

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 4, Section IV

This Need Not Be

Overview of the Section

The preceding sections of this chapter have repeatedly called for what I term “mental vigilance,” which is the heart of the Course’s “prescription” for our mental illness. They have been setting the stage for the main act, found in Section IV, which presents an extended discussion and examples of mental vigilance. My commentary is a bit longer than usual, due to the paramount importance of the material.

By *mental vigilance*, I mean the practice of watching our thoughts, detecting ego-based thoughts, looking at them honestly, and—with the help of the Holy Spirit—deciding we do not want them, stepping aside from them, and choosing to change our minds. This is a central teaching of the whole Course. A few quotes from later chapters will serve to illustrate:

If you raise what fear conceals to clear-cut unequivocal predominance, fear becomes meaningless. You have denied its power to conceal love, which was its only purpose. The veil that you have drawn across the face of love has disappeared. (T-12.I.9:9–11)

The search for truth is but the honest searching out of everything that interferes with truth. ... Under each cornerstone of fear on which you have erected your insane system of belief, the truth lies hidden. Yet you cannot know this, for by hiding truth in fear, you see no reason to believe that the more you look at fear the less you see it, and the clearer what it conceals becomes. (T14.VII.2:1,7–8)

Our task is but to continue, as fast as possible, the necessary process of looking straight at all the interference and seeing it exactly as it is. (T-15.IX.2:1)

• **Study Question** •

1. *Look up the following references, all in this chapter:*

T-4.I.4:1-2

T-4.I.4:6-7

T-4.II.3:1-6 (note the similarity between the phrase in the last sentence, “need not work that way,” and the title of Section IV, “This Need Not Be”)

T-4.III.5:1-2 (a “belief in darkness and hiding” is the opposite of the open watchfulness being asked for)

T-4.III.7:1-5 (especially last sentence)

T-4.III.8:1-3

T-4.III.10:3.

In your own words, summarize the practice of mental vigilance the Course is suggesting to us.



Paragraph 1

1. ¹If you cannot hear the Voice for God, it is because you do not choose to listen. ²That you *do* listen to the voice of your ego is demonstrated by your attitudes, your feelings and your behavior. [Your attitudes are obviously conflicted; your feelings have a narrow range on the negative side, but are never purely joyous; and your behavior is either strained or unpredictable.] ³Yet this is [Ur: *is*] what you want. ⁴This is what you are fighting to keep, and what you are vigilant to save. ⁵Your mind is filled with schemes to save the face of your ego, and you do not seek the face of Christ [Ur: *the Face of God*]. ⁶The glass in which the ego seeks to see its face is dark indeed. ⁷How can it maintain the trick of its existence except with mirrors? ⁸But where you look to find yourself is up to you.

• **Study Question** •

2. *Why is it necessary to exercise great care in watching our minds for thoughts of the ego? (See 1:6-7.)*



Some people criticize the Course and those who practice it as being too concerned with their heads and not sufficiently in touch with their hearts. Yet here, in sentence 2, the Course plainly points to our attitudes, feelings and behavior and implies that they are very important indicators. They are barometers that indicate which voice we are listening to: the ego or the Holy Spirit. In other words, our feelings can help us become conscious of what is going on in our minds.

Perhaps we complain that we can't listen to the Holy Spirit because we cannot hear "the Voice for God" (1:1). The Course pulls no punches; it tells us that if we cannot hear, it is because *we choose not to* (1:1). That same thought is echoed in Chapter 8: "The Holy

Spirit's Voice is as loud as your willingness to listen" (T-8.VIII.8:7). This is really the same message Jesus has been delivering all along: For Love to enter our minds, we must want it truly, without ambivalence. The only thing preventing it from entering is our own resistance to it. We must uncover, and give up, every thought that opposes knowledge.

We may also object that we are not listening to the ego. That is most likely pure self-delusion. Jesus tells us to examine our attitudes, our feelings and our behavior, because they demonstrate quite plainly that we *are* listening to the ego (1:2). (I believe the sentence I've inserted from the Urtext refers specifically to Helen, but perhaps you and I may see ourselves there, also.) He says we *want* the ego, we are *fighting to keep* it, we are *vigilant to save* it, and our mind is *filled with schemes to save its face* (1:3–5). That's a pretty heavy indictment! For most of us, it probably seems overdone. We may admit to a certain lingering fondness for the ego because we made it and it is familiar, but for the most part, we believe, we really want to be done with the ego. After all, why else would we be doing *A Course in Miracles*? To say that our minds are "filled with schemes to save" the ego seems a gross and unfair exaggeration. Right? "Of course I am seeking Christ's face; how can you even suggest otherwise?" But obviously Jesus isn't buying our objections!

The ego is extremely deceptive and tricky. It does its tricks with mirrors (1:7), like an illusionist, causing us to see what is *not* there, and to not see what *is* there. If we are not seeing the ego at work in our minds, there are two explanations: one, that it isn't there; two, that it is doing a very good job of hiding! The latter is far more likely. Mental vigilance is the key for uncovering the hidden works of the ego.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹I have said that you cannot change your mind by changing your behavior, but I have also said, and many times, that you *can* change your mind. ²When your mood tells you that you have chosen wrongly, and this is so whenever you are not joyous, then *know this need not be*. ³In every case you have thought wrongly about some brother [Soul] God created, and are perceiving images your ego makes in a darkened glass. ⁴Think honestly what you have thought that God would not have thought, and what you have not thought that God would have you think. ⁵Search sincerely for what you have done and left undone accordingly, and then change your mind to think with God's [*think with God's*]. ⁶This may seem hard to do, but it is much easier than trying to think against it. ⁷Your mind is [*is*] one with God's. ⁸Denying this and thinking otherwise has held your ego together, but has literally split your mind. ⁹As a loving brother I am deeply concerned with your mind, and urge you to follow my example as you look at yourself and at your brother [Ur: yourselves and at each other], and see in both the glorious creations of a glorious Father.

• Study Question •

3. *This paragraph gives a concise summary of the process of mental vigilance. In 2:1–5, the steps of the process are given. After we have noticed that our mood (or feeling) is less than “wholly joyous,” which tells us that we have made a wrong choice, we are told to do four things. Notice the verbs that give us directions such as “know” starting in sentence 2; they provide a good outline. What four steps are prescribed in sentences 2 to 5?¹ Suggestion: Write the four steps on a card to carry with you, and practice them as often as possible during the day throughout the week.*

This is one of the most important paragraphs in the Text, in terms of practical advice of how to transform our minds. Therefore, I am going to spend a little more time with it than usual.

How often are you *not* “joyous” (1:2)? I don’t know about you, but for me, it’s most of the time. I consider myself a reasonably happy man, and yet I don’t know if I *ever* could say that I have been *completely* joyous. To me, that means feeling only joy; joy without conflict. In speaking about how a teacher of God spends his or her day, Jesus says in the Manual:

"There is one thought in particular that should be remembered throughout the day. It is a thought of pure joy" (M-16.6:1-2).

As the Course says a bit later in the Text: “You must already have decided not to be wholly joyous if that is how you feel” (T5.VII.6:2).

Whenever you are not wholly joyous, then, your mood is telling you that you have “chosen wrongly” (1:2). The message the Course brings to you is that “this need not be” (2:2) because “you *can* change your mind” (2:1).² You made the wrong choice, but you can change your mind; you can choose differently. If you will observe your moods and feelings, they will tell you what you are thinking. Any time you are less than joyous, you have made a bad choice and need to change your mind. The bad mood is not coming from anything outside of yourself; it is coming from *you*.

“In every case you have thought wrongly about some brother God created” (2:3). Notice: *in every case*. There are no exceptions! This idea is important enough that it will be repeated almost verbatim in a later chapter:

Whenever you are not wholly joyous, it is because you have reacted with a lack of love to one of God's creations.... The decision to react in this way is yours, and can therefore be undone. (T-5.VII.5:1,3)

¹ The four directive verbs referred to are “know,” “think,” “search,” and “change.”

² Note: Other places where Jesus has said we can change our minds include: T-1.V.5:7; T-2.VI.3:4; T-2.VII.7:5; and T-4.I.4:1–2, 6.

“Thought wrongly about” and “reacted with a lack of love” are saying the same thing. You have misperceived some Son of God. Let what this is saying sink in: *Every time* you are in a less than perfect mood, every time you are not *wholly joyous*, it is because you have a grievance of some kind against some child of God, perhaps another, perhaps yourself. That unloving reaction was *your choice*, and it is that reaction of yours—not anything you or the other person has done—which is the cause of your bad mood. You are not seeing the real Self of the other person, or of yourself. You are seeing a dark picture projected by your ego (2:3).

What you need, then, is to practice forgiveness. That involves making a new choice. Specifically, it involves four steps:

a) Knowing you can change your mind (2:2)

First, you need to realize that, if this choice is something you have done, it is something you can undo. “This need not be.” The lack of joy does not have to continue. You can do something about it. This is an important separate step because, so often when we are caught in a negative feeling or attitude, we *do not* realize it can be changed! The early Workbook lessons focus on this; for instance, “I could see peace instead of this” (W-pI.34).

b) Examine your thoughts (2:4)

Second, look at your recent thoughts. What thoughts have you had that were unworthy of God Himself—thoughts He would not be thinking? What thoughts that God would *want* you to think have you been repressing? Think about it; seriously examine your mind. What unloving reactions have you had toward yourself or toward others? We so often try to adjust our feelings by changing our *behavior* or trying to change that of others. The Course says the cause of our undesirable feeling is a thought, and it is the thought that needs to change. Behavior will adjust automatically.

c) Search your actions resulting from your thoughts (2:5)

Look at the actions that resulted from your thoughts. If you thought thoughts that were unworthy of God, you probably carried them out in actions that were ungodly as well. If you repressed thoughts of love in your mind, you probably failed to perform acts of love that might have been appropriate.

d) Change your mind to think with God's (2:5)

Finally, change your mind to think with God's. “See in both [yourself and your brother] the glorious creations of a glorious Father” (2:9).

We may think that last step is easier said than done. It may seem too hard (2:6). I love Jesus' ironic answer: It is easier to think *with* God's mind than to think *against* it! (2:6). It has to be easier because our minds are one with God's (2:7). Denying that oneness is the whole basis of the ego (2:8). Therefore, thinking that it is hard to think with God must be a thought coming from the ego.

Thinking in opposition to God is truly difficult! Holding a thought God would not have us think is the cause of our lack of joy. It brings on guilt, sadness, depression and

anxiety (see the next three paragraphs). Our pain derives from the incredible effort of holding on to our negative thoughts.

This practice of mental vigilance is something we are meant to *really do*, not just to read about. As Jesus said in the previous section, “Watch carefully... If you will *really try to do this*, you have taken the first step toward preparing your mind for the Holy One to enter” (T-4.III.8:1,3, my emphasis). He says that, as a loving brother, he is “deeply concerned” with our minds (2:9). He wants us to watch our thoughts and to follow his example in the way we perceive ourselves and one another, seeing everyone as Jesus sees us: “glorious creations of a glorious Father” (2:9). Whenever we catch ourselves seeing in any other way, we need to notice, take stock, and change our minds.

Paragraph 3–6

The next four paragraphs give some examples of the kind of non-joyous feelings we may have, to which we can respond, “This need not be.”

3. ¹When you are sad, *know this need not be*. ²Depression comes [Ur: *always arises ultimately from*] from a sense of being deprived of something you want and do not have. ³Remember [Ur: *Know*] that you are deprived of nothing except by your own decisions, and then decide otherwise.

4. ¹When you are anxious, realize [Ur: *know*] that anxiety comes from the capriciousness of the ego, and *know this need not be*. ²You can be as vigilant against the ego's dictates as for them.

5. ¹When you feel guilty, remember [Ur: *know*] that the ego has indeed violated the laws of God, but *you* have not. ²Leave the “sins” of the ego to me. ³That is what Atonement is for. ⁴But until you change your mind about those whom your ego has hurt, the Atonement cannot release you. ⁵While you feel guilty your ego is in command, because only the ego can experience guilt. ⁶*This need not be*. [Ur: *You, Helen, have been more honest than B. in really trying to see whom your ego has hurt, and also in trying to change your mind about them. (HS {Helen Schucman} doubtful whether this is accurate-written at a time when she was very angry.) I am not unmindful of your efforts, but you still have much too much energy invested in your ego. This need not be.*]

6. ¹Watch your mind for the temptations of the ego, and do not be deceived by it. [Ur: *Know*] ²It offers you nothing. [Ur: *You, B, have not made consistent efforts to change your mind except through applying old habit patterns to new ideas. But you have learned, and learned it better than H., (HS doubtful about accuracy here) that your mind gains control over itself when you direct it genuinely toward perceiving someone else truly. Your lack of vitality is due to your former marked effort at solving your needless depression and anxiety through disinterest. Because your ego was protected by this unfortunate negative*

attribute, you are afraid to abandon it.] ³When you have given up this voluntary dis-spiriting, you will see [Ur: have already seen] how your mind can focus and rise above fatigue and heal. ⁴Yet you are not sufficiently vigilant against the demands of the ego to disengage yourself. ⁵*This need not be.*

• Study Question •

4. *How can we disengage ourselves from the dis-spiriting and fatigue generated by the ego (see IV.6:3–4)? (Compare with T-4.In.1:5–7; 4.In.2:4; 4.In.3:6.)*

These paragraphs are not just theory; they are practical instructions that the author intends for us to follow quite literally. When we are sad, or anxious, or guilty, we can stop and do this practice. Each one contains the italicized assertion: *this need not be*. The Course admonishes us to *know* this (3:1, 4:1), which to me says we should call it to mind, reminding ourselves of this fact when adverse feelings arise.

We can put it into our own words, of course. For instance, if I am feeling anxious, I could say something like this to myself: “I am feeling anxious about this situation, but I do not have to feel this way.” Or, if I am feeling sad, I could say to myself, “I don’t *need* to feel sad.” The key thought is always: *this need not be*. Whatever my feeling, it does not have to be this way, because the feeling is being caused by my own thoughts, not by something external to me. I may be thinking *about* something external, but it is the thoughts, not the external things, that are causing the feeling. Therefore, if I change my thoughts, I can change the feeling as well. I don’t need to feel this way. I have this feeling because, at some level of mind, I have chosen it, and I can make a different choice.

Jesus gives three specific examples of this practice, and then, in paragraph 6, gives a generic summary of the practice which can be applied to any feeling, attitude or behavior we encounter. The first example is feeling *sad*. He equates sadness with depression, and says that it “comes from a sense of being deprived of something you want and do not have” (3:2). The thought behind the feeling, then, is a thought of being deprived. This certainly accords with my own experience. Generally, if I am feeling sad or depressed, it takes just a little self-examination to discover that I think I am being deprived in some way. I may feel sad because my best friend is moving out of town: deprived of companionship. Perhaps I am depressed because I can’t find a decent job: deprived of a good livelihood. Or maybe I’m depressed because I can’t shake off a case of the flu: deprived of health and strength.

The remedy is starkly stated: “Remember that you are deprived of nothing except by your own decisions, and then decide otherwise” (3:3). I think there are two ways of taking this. The most radical way is to understand that everything that happens to me happens by my own deliberate choice. That *is* what the Course teaches: “Everything that seems to happen to me I ask for, and receive as I have asked” (T-21.II.2:5). Many people find it hard to apply this to themselves, however. That statement simply does not seem to be true when my friend is moving away or prospective employers are turning me down

for jobs I think I want. I think that ultimately we *do* choose and design every event of our lives, but I also think this is happening at a level of mind that most of us are not in touch with. If I try to make myself believe that “I asked for this,” I can even end up making myself feel guilty for having done so, especially in the case of physical illness. I could start thinking, “What kind of sick and twisted mind do I have? Why am I doing this to myself? *Why can't I stop doing it?*”

I believe that to deeply understand, on that radical level, what it means that we are deprived of nothing except by our own decisions, we need to have practiced and accepted this idea on a simpler level first. That simpler level could be stated thus: When something occurs in my life, I am the one who gives it whatever meaning I think it has. I am the one who “decides” that “this means I am being deprived.”

For instance, when my friend is moving away, I *could* view this as an opportunity to make new friendships. I could see it as an event that frees up large chunks of my time, formerly given to my friend, that I can now spend doing other things. It's another example of the old illustration: Is the water glass half *empty*, or half *full*? Or an even older adage: Every cloud has a silver lining. I can choose to focus on what I seem to be losing, or I can choose to focus on what I might be gaining. It's my choice; I can decide to perceive myself as deprived, or I can decide otherwise.

The same is true with employers turning me down, and even with having the flu. Perhaps I cannot yet accept that in some profound and exotic metaphysical chain of mental causation I actually caused these circumstances to occur, but I can certainly understand that *my reaction* to the circumstances of life is completely a matter of my own choice. How I perceive the world is under my own control. I do not have to see the world as depriving me of anything; I can remember that only my own decisions bring on my perception of deprivation.

The next example is *anxiety* (4:1–2). Jesus says anxiety “comes from the capriciousness of the ego.” That means that the ego is subject to whim, impulsive and unpredictable. The ego suffers from manic-depressive illness, excited and “high” in one moment, depleted and depressed in the next. Sometimes the ego will seem to love you and reward you. Other times it will slam you to the floor. One Course student compared her ego to “living with alcoholic parents.” One moment you feel loved, and the next you are cowering in terror. No wonder this generates anxiety! The remedy here is even more basic than the one for sadness: Remember that “you can be as vigilant against the ego's dictates as for them” (4:2). In other words, *choose not to listen to your ego*. Don't allow the unpredictable ego to run your life. Once again, the remedy is a choice, a change of mind.

The third example is *guilt* (5:1–6). When you feel guilty, Jesus advises, remember that while the ego *has* violated God's laws, *you have not* (5:1). The recognition that “the ego is not you” (W-pI.25.2:2; T-4.II.4:11) is crucial for making this distinction. You are spirit; you are not the ego. Yes, the ego has been less than loving, but that is not who you really are. Your Self is “perfectly unaffected” (T-2.I.5:6) by any expressions of lack of love. You remain as God created you. As for the so-called “sins” of the ego, Jesus says,

© 2010 by Allen A. Watson, Portland, OR

<http://allen-watson.com/> • allen@unityportland.org • 503-916-9411

“Leave [them] to me. That is what Atonement is for” (5:2–3). “There is no sin; it has no consequence” (W-pI.101.6:7). Perhaps we cannot understand how those seeming sins can be without consequence, but Jesus understands it; we can leave that to him.

We are being called to “disengage” from our egos (6:4), realizing that “sins” belong to the ego, not to us. Instruction in making that distinction or separation goes on all through the Course. Later in the Text, we are told that this separation must eventually become complete: “This is a crucial period in this course, for here the separation of you and the ego must be made complete” (T-22.II.6:1). This is “separation in the constructive sense” (T-2.VIII.4:2). We must come to realize that the ego, with its mistakes, its fears and its “sins,” is not our self. Therefore, guilt belongs to the ego as well (5:6). Our Self is something quite separate from the ego, and quite magnificent. If we are feeling guilt, we are listening to the ego. We need to turn away from the ego to the spirit.

The release from guilt, however, cannot come unless we let go of the thoughts that brought it upon us. We must “change [our] mind about those whom [our] ego has hurt” (5:5). We cannot be free of guilt if we are still, in our minds, attacking and blaming our brothers and sisters, because such attack is an attack on the Son of God, and therefore an attack on ourselves. How can we claim immunity from guilt through identification with the Son if we deny that identification to others? Again, we see that the solution is fundamentally a change of mind.

Having given three examples, Jesus now speaks in general of “the temptations of the ego” (6:1). He reminds us of that four-step process outlined earlier: *know* you can change your mind (“this need not be”); *examine* your thoughts; *search* your actions; *change* your mind. He tells us to watch our minds for the ego’s thoughts and to reject them. It requires vigilance “against the demands of the ego” (6:4). The basic pattern here is clear: let your feeling be a warning flag; become aware of the ego thought in your mind that produces the feeling; choose to change that thought, and then counter it with the truth. He tells us that if we will do this, we “will see how [our] mind can focus and rise above fatigue and heal” (6:3). I love the way he always takes us right past *being healed* to *healing others*. In his mind, it seems that the major purpose in being healed is to become capable of extending healing to others.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The habit of engaging with God and His creations is easily made if you actively refuse to let your mind slip away. ²The problem is not one of concentration; it is the belief that no one, including yourself, is worth consistent effort. ³Side with me consistently against this deception [Ur: as we have sided against it briefly already], and do not permit this shabby belief to pull you back. ⁴The disheartened are useless to themselves and to me, but only the ego can *be* disheartened.

• **Study Question** •

5. *Skim through Sections I and III, and Section IV, paragraphs 1 to 9, and see how many times Jesus tells you, in one form or another, to “refuse to let your mind slip away,” or to watch your mind for ego thoughts and refuse to listen to them. This is the practice method of the Course.*

Jesus calls the practice of mental vigilance “the habit of engaging with God and His creations” (7:1). Notice: You are *disengaging* yourself from the demands of the ego and *engaging* with God and His creations. You are transforming the focus of your life. This is the goal: breaking your identification with the ego and rediscovering your Identity in God. The goal is to form a *habit*, the habit of engaging with God. The word “engaging” makes me think of the way gears mesh or “engage” one another, as with engaging the transmission of a car. We want to mesh gears with God; we want to have the Power of God channeling Itself through our lives.

The way to do this is to “actively refuse to let your mind slip away” (7:1), i.e., mental vigilance. If we don’t watch them, our minds will just slip away, because the ego is constantly injecting its infected thoughts into them. We have to be vigilant, or watchful, against its demands. A daily routine of spiritual practice, such as the habits the Workbook is designed to establish, is the perfect prescription for developing such mental alertness.

If it seems difficult to form such a habit, it isn’t because of any deficiency in our mind’s ability to concentrate. What causes us to lose heart is our belief that “no one, including [ourselves], is worth consistent effort” (7:2). So, even when we become disheartened in our spiritual practice, the prescription is the same: Recognize the ego’s deceptive questioning of your worth; refuse to let it pull you back; and side with Jesus against it, that is, join with Him in believing that you *are* worth consistent effort (7:3–4)!

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Have you really [Ur: *really*] considered how many opportunities you have had to gladden yourself, and how many of them you have refused? ²There is no limit to the power of a Son of God, but he can limit the expression of his power as much as he chooses. ³Your mind and mine can unite in shining your ego away, releasing the strength of God into everything you think and do. ⁴Do not settle for anything less than this, and refuse to accept anything but this as your goal. ⁵Watch your mind carefully for any beliefs that hinder its accomplishment, and step away from them. ⁶Judge how well you have done this by your own feelings, for this is the one right use of judgment. ⁷Judgment, like any other defense, can be used to attack or protect; to hurt or to heal. ⁸The ego *should* be brought to [Ur: *your own*] judgment and found wanting there. ⁹Without your own allegiance, protection and love, the ego cannot exist. ¹⁰Let it be judged truly [Ur: *Judge your ego truly*] and you must withdraw allegiance, protection and love from it.

• **Study Question** •

6. *See if you can identify at least one belief you have held that hinders the accomplishment of what should be your **only** goal: shining away the ego, releasing the strength of God into everything you think and do. Make a resolution to step away from that belief.*

This paragraph implies that we have consistently refused to receive God's joy (8:1). We just let the ego have its way, refusing to listen to the Voice for God, when we *could have* chosen differently. To engage with God, to channel His power would bring us incredible joy. God's power *could* be coming through us without limit, but in listening to the ego, we limit the expression of that power (8:2).

If we are willing to let the mind of Jesus join with our minds in shining away the ego (that is, to practice mental vigilance against the ego), we can release "the strength of God into everything [we] think and do" (8:3). What a joy that can bring us! Jesus emphasizes strongly that shining away the ego and releasing God's power in our lives should be our *only* goal in life. He tells us not to settle for anything less, and to refuse all other goals (8:4).

How can we do that? By carefully watching our minds for every thought that opposes that goal, and stepping away from all such thoughts (8:5). The stress on watching our minds is unmistakable; this *is* the premier practice technique in the Course.

We can evaluate our progress by watching our feelings (8:6); they are the barometers. If we are sad, anxious, guilty, or in any state that isn't joyous (2:2), our emotions or moods are telling us we have chosen to listen to the ego. This self-monitoring is called "the one right use of judgment" (8:6).

Judgment is not, per se, an evil thing; it can be used to heal (8:7). The proper target of judgment is not you or your brother, but the ego. The whole process of mental vigilance is one of judging against the ego. We notice the ego's thoughts, we find them wanting, and because of our judgment, we withdraw our allegiance, protection and love from it. As those are withdrawn, the ego will cease to exist (8:7–10).

• **Study Questions** •

7. *Summarize some thoughts from this paragraph (IV.8). a) What should be your only goal? b) What practice will bring you to this goal? c) How can you evaluate how well you are practicing?*

Paragraph 9

9. ¹You are a mirror of truth, in which God Himself shines in perfect light. ²To the ego's dark glass you need but say, "I will not look there because I know [Ur: *know*] these images are not true." ³Then let the Holy One shine on

you in peace, knowing that this and only this must be. ⁴His Mind shone on you in your creation and brought your mind into being. ⁵His Mind still shines on you and must shine through you. ⁶Your ego cannot prevent Him from shining on you, but it can prevent you from letting Him shine through you.

This paragraph uses a different figure of speech to illustrate mental vigilance and its results. Two mirrors are mentioned. You are one mirror, meant to mirror God Himself; the other is “the ego’s dark glass,” in which the ego projects its delusions in its attempts to prove itself real (9:1–2, see also 1:6–7). The images in that dark glass are the thoughts in your mind, or your false perceptions of your brother. To refuse to look there is the same as stepping away from the beliefs that hinder the goal. When you do, you can allow “the Holy One” (clearly God) to “shine on you in peace, knowing this shining peace to be the only reality (9:3). It was by this shining you were created (9:4). “His Mind still shines on you and must shine through you” (9:5). The ego cannot prevent His shining *on* us. It can, however, interfere with His shining *through* us (9:6). When we step away from the ego and refuse to give credence to its illusions, God again will shine through us.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹The First Coming of Christ is merely another name for the creation, for Christ is the Son of God. ²The Second Coming of Christ means nothing more than the end of the ego’s rule [Ur: over part of the minds of men] and the healing of the mind. ³I was created like you in the first, and [Ur: I am reminding you that] I have called you to join with me in the second. [Ur: If you will think over your lives, you will see how carefully the preparations were made.] ⁴I am in charge of the Second Coming, and my judgment, which is used only for protection, cannot be wrong because it never attacks. ⁵Yours may be so distorted that you believe I was mistaken in choosing you. ⁶I assure you this is a mistake of your ego. ⁷Do not mistake it for humility. ⁸Your ego is trying to convince you that it is real and I am not, because if I am real, I am no more real than you are. ⁹That knowledge, and I assure you that it *is* knowledge, means that Christ has come into your mind and healed it [Ur: Christ must come into your minds and heal them].

When this process of eliminating the ego’s interference is complete, that completion will be what is called the Second Coming of Christ (10:2, for more information see W-pII.9, “What is the Second Coming?”). The First Coming is just another name for the creation, when God shined Christ into existence, and all of us in Christ (10:1). Jesus says he shares the First Coming with us (it was not just the birth of Jesus, as most Christian churches have believed) and calls us now to share in the Second (10:3), ending the ego’s rule and healing our minds.

He cannot be mistaken in calling us. Thinking we are unfit to join him is the ego's mistake. It is trying to convince us that it is real and that Jesus is unreal. (I'm sure this was dramatically true for Helen, who was strongly tempted to doubt the reality of the voice speaking to her.) Declaring ourselves unworthy is not humility; it is ego arrogance (10:5-8). We are worthy; we can do this. (This theme carries over to the next paragraph as well.) Jesus is not some special category of being. If he is real, so are we! (10:8). That is why the ego plants doubts about him in our minds. When we come to know that we are the same as Jesus is, that's when Christ has entered our minds and healed them (10:9).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹I do not attack your ego. ²I do work with your higher mind, the home of the Holy Spirit, whether you are asleep or awake, just as your ego does with your lower mind, which is its home. ³I am your vigilance in this, because you are too confused to recognize your own hope. ⁴I am not mistaken. ⁵Your mind will elect to join with mine, and together we are invincible. ⁶You and your brother [Ur: You two] will yet come together in my name, and your sanity will be restored. ⁷I raised the dead by knowing that life is an eternal attribute of everything that the living God created. ⁸Why do you believe it is harder for me to inspire the dis-spirited [Bill] or to stabilize the unstable [Helen]? ⁹I do not believe that there is an order of difficulty in miracles; you do. ¹⁰I have called and you will answer. ¹¹I understand that miracles are natural, because they are expressions of love. ¹²My calling you is as natural as your answer, and as inevitable.

• Study Question •

8. *If we feel incapable of the kind of mental vigilance being called for, how can what Jesus says in this paragraph encourage us?*



Jesus will not attack us; he won't even attack our egos. He just shines the ego away as he works with our "higher mind" (another phrase for our right mind), which is the home of the Holy Spirit. He does this whether we are awake or asleep (11:1-2). I believe this means *spiritually* awake or asleep. The kind of vigilance called for may seem beyond us, but Jesus says, "I am your vigilance in this" (11:3). He will help us where we are too confused to help ourselves. Although we may be asleep, he can work with the Holy Spirit in our higher mind. Our self-doubt is wrong; he knows what he is doing (11:4).

It may seem impossible to us, but our minds will join with his; our sanity will be restored; our relationships will all be healed (11:5-6). Jesus raised the dead! How can we imagine that our disease is beyond his healing? Thinking that there is an order of difficulty in miracles is *our* mistake, not his (11:7-9).

He then reiterates another truth from the "Principles of Miracles" section at the start of the Text: "Miracles are natural, because they are expressions of love" (11:11). He

Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

points out that he *understands* this. What it makes me realize is that Jesus already knows and thoroughly understands all these principles which he iterates in the Course. To him, there *are* no obstacles. To him, the outcome is already certain. He has no doubts. "I have called and you will answer" (11:10), period. End of discussion. It's all perfectly natural (expressions of love), both his call and our answer (11:12). He is love; he must call. We too are love, so we must answer. No other outcome is remotely possible.

Answer Key

1. Mental vigilance consists of watching our thoughts and becoming aware of the degree to which our minds are controlled by the ego and its thoughts of attack, vengeance, weakness, self-doubt and fear. We need to realize the effect of such thoughts, and what they cost us. With the help of the Holy Spirit, we are to judge against these thoughts, realizing they are insane, and to choose to change our minds. This vigilance is akin to the “response to temptation” practice in the Workbook, in which we recognize an ego temptation and respond to it with the thought for the day or a related thought. For instance, “This thought I do not want. I choose instead” a thought of love (W-pI.rVI.in.6:2).
2. The ego is very tricky and deceptive; it maintains its existence with mirrors. Therefore, we must watch our minds carefully to catch the ego in its deceptions.
3. The four steps we are told to take when we notice that we are not completely joyful are:
 - a) *Know* that this need not be.
 - b) *Think* honestly what un-godlike thoughts we had, or what godlike thoughts we rejected.
 - c) *Search* our behavior for what we have done or left undone because of our wrong thinking.
 - d) *Change* our mind to think with God’s.
4. We can free ourselves from fatigue and dis-spiriting by being more vigilant against the demands of the ego.
5. Here are several quotations, all of which urge us to watch our minds for ego thoughts:

When you are afraid, be still and know that God is real, and you are His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased. Do not let your ego dispute this, because the ego cannot know what is as far beyond its reach as you are. (T4.I.8:6–7)

The ego is afraid of the spirit's joy, because once you have experienced it you will withdraw all protection from the ego, and become totally without investment in fear. Your investment is great now because fear is a witness to the separation, and your ego rejoices when you witness to it. Leave it behind! Do not listen to it and do not preserve it. Listen only to God, Who is as incapable of deception as is the spirit He created. (T-4.I.10:1–5)

Watch your mind for the scraps of fear, or you will be unable to ask me to do so. (T-4.III.7:5)

Watch carefully and see what it is you are really asking for. Be very honest with yourself in this, for we must hide nothing from each other. If you will really

try to do this, you have taken the first step toward preparing your mind for the Holy One to enter. (T-4.III.8:1-3)

I have said that you cannot change your mind by changing your behavior, but I have also said, and many times, that you *can* change your mind. When your mood tells you that you have chosen wrongly, and this is so whenever you are not joyous, then *know this need not be*. (T-4.IV.2:1-2)

Watch your mind for the temptations of the ego, and do not be deceived by it. (T-4.IV.6:1)

...refuse to let your mind slip away. The problem is not one of concentration; it is the belief that no one, including yourself, is worth consistent effort. Side with me consistently against this deception, and do not permit this shabby belief to pull you back. (T-4.IV.7:1-3)

Watch your mind carefully for any beliefs that hinder its accomplishment, and step away from them. Judge how well you have done this by your own feelings, for this is the one right use of judgment. (T-4.IV.8:5-6)

To the ego's dark glass you need but say, "I will not look there because I know these images are not true." (T-4.IV.9:2)

6. No written answer is expected.
7. a) The goal is to unite your mind with Jesus' mind to *shine the ego away*, thus releasing the strength of God into everything you think and do.
b) The method is watching your mind carefully for anything that hinders this goal, and stepping away from such thoughts.
c) You judge how well you are doing by monitoring your feelings.
8. Jesus says he will be our vigilance; our confusion is too great to maintain it. With him we are invincible. If he can raise the dead, he can inspire the dis-spirited and stabilize the unstable, and that means me.