *do* without really changing what we *think*—it cannot work. We are confusing levels. We think we are directly responsible for our actions; in fact, we are only indirectly responsible for them. Actions come from thoughts (2:7). It is a mistake, a confusion of levels, to attempt to deal directly with behavior.

If we take responsibility for our thoughts, and place them under Jesus' guidance, our behavior “is controlled by [Jesus] automatically” (2:8). What *matters* (1:3) is our thoughts; what *does not matter* is our actions (2:8–9). The actions stem from the thoughts. Take care of the thoughts and the actions will follow.

**Suggestion:** try reading this paragraph aloud to yourself, inserting your own name wherever appropriate, for example, “I do not foster level confusion, but you, Allen, must choose to correct it.”

## Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>It is pointless to believe that controlling the outcome of misthought can result in [real] healing. <sup>2</sup>When you are fearful, you have chosen wrongly. <sup>3</sup>That is why you feel [Ur: feel you are] responsible for it. <sup>4</sup>You must change your mind [mind], not your behavior, and this *is* a matter of willingness [Ur: will]. <sup>5</sup>You do not need guidance except [except] at the mind level. <sup>6</sup>Correction belongs only [only] at the level where change is possible. <sup>7</sup>Change [The term, possibly referring to “correction” instead of “change”] does not mean anything at the symptom level, where it cannot work.

### • Study Question •

4. *“This is a matter of willingness” (3:4). Are you willing to ask Jesus to guide, correct and change all of your thinking? Think of a situation in which you are fearful, and have been trying to change your behavior or to know what action to take. Ask Jesus to take charge of your thinking about the situation, and try to let go of your attempts to correct your behavior.*



This paragraph reemphasizes the message of the first two paragraphs: “You must change your *mind*, not your behavior” (3:4). It “is pointless” to try to control “the outcome of misthought” (3:1). When fear arises in us, we don’t need a change in our behavior or in external circumstances; we need a change of mind. Fear comes from a wrong choice of the mind (not allowing Jesus to guide it) (3:2; 2:10), not from anything outside or anything we do.

Over and over, Jesus tells us the same thing: “You do not need guidance except at the mind level. Correction belongs only at the level where change is possible” (3:4–5). If we honestly examine our lives, we will see why he finds such repetition to be necessary: When troubles arise, our first question always seems to be, “What should I *do*?” Rarely do we find ourselves asking, “What should I *think*?” Yet that is the only meaningful request. Faulty behavior is just a “symptom” (3:7) of faulty thinking. If you choose to think lovelessly, you cannot behave lovingly. Heal the mind, and mind’s physical manifestation will follow suit.

Furthermore, bringing healing to another person is likewise not a matter of specific behaviors, but a matter of changing our minds about the person—truly seeing them as whole.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>The correction of fear *is* your responsibility. <sup>2</sup>When you ask [Jesus] for release from fear, you are implying that it is not. <sup>3</sup>You should ask, instead, for help in the conditions that have brought the fear about. <sup>4</sup>These conditions always entail a willingness to be separate [Ur: a separated Mind-willingness]. <sup>5</sup>At that level you *can* help it. <sup>6</sup>You are much too tolerant of mind wandering, and are passively condoning your mind’s miscreations [Ur: thus passively

condoning its miscreation]. <sup>7</sup>The particular result does not matter [never matters], but the fundamental error does [*does*]. <sup>8</sup>The [Ur: fundamental] correction is always the same. <sup>9</sup>Before you choose to do anything, ask me if your choice is in accord with mine. <sup>10</sup>If you are sure that it is, there will be no fear.

• Study Question •

5. *This paragraph tells us what to do when fear arises in our minds. How would you summarize that practice? If some specific instance of fear in your life comes to mind, try applying this practice now to that situation.*



As I noted at the beginning, the central message of this section is that fear is voluntary, and can be controlled by our accepting the Atonement. Jesus, or God, will not take away our fear; it is *our own responsibility*, so we needn't bother praying for release from it (4:1–2). If we take responsibility for our thoughts, he will take responsibility for our bodies. Later, he actually promises to take care of our *egos* as well! (See T-4.I.13:4.)

Remember also that the fears being spoken of all through the chapter are the fears that arise for us when we think of assuming our function as miracle workers. Notice that release from fear is “your responsibility” (4:1), yet the last section told us that accepting the Atonement is our “sole responsibility” (T-2.V.5:1). These two, then, must be the same: It is up to us to release ourselves from fear by accepting the Atonement for ourselves.

If asking for release from fear is not appropriate when we are afraid, what kind of prayer *is* appropriate? Asking for “help in the conditions that have brought the fear about” (4:3), or in other words, asking for help in correcting our thinking. Our misthought always involves a choice to be separate in some way (4:4). I believe, given the context, this means a desire to have a *separate will*, rather than allowing God's Voice to guide us. The correction to this mistake in 4:9–10 is choosing with Jesus, which makes it crystal clear what mistake is being corrected.

This paragraph presents a fundamental practice of *A Course in Miracles*: watching my thoughts. “You are much too tolerant of mind wandering” (4:6). I think I ought to post that saying on my bathroom mirror! I often let my mind follow whatever avenue of thought seems to invite my attention, without bothering to notice whether it strengthens my sense of separation or weakens it.

In the Urtext (T 2 E 23), Jesus once told Helen, “The unwatched mind is responsible for the whole content of the unconscious” (also quoted in *Absence from Felicity*, page 257). Once an unwatched thought falls into our unconscious, it can result in seemingly uncontrollable behavior. Watching our minds and choosing with Jesus, can prevent this.

I am being asked to *not* tolerate wandering thoughts, but instead to ask Jesus if my thoughts agree with his (4:9). Are they thoughts of separation, or thoughts of union? Thoughts of recoil and withdrawal, or thoughts of extension and love? Is the choice I am about to make coming from truth? Does it reflect truth? If I will watch my thoughts in this manner, “there will be no fear” (4:10).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>Fear is always a sign of strain, arising whenever what you want [Ur: whenever the will to do] conflicts with what you do. <sup>2</sup>This situation arises in two [Ur: major] ways: First, you can choose to do conflicting things, either simultaneously or successively. <sup>3</sup>This produces conflicted behavior, which is intolerable to you because the part of the mind that wants to do something else is outraged [Ur: which would be tolerable to the self (though not necessarily to others) except for the fact that the part of the will that wants something *else* is outraged]. <sup>4</sup>Second, you can behave as you think you should, but without entirely wanting to do so. <sup>5</sup>This produces consistent behavior, but entails great strain [Ur: within the self]. <sup>6</sup>In both cases, the mind [Ur: the will] and the behavior are out of accord, resulting in a situation in which you are doing what you do not wholly want to do. <sup>7</sup>This arouses a sense of coercion that usually produces rage, [Ur: The anger then invades the mind,] and projection is likely to follow. [Ur: Depression or anxiety are virtually certain.] <sup>8</sup>Whenever there is fear, it is because you have not made up your mind. <sup>9</sup>Your mind is therefore split, and your behavior inevitably becomes erratic. <sup>10</sup>Correcting at the behavioral level can shift the error from the first to the second type, but will not obliterate the fear.

### • Study Question •

6. *See if you can identify, in your own life, some situation that matches each of the "two ways" that are described in sentences 2 through 5 in which what you want conflicts with what you do.*



Paragraphs 5 and 6 explain *how* fear is born from our attempts to treat behavior as if it had nothing to do with thought. Fear arises because we “have raised body thoughts to the level of mind” (1:6); because we have “allowed [our] mind to miscreate and have not allowed [Jesus] to guide it” (2:10); because we “have chosen wrongly” (3:2); and because we have passively entertained “a willingness to be separate” (4:4), to choose independently of God’s will. Now we are told that fear arises because our wrongful choices have created a conflict between what we want and what we do (5:1).

A conflicted mind is a natural consequence of desiring a will that is independent of God’s. The supposed battle between our illusory independent will and God’s Will is the hidden cause of all our fear. Consider the two ways in which “what you want conflicts with what you do” (5:1):

- Type I Conflict: You want and do two (or more) conflicting things, either one after the other, or even simultaneously (5:2–3);
- Type 2 Conflict: You do what you think you *should*, but you don't really want to. Part of your mind wants to do something else (5:4–5).

Both types raise the same question. What is the source of this conflict? I must be listening to *two different voices*. We are quite familiar with this in ordinary situations. We often want two things that conflict so that no matter what we do, we cannot have both. This arouses fear simply because in every case, we appear to lose *something*.

I think the dichotomy in mind goes even deeper. One voice I hear seems to be my own independent voice; it seems to tell me what I *want* to do, which is some action of grasping, based on fear. This voice is the ego. The other voice is God's, which seems to tell me what I *should* do, what would be in accord with my divine nature, (5:4), an act of giving and love. In this section, Jesus represents God's Voice.

If I outwardly do what I think I should *without correcting my thinking*, I am doing what I believe *God* wants at the expense of what I think *I* want. In Type I Conflict, I obey both voices simultaneously or successively; sometimes I "do good" and sometimes I "do evil." That results in fear because I feel as though I am angering God. In Type II Conflict, I behave consistently as I "think [I] should" (5:4). But I end up feeling coerced, forced into doing something I do not want to do under threat of God's anger. In both cases, I feel fear. As T-2.I.4:1 told us, we fear because we think we can usurp God's power.

"Whenever there is fear, it is because you have not made up your mind" (5:8). This means more than, "Make your goal clear and you will not fear." It is really saying, "You are afraid because you have not chosen to listen unequivocally to one voice; you are still trying to nurture your separate ego self." It does no good at all to *imitate* loving behavior. You can't be a miracle worker just by *acting* like one. That just turns Type I Conflict into Type II Conflict, and does nothing at all to "obliterate the fear" (5:10).

We need to correct our minds, not our behavior. We need to bring our dark thoughts to Jesus and ask him to help us correct them until loving behavior is the natural expression of our state of mind.

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>It is possible to reach a state in which you bring your mind [Ur: will] under my guidance without [Ur: much] conscious effort, but this implies a willingness [Ur: a kind of habit pattern] that you have not developed [Ur: dependably] as yet. [Ur: Tell Bill that although he keeps telling you that God will never ask you to do more than you can, he does not understand it himself.] <sup>2</sup>The Holy Spirit cannot [Ur: God cannot] ask more than you [Ur: will.] are willing to do. <sup>3</sup>The strength to do comes from your undivided decision [Ur: from your own undivided will to do]. <sup>4</sup>There is no strain in doing God's Will as soon as you recognize that it is also your own. <sup>5</sup>The lesson here is quite simple, but particularly apt to be overlooked. <sup>6</sup>I will therefore repeat it, urging you to listen. <sup>7</sup>Only your mind can produce fear. <sup>8</sup>It does so whenever it is conflicted in what it wants, [Ur: thus] producing inevitable strain because wanting [Ur: willing] and doing are discordant. <sup>9</sup>This can be corrected only by accepting a unified goal. [Ur: This cannot be corrected by better *doing*. But it *can* be corrected by higher *willing*.]



**Note:** For a similar discussion, read W-pI.16.3:1–4.

• **Study Question** •

7. *One central thing prevents our peace of mind and produces fear in our minds, and only one thing can resolve this problem. What is the problem, and what is the solution?*

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We may aspire to bring our minds under Jesus' guidance without conscious effort, but we are not there yet! In our condition, it *does* require conscious effort because our willingness isn't developed sufficiently (6:1). Of course we want our spiritual walk to become effortless. It eventually *will* be. But—and this is a note sounded often in the Course—it will take effort to arrive at effortlessness.

This seemingly paradoxical idea is actually quite commonplace. A pianist plays some complex Liszt concerto apparently without effort, and yet we know that behind the virtuoso display lie years of practice. We speak our native tongue without conscious effort, but we have forgotten the monumental effort we put forth as infants to master the language.

Enough effort *can* achieve effortlessness. “What you take, takes you,” my teacher Norman Grubb used to say. Learning a new language requires a long period of conscious effort, but eventually the language takes you over, and you arrive at using the language without consciously thinking about it. The same is true in spiritual practice. If we want our minds to come to the place where they spontaneously operate in the main current of God's Will, we must train them to do so. We must choose God's Will again, and again, and again. We must develop our willingness. “This is a course in mind training” (T-1.VII.4:1).

We have been told that we can do anything Jesus asks of us (T-2.II.1:1); we can work miracles. Where does such strength come from? “From your undivided decision” (6:3). When our minds have been purified from all conflict, when doing God's Will is all we want because we have recognized It as our own, then “there is no strain in doing God's Will” (6:4). That is *true* effortlessness. Jesus states it succinctly in a later passage:

Once you accept His plan as the one function that you would fulfill, there will be nothing else the Holy Spirit will not arrange for you without your effort.  
(T-20.IV.8:4)

A mind with such a unified purpose has no fear. The early stages of our spiritual path are generally spent in ridding ourselves of our divided loyalties. We want God, but we still want our toys too. We want to discover our holy, loving nature, but we are afraid to give up the comfort of our familiar ego self. “You believe that without the ego, all would be chaos” (T-15.V.1:6).

The conflict cannot be ignored, suppressed, or run away from. There is only one way out: through the conflict (W-pII.333.1:1–4). The dark thoughts must be brought into the presence of the Light. Don't suppress the dichotomy of mind. Recognize it, bring it into sharp focus, and end it with a firm choice for the truth. “The way out of conflict between two opposing thought systems is clearly to choose one and

relinquish the other" (T-6.V(B).5:1). Turn to the Holy Spirit and let Him lead you through the conflict. You would condemn yourself for the dark thoughts in your mind; He will not condemn, He will bring forgiveness and healing.

Robert Perry has written an excellent article based on these two paragraphs, giving his explanation of these ideas. Its title is "Fear and Conflict," and it can be found here: <http://www.circleofa.org/articles/FearandConflict.php>

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>The first corrective step in undoing the error is to know first that the conflict is an expression of fear [Ur: After taking the first corrective step, i.e., "Knowing it is fear," you might benefit temporarily by adding another next step before going on with the corrective process.]. <sup>2</sup>Say to yourself that you must somehow [Ur: or somewhere] have chosen not to love, or the fear could not have arisen. [Ur: Then follow previous instructions.]. <sup>3</sup>Then the whole process of correction becomes nothing more than a series of pragmatic steps in the larger process of accepting the Atonement as the remedy. <sup>4</sup>These steps may be summarized in this way:

<sup>5</sup>Know first that this is fear.

<sup>6</sup>Fear arises from lack of love.

<sup>7</sup>The only remedy for lack of love is perfect love.

<sup>8</sup>Perfect love is the Atonement.

[Ur: The final procedural step (3) is inherent in the last statement (4).]

"Whenever there is fear, it is because you have not made up your mind" (5:8). That is, a divided mind causes fear. On first reading, sentence 7:1 seems to say the reverse, that fear causes a divided mind: "...the conflict is an expression of fear." I don't think that is what it really means. I think that the phrase "expression of fear" means "the outward form taken by the fear" rather than "the result of fear." When you experience the strain of conflict between what you want and what you are doing, you think the outward conflict is the problem. Actually the conflict is a manifestation of fear, which is the real problem. The conflict *is a form fear takes*. And fear arises (as it goes on to say) because you haven't made up your mind. Somehow, somewhere, you chose something besides love. If you recall, in paragraph 6 we were told: "There is no strain in doing God's Will as soon as you recognize that it is also your own" (6:4). The strain vanishes when you have wholeheartedly chosen love.

When I experience this kind of strain (especially when I think I am doing God's will, but reluctantly), I need to realize: "This is fear" (7:5). Fear in my mind shows up in my actions as a discord between wanting and doing. I don't normally identify that as a symptom of fear, but that is what I need to learn: This is fear! And fear can only arise if I've chosen not to love (chosen to separate my mind from that of Jesus). I

need to correct *that*, rather than try to perfect my behavior. These steps taken together comprise the "larger process of accepting the Atonement" (7:3). Then, the whole corrective process becomes a simple series of "pragmatic steps" (7:3), which are summarized in the sentences that follow.

• Study Question •

8. *There are four steps given in the correction process. Write them out in your own words, expanding on what they mean to you. When you have done so, try applying the steps to some situation in your life where you have experienced strain and conflict.*



## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>I have emphasized that the miracle, or the expression of Atonement, is always a sign of [Ur: real] respect *from* the worthy *to* the worthy. <sup>2</sup>The recognition of this worth is re-established by the Atonement. <sup>3</sup>It is obvious, then, that when you are afraid, you have placed yourself in a position where you need Atonement. <sup>4</sup>You have done something loveless, having chosen without love. [Ur: It is obvious, then, that when you are afraid you have placed yourself in a position where you *need* Atonement *because* you have *done* something loveless *because* you *willed* without love.] <sup>5</sup>This is precisely the situation for which the Atonement was offered. <sup>6</sup>The need for the remedy inspired its establishment. <sup>7</sup>As long as you recognize only the *need* for the remedy, you will remain fearful. <sup>8</sup>However, as soon as you accept the remedy [Ur: *as you remedy it*], you have abolished the fear. <sup>9</sup>This is how true [*true*] healing occurs.

When I have "done something loveless" (8:4), I do not feel worthy of sharing a miracle. A miracle cannot extend from me to another until I have re-established my sense of worth; the Atonement does that. I may feel fear; I may feel too "dirty" to pray. That is *precisely* when I need it most; that is "precisely the situation for which the Atonement was offered" (8:5).

Becoming aware of unloving thoughts and choices is good; it awakens your awareness of a need for the Atonement. But don't stop there! Don't wallow in self-loathing. Never postpone coming to God because you don't feel ready. As the old gospel hymn says, each of us should come "Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot." The Atonement welcomes you just as you are; it was *made* for your seeming deficiencies; it is the *remedy* for your unworthiness. It will wash away all fear.

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Everyone experiences fear [Ur: *and nobody enjoys it*]. <sup>2</sup>Yet it would take very little right-thinking to realize why fear occurs. <sup>3</sup>Few appreciate the real power of the mind, and no one remains fully aware of it all the time. [Ur: *This is*

inevitable in this world, because the human being has many things he must do, and cannot engage in constant thought-watching.] <sup>4</sup>However, if you hope to spare yourself from fear there are some things you must realize, and realize fully [Ur: at least some of the time]. <sup>5</sup>The mind is very powerful, and never loses its creative force. <sup>6</sup>It never sleeps. <sup>7</sup>Every instant it is creating [Ur: and *always* as you will. Many of your ordinary expressions reflect this. For example, when you say “don’t give it a thought”, you are implying that if you do not think about something, it will have no effect on you. This is true enough. On the other hand, many other expressions are clear expressions of the prevailing *lack* of awareness of thought-power. For example, you say, “just an idle thought”, and mean that the thought has no effect. You also speak of some actions as “thoughtless”, implying that if the person *had* thought, he would not have behaved as he did. You also use phrases like “thought provoking”, which is bland enough, but the term “a provoking thought” means something quite different. While expressions like “think big” give some recognition to the power of thought, they still come nowhere near the truth. You do not expect to grow when you say it, because you don’t really believe it.] <sup>8</sup>It is hard to recognize that thought and belief combine into a power surge that can literally move mountains. <sup>9</sup>It appears at first glance that to believe such power about yourself is arrogant, but that is not the real reason you do not believe it. <sup>10</sup>You prefer to believe that your thoughts cannot exert real influence because you are actually [Ur: literally] afraid of them. [Ur: Therapists try to help people who are afraid of their own death wishes by depreciating the power of the wish. They even attempt to “free” the patient by persuading him that he can think whatever he wants, without *any* real effect at all. There is a real dilemma here, which only the truly right-minded can escape. Death wishes do not kill in the physical sense, but they *do* kill spiritually. *All* destructive thinking is dangerous. Given a death wish, a man has no choice except to *act* upon his thought, or behave *contrary to* it. He can thus choose *only* between homicide {did he mean suicide?} and fear....The other possibility is that he depreciates the power of his thought. This is the usual psychoanalytic approach.] <sup>11</sup>This may allay awareness of the guilt, but at the cost of perceiving the mind as impotent. <sup>12</sup>If you believe that what you think is ineffectual you may cease to be [Ur: overly] afraid of it, but you are hardly likely to respect it. [Ur: The world is full of endless examples of how man has depreciated himself because he is afraid of his own thoughts. In some forms of insanity, thoughts are glorified, but this is only because the underlying depreciation {of thought} was too effective for tolerance {it became intolerable and had to be compensated for by a glorification of thought}.] <sup>13</sup>There *are* no idle thoughts. <sup>14</sup>All thinking produces form at some level. [Ur: The reason why people are afraid of ESP, and so often react against it, is because they *know* that thought can hurt them. Their own thoughts have made them vulnerable {to the “psychic” thoughts of others}.]

This last paragraph offers yet another cause for fear: the awesome power of our minds, and the belief we have misused it. We are, at the root of it all, afraid of our own thoughts (9:10). This points back to what was said earlier: "All fear is ultimately reducible to the basic misperception that you have the ability to usurp the power of God" (T-2.I.4:1). When we take the creative force of our minds which "can literally move mountains" (9:8), and divorce it from God's guidance, it is, as I said earlier, like suddenly finding yourself at the helm of a Boeing 767, knowing nothing about how to fly it. It terrifies us. We believe that we have already done irreparable damage to the peace of Heaven. If we let ourselves realize how powerful our minds really are, it would fill us with unimaginable guilt. We prefer to pretend that our minds are weak (9:10). Thinking we are weak actually brings on a different kind of fear: We become afraid of what other things can do to us. That happens only because, unconsciously, we are really afraid of what *we* can do.

The final lines of the section re-emphasize the importance of watching our thoughts and bringing them all under divine guidance. If the mind never sleeps (9:6), no thoughts are idle, and "all thinking produces form at some level" (9:13–14), then there is no mystery of why we need to refuse to tolerate mind wandering, and bring our minds wholly back into alignment with God's loving Will.

The material re-inserted from the Urtext just underscores the basic message of the paragraph, making it even more pointed and powerful. No actions are "thoughtless." To "think big" might actually cause growth. (Charles Fillmore actually did succeed in making his shriveled leg grow!) Thoughts *can* hurt us, if our own thoughts have made us vulnerable.

It is interesting, also, that Jesus is so critical of the usual psychoanalytic approach of depreciating the power of negative thinking.

## Answer Key

1. "What does not matter" is our behavior, our actions; this is what Jesus controls. "What does" matter is what we think; this is what he guides. See 2:8, 9; 4:6, 7 (*the result* is our behavior, while *the fundamental error* is in our thoughts). A similar idea is expressed in T-4.I.13:4, where Jesus says he will take care of our bodies and our egos.
2. Control means Jesus makes the decisions and chooses direction; guidance means he suggests to us, but the choice is ultimately ours.
3. A reasonable antidote to fear, based on 2:10, would be to ask Jesus to undo the miscreations of the past and to guide my thinking in the present moment.
4. No written response expected.
5. The specific practice in response to fear is: Do not allow your thinking to wander unchecked. If fear arises, actively choose to bring your thinking under the guidance of Jesus, and ask him for help in correcting the conditions in your mind that brought about the fear.
6. No written response expected.
7. The central thing that produces fear in our mind is that we are not single-minded; our mind is conflicted in what it wants. Part of our mind wants to do God's Will; another part thinks it does not. Therefore, we fear because ultimately we fear God. The one solution to this problem is to accept a unified goal, that is, to recognize that our will is one with God's, and we want nothing else.
8. *Steps in the correction process:*
  - Step 1: Recognize that my conflict between wanting and doing, or my inner sense of strain, is really an expression of fear.
  - Step 2: Understand that fear always arises from a lack of love, or my choice not to love.
  - Step 3: If the problem is a lack of love, the solution is to supply the love that is lacking; i.e., to choose love.
  - Step 4: Choosing love means accepting the Atonement; that is, receiving forgiveness for my lack of love and being empowered to choose again for love, in accord with Jesus.