

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

The Rewards of God

Overview of the Section

This section moves on beyond the discussion of mental vigilance to focus on the *rewards* that come from rejecting ego thoughts and keeping our mind filled with God's thoughts and God's purpose. We can learn to identify pain as the result of listening to the ego, and to identify joy as the result of listening to the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹[The essential thing to remember always is that] The ego does not recognize the real source of "threat," and if you [*you*] associate yourself with [*with*] the ego, you [*you*] do not understand the situation as it is. ²Only your allegiance to it gives the ego any power over you. ³I have spoken of the ego as if it were a separate thing, acting on its own. ⁴This was necessary to persuade you that you cannot dismiss it lightly, and must realize how much of your thinking is ego-directed. ⁵We cannot safely let it go at that, however, or you will regard yourself as necessarily conflicted as long as you are here, or as long as you believe that you are here. ⁶The ego is nothing more than a part [*Ur: part*] of your belief about yourself. ⁷Your other life has continued without interruption, and has been and always will be totally unaffected by your attempts to dissociate it [*Ur: dissociation is always involved, or you would not believe that you are here.*]

• Study Question •

1. *The preceding sections about watching our minds for ego thoughts have made it clear that we cannot dismiss the ego lightly. Instead, we must recognize how much of our thinking is directed by the ego. Although these are very important realizations, what additional understanding about the ego is crucial to our spiritual well-being, and why is it so important?*

The first sentence links back to the preceding section, which discussed how the ego feels threatened both by Thoughts of God and by unwanted physical impulses. The *real* source of what the ego experiences as "threat" is the calm being of God's Kingdom

(T-4.III.10:1), that is, the truth that we remain as God created us. The ego is threatened by everything real because the real exposes the unreal *as* unreal. The ego cannot recognize the real source of “threat” because to do so would be to actuate the threat to its existence. It therefore hides and protects itself in confusion.

When I identify with the ego, I am equally confused. I cannot understand “the situation as it is” (1:1). That applies to *any* situation in which I am “in” my ego. It applies particularly to the way I can get confused about the ego itself! I can begin to think that the ego is more powerful than my mind, that I am subject to its whims, that my ego can lead me hither and yon without hindrance. I can start to believe that I have been irreversibly saddled with a contrary ego about which I can do nothing. As long as I am in this world, or believe I am in this world, I am “necessarily conflicted” (1:5).

This seems to be a reasonable conclusion when we first begin to watch our minds for ego thoughts, and we uncover the convoluted mess of ego thinking within our minds. We are appalled at “how much of [our] thinking is ego-directed” (1:4). Perhaps at first we thought that, for ourselves, the ego was a trivial problem; now we realize we are infested with it—seemingly, hopelessly infested. We realize we cannot dismiss the ego lightly (1:4).

The seriousness of the ego problem and the degree to which it dominates our minds, however, are not the end of the story. In fact, they are not even wholly accurate representations of the story. They tell only part of the truth about the ego. One additional key fact must be integrated into our understanding: “Only your allegiance to it gives the ego any power over you” (1:2). The ego is not “doing it to you”; on the contrary, *you* are “doing” the ego. You are generating it, empowering it, directing it, and giving it the appearance of something real. The ego is a puppet and you are the puppeteer. Or, to use a more modern analogy, the ego is a computer program you have written. It is just software; you are the programmer, and you can change the code. “The ego is nothing more than a part of your belief about yourself” (1:6). It’s no big deal.

The ego is not a separate thing. It cannot act on its own (1:3). The Course speaks of it in that way at times, but only to keep us from allowing the ego operate without restraint. It may be unreal, but because we believe in it, the problem it presents is *very* real. What must happen, however, as we uncover ego thoughts in our minds, is that instead of reacting with horror, panic, or shocked loathing (which quickly turns to *self-loathing*), we simply recognize that these ego thoughts—horrid and detestable as they may be—have no power unless we grant them power. We can choose to withdraw our power from them, and they will collapse like empty balloons.

Both aspects of the Course’s description of the ego are essential. It is dark, ugly, and terrible; it infects our thoughts and cannot be ignored. Yet, it is not a real, separate thing, acting on its own; only we empower our egos. As Greg Mackie has written, “The ego’s darkness makes us *want* to get rid of it, and the ego’s unreality means we *can* get rid of it.”

Even while our mind is running its ego act, our “other life has continued without interruption” (1:7). Our true Self persists, unaffected by our ego’s attempts to ignore it (1:7). That is a very comforting thought!

The last line, from the Urtext, is fascinating. Essentially, it says that the only reason we believe we are here, in this world, is that we are dissociating ourselves from our true Self.

Paragraph 2

When I told Bill to concentrate on the phrase “here I am, Lord,” I did not mean “in this world” by “here.” I wanted him to think of himself as a separate consciousness, capable of direct communication with the Creator of that consciousness. He, too, MUST begin to think of himself as a very powerful receiving and sending channel, a description I once gave you symbolically. Remember that HE understood it before you did, because you are more dissociative and less repressed.

2. ¹In learning to escape from illusions, your debt to your brother [Ur: Your great debt to each other] is something you must never forget. ²It is the same debt that you owe to me. ³Whenever you act egotistically towards another [Ur: each other], you are throwing away the graciousness of your indebtedness and the holy perception it would produce. ⁴The term “holy” can be used here because, as you learn how much you are indebted to the whole Sonship, which includes me, you come as close to knowledge as perception can. ⁵The gap is then so small that knowledge can easily flow across it and obliterate it forever.

• Study Question •

2. *Spend some time examining your attitude toward the people around you, especially those closest to you. How much is your attitude characterized by a sense of indebtedness and gratitude?*

When we turn away from the ego, away from egotism, what does our life look like? From what we read here, the opposite of egotism is gratitude, gratitude toward our brothers. Jesus says we “must never forget” our debt to each other (2:1). “What debt is he talking about?” we may wonder. He says we owe him the same debt, but that does not help much. Primarily, I think, the debt we owe is the recognition that we cannot be what we are without our brothers. What we are, we share with them. What we are, they are. We are to be grateful to them for being God’s creations because their being what they are supports our being what we are. Because creation is one, we can be complete.

This is actually the first time the word “debt” is used in the Course, so there are no earlier passages that explain what it means. Some later passages give more specific examples:

You are being blessed by every beneficent thought of any of your brothers anywhere. You should want to bless them in return, out of gratitude. (T5.in.3:1–2)

Only appreciation is an appropriate response to your brother. Gratitude is due him for both his loving thoughts and his appeals for help, for both are capable of bringing love into your awareness if you perceive them truly. (T-12.I.6:1–2)

Your relationship with them [your creations] is without guilt, and this enables you to look on all your brothers with gratitude, because your creations were created in union with them. Acceptance of your creations is the acceptance of the oneness of creation, without which you could never be complete. (T-16.IV.8:5–6)

Heaven is the gift you owe your brother, the debt of gratitude you offer to the Son of God in thanks for what he is, and what his Father created him to be. (T19.IV.D.19:6)

When we look on one another with gratitude, it produces a holy perception (2:3) that brings us as close to knowledge as perception can bring us (2:4). That kind of perception is so close to knowledge that knowledge can flow across the tiny gap remaining and “obliterate it” (wipe it out) forever (2:5).

We should “never forget” (2:1) the importance of gratitude. All through the Course, gratitude toward our brother and toward God is emphasized. When I pause to reflect on the people I have met who were, in my estimation, holy people, I am amazed when I realize that, without exception, they always seemed grateful to me for what I said or did, or sometimes just for my being there. When I met them, they seemed glad to see me. When I spoke with them, they appreciated what I had to say. If I offered them some service, even something as trivial as the use of my telephone, they were grateful and let me know it. These saintly people seemed to perceive, in me, something very holy and laudable. At the time, perhaps, I had difficulty in receiving their thanks. What I did or said seemed like nothing to me, and certainly was no indicator of any shining light within me. I knew better, anyhow, or thought I did. But these saints saw Christ in me, and their simple gratitude, in some way, let me know that. Their perception of me nourished that same perception of myself so that, eventually, I could start to accept my own holiness.

The remainder of this chapter is going to emphasize our connectedness. It is going to tell us that we cannot make it without each other, that we are part of one another and not, as the ego would have it, separate and isolated beings. Gratitude is the thought that best expresses, in a simple and practical way, this interrelatedness. Gratitude is the acknowledgement of our oneness.

Notice that Jesus points out that “the whole Sonship” includes *him* (2:4). In our indebtedness to the whole Sonship, we are indebted especially to Jesus, because in him our shared Self, the Christ (WpII.6.1:1–2), is manifest.

In his complete identification with the Christ—the perfect Son of God, His one creation and His happiness, forever like Himself and One with Him—Jesus became what all of you must be. He led the way for you to follow him. (C5.3:1–2)

Because he led the way, he deserves our gratitude (M-23.5:1–2).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹You have very little trust in me as yet, but it will increase as you turn more and more often to me instead of to your ego for guidance. ²The results will convince you increasingly that this choice is the only sane one you can make. ³No one who learns from experience that one choice brings peace and joy while another brings chaos and disaster needs additional convincing [Ur: needs much conditioning. The ego cannot withstand the conditioning process, because the process itself *demonstrates* that there is another way]. ⁴Learning through rewards is more effective than learning through pain, because pain is an ego illusion, and can never induce more than a temporary effect. [Ur: The classic conditioning by rewards model has always been most effective.... conditioning through pain is not the most efficient method is because pain itself is an ego-illusion, and can never induce more than a temporary effect.] ⁵The rewards of God, however, are immediately recognized as eternal. ⁶Since this recognition is made by you and not the ego, the recognition itself establishes that you and your ego cannot [*cannot*] be identical. ⁷You may believe that you have already accepted this difference {between you and the ego}, but you are by no means convinced as yet. ⁸The fact that you believe you must escape from the ego shows this; but you cannot escape from the ego by humbling it or controlling it or punishing it.

• Study Question •

3. a) *What is it that helps us to increasingly trust Jesus, and gradually to become convinced that we cannot be identical with our egos?*
- b) *What are the rewards of God (3:3, 5)?*

Compare 3:1 with 6:1. Jesus says that his trust in us is greater than our trust in him, but it won't always be that way. Our trust in him will increase until, one day, it will equal his trust in us. Our trust in him will increase as we turn with increasing frequency to him for guidance, rather than to our egos (3:1). Each time we do so we will experience peace and joy, while each time we listen to our egos we will experience chaos and disaster (3:3). Such results will increasingly convince us which choice is the sane one (3:2).

If I think about it, I can realize that I don't fully trust Jesus. If I did, I would be following his guidance *all* the time, or at least asking for it. If I asked, no doubt the guidance would be given. However, I don't even ask much of the time. Consequently, my life evidences a fair amount of chaos and disaster, clear evidence of which voice I've been listening to. When I do listen to his guidance, though, I experience peace and joy. I'm sure that such evidence will eventually convince me to ask for his guidance *all* the time. In a few areas, I believe I've learned the lesson well and don't feel that I need "additional convincing" (3:3).

The Course's program is one of learning through rewards rather than through pain (3:4), which is good news. Learning through pain is possible, of course. We can use even our painful experiences as grist for the mill. Pain, however, is not *necessary*, and since it is only an ego illusion, its effects can only be temporary (3:4). The happy news is: Following our inner Guide *feels good*. It is the happiness that will ultimately convince us.

We may think that we already know the difference between our self and the ego, and that we have fully accepted the fact that we are not the ego. That cannot be true, however, if we still believe that we need to escape from the ego (3:7–8). We may know the difference intellectually, but we are not completely *convinced* (3:7). We may still be trying to escape by humbling the ego, or controlling it or punishing it (3:8), but these methods will not work. What works is the gradual process of being weaned away from the ego, becoming convinced by repeated experience that our peace and our joy lie in refusing to hear the ego's voice, and listening instead to Jesus. The paragraphs that follow explain this process in more detail.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The ego and the spirit do not know each other. ²The separated mind cannot maintain the separation except by dissociating. ³Having done this, it denies [Ur: utilizes repression against] all truly natural impulses, not because the ego is a separate thing, but because you want to believe that *you* are. ⁴The ego is a device for maintaining this belief, but it is still only your decision to use the device that enables it to endure.

• Study Question •

4. *What makes it seem as if the ego is all there is, and what or who is responsible for this?*

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As has been said before, there is no contact between ego and spirit (4:1, compare with T-4.I.2:6). The ego mind is deliberately keeping spirit at bay, prohibiting any contact between spirit and the part of the mind ruled by the ego. It has to do so; such *dissociation* is essential to maintaining the apparent reality of separation. If the ego-dominated mind were exposed to spirit, the unreality of the ego would instantly be apparent.

What is *dissociation*? Perhaps you've heard the humorous phrase, "My mind is already made up; don't confuse me with facts." That is what dissociation does. It blocks out some of the facts in order to preserve its illusions. Dissociation is the mental act of separating one set of thoughts, or one part of consciousness, from another. Psychiatry defines it as, "separation of normally related mental processes, resulting in one group functioning independently from the rest, leading in extreme cases to disorders such as multiple personality." So multiple personality disorder is an extreme case of dissociation, in which each personality is often unconscious of the other personalities. The ego is a kind of multiple personality disorder. We have created a separate identity and then have

“escaped” into it and “become” it, leaving the rest of ourselves behind, although the rest still exists.

The main point of this paragraph, however, is that *my mind itself* is doing this: “it is still only your decision to use the device that enables it to endure” (4:4). My mind itself chooses to use the “device” of the ego to maintain its illusion of separation (4:2–3). My ego has no power but that given it by my mind (1:2; see also T-8.I.2:1). It endures only because I continue choosing to use the illusion of being an ego in order to maintain my imaginary separation from God and the Sonship. The ego “exists” only by the mind’s active consent (4:4).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹How can you teach someone the value of something he has deliberately thrown away? ²He must have thrown it away because he did not value it. ³You can only show him how miserable he is without it, and [Ur: very] slowly bring it nearer so he can learn how his misery lessens as he approaches it. ⁴This teaches [Ur conditions] him to associate his misery with its absence, and the opposite of misery with its presence. ⁵It gradually becomes desirable as he changes his mind about its worth. ⁶I am teaching [Ur: conditioning] you to associate misery with the ego and joy with the spirit. ⁷You have taught [Ur: conditioned] yourself the opposite [Ur: the other way around. But a far greater reward will break through any conditioning, if it is repeatedly offered when the old habit is broken.] ⁸You are still free to choose, but can you really want the rewards of the ego in the presence of the rewards of God?

• Study Question •

5. *We are unaware of the value of our Self, which we have thrown away, retreating into the ego personality. How can the Holy Spirit teach us the value of what we have thrown away (5:1–5)?*

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At this point, the remainder of the section has been significantly edited. For instance, this paragraph actually occurs *after* paragraphs 6 through 8 in the Urtext. There is also a good deal of personal material, which is quite illustrative, that has been omitted. I’ve included a chunk of the Urtext from Paragraph 4 to the end of the section as an Appendix for those who are interested.

What is it that *we* have “deliberately thrown away” (5:1)? We have thrown away the knowledge of our Self. We have chosen to believe we are an ego, a separate being. If we threw away awareness of the Self, we must not have valued the Self (5:2); therefore, we need to be taught Its value. How can the Holy Spirit teach us the value of identifying with our Self?

The answer isn't a particularly happy one: He can teach us the value of awareness of our Self only by showing us, in the first place, how miserable we are without it (5:3). Much the same idea is expressed again in Chapter 14:

You who are steadfastly devoted to misery must first recognize that you are miserable and not happy. (T-14.II.1:2)

We must become aware of how miserable we are, because we skillfully mask our misery from ourselves. We mask it with a multitude of diversions and distractions. Above all, we avoid silence and solitude, because that is when our misery becomes insistently self-evident. When all is silent, the soft sobs of despair often rise easily to the surface of the mind. One of the benefits of meditation is an increased awareness of the fear and agony present in the ego's warped thinking. The difficulty we experience in silencing our thoughts is often a measure of our fear of what we might discover in silence. Uncovering and acknowledging that misery is a major goal of mental vigilance.

As we become more aware of our misery, slowly the Holy Spirit also brings the Self (the Christ) nearer to our awareness so that we can learn how approaching It decreases our misery (5:3). We begin to associate misery with our lack of awareness of Christ, and joy with His presence in our minds (5:4). This induces us to once more value our Identity in Christ (5:5), and weakens our desire to maintain our belief in separation.

We have taught ourselves that misery comes from closeness to spirit, and joy from identifying with the ego; Jesus is teaching us the exact opposite (5:6–7). He introduces us to the rewards of God, that is, to the joy that arises as we identify with Christ in spirit, and he counts on the sanity of our mind to choose those rewards over the meager offerings of the ego (5:8). The far greater reward we experience can break through any of the negative conditioning of the ego.

Notice how this entire process consists of direct experience. Jesus is not talking about book learning; he is directing us to a mental practice that produces tangible results in terms of joy and peace. We know we are practicing mental vigilance well when we experience the rewards of God. We will recognize we are listening to the ego without realizing it when we wake up to find ourselves joyless, anxious, guilty or depressed.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹My trust in you is greater than yours in me at the moment, but it will not always be that way. ²Your mission is very simple. ³You are asked to live so as to demonstrate that you are not an ego, and [Ur: I repeat that] I do not choose God's channels wrongly. ⁴The Holy One shares my trust, and accepts [Ur: always approves] my Atonement decisions because my will is never out of accord with His. ⁵I have said before that I am in charge of the [Ur: whole] Atonement. ⁶This is only because I completed my part in it as a man, and can now complete it through others. ⁷My chosen [Ur: receiving and sending] channels cannot fail, because I will lend them my strength as long as theirs is wanting.

• Study Question •

6. *What does this paragraph declare to be our mission, and how is it related to the only goal we should accept, mentioned in T-4.IV.8:3-4?*

Many Course students have little confidence in their ability to carry out the instructions of the Course. It seems as though we cannot trust ourselves to be diligent. Jesus says that right now he has more trust in our ability than we do (6:1), but that our self-trust will grow with time. Eventually we will gain in self-confidence until we trust ourselves as much as he trusts us. Yes, we must begin by recognizing how miserable we are! We must acknowledge our mistaken thoughts. That can be discouraging. Yet we eventually need to move past that negative self-analysis to an acceptance of the limitless power of Who we truly are:

The recognition of your own frailty is a necessary step in the correction of your errors, but it is hardly a sufficient one in giving you the confidence which you need, and to which you are entitled. You must also gain an awareness that confidence in your real strength is fully justified in every respect and in all circumstances. (W-pI.47.6:1-2)

Our mission is to demonstrate that we are not egos (6:2-3). If Jesus has chosen us to do this and to be “God’s channels” (6:3), then we can do it! We can *demonstrate* in our lives that we have transcended the ego. “The Holy One” (I think the phrase must refer to God acting through the Holy Spirit) shares his trust in us (6:4); Jesus’ will is never out of accord with God’s. Therefore, we are backed by awesome Beings! Jesus himself backs us up, lending us his strength when ours is lacking (6:7). For this reason alone, we cannot fail. He is qualified to be in charge of the Atonement process because he completed that process himself. The Atonement process is what we are talking about here: becoming aware of ego thoughts, associating them with misery, drawing near to spirit and experiencing joy, and learning more and more to choose spirit over ego. He is qualified to lead us through this because he has already gone through it. He knows how to complete it, and “can now complete it through others” (6:6). He can literally carry us along with him because, in reality, we are part of him.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹I will go with you to the Holy One, and through my perception He can bridge the little gap. ²Your gratitude to your brother [Ur: each other] is the only gift I want. ³I will bring it to God for you, knowing that to know your brother *is* to know God. [Ur: A little knowledge is an all-encompassing thing.] ⁴If you are grateful to your brother [Ur: each other], you are grateful to God for what He created. ⁵Through your gratitude you come to know your brother [Ur: each other], and one moment of real recognition makes everyone your brother because each of them is of your Father. ⁶Love does not conquer all things, but it does set all things right. ⁷Because you are [Ur: all] the Kingdom of God I can

lead you back to your own creations [Ur: which you do not yet know. God has kept them very safe in *His* knowing while your attention has wandered.] ⁸You do not recognize them now, but what has been dissociated is still there. [Ur: Bill gave you a very important idea when he told you that what has been dissociated *is still there*. I am grateful to him for that.]

• **Study Question** •

7. *Try to follow the inter-relationship of the various actions depicted in this paragraph. a) What do you offer to your brothers? b) What “gift” do you bring to Jesus? c) What does Jesus do with that gift? d) Where, or to whom, does Jesus lead you?*

Jesus goes with us to God. He lends us his own perception that bridges “the little gap” (7:1), the tiny gap between right perception and knowledge, first mentioned in 2:5. This concept of a “little gap,” which occurs first in this section, is one that shows up eighteen times in the Course. The word “gap” by itself occurs in fifty-six paragraphs. It is an important term, worthy of our attention. Its meaning, according to Robert Perry, is:

The space between reality and your dreams, which God will bridge in the final step. The space between your mind and your brother's. (*A Course Glossary*, p. 26)

Jesus' perception enables us to see our brothers as God's creations, and therefore to experience gratitude toward them for what they are (7:2). Gratitude toward our brothers is what Jesus wants from us; it is our “contribution” to the Atonement process. If this seems like a shift in theme, it really isn't; gratitude is the result of mental vigilance, the spontaneous expression when the ego is set aside. The ego thoughts we are cleansing from our minds are made up of thoughts of judgment and condemnation toward our brothers. The thoughts of God that replace them are thoughts of gratitude. Extending our hearts to our brothers in love (7:6) and gratitude brings the rewards of God to us. Jesus carries our gratitude to God (7:3), because he knows that when we recognize our brothers for what they are—God's creations—we are recognizing God as Creator as well (7:3–4).

In rejoining with God's creations, we can also be led back to our own creations, which we created with our brothers and with God (7:7). We do not recognize them now; that is, we do not know what they are, and we cannot see them. Yet, although we have blocked them from our minds, they are still there (7:8).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹As you come closer to a brother you approach me, and as you withdraw from him I become distant to you. ²Salvation is a collaborative venture. ³It cannot be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me. ⁴God will come to you only as you will give Him to your brothers. ⁵Learn first of them and you will be ready to hear God. ⁶That is because the function of

Love is one.

• Study Question •

8. *This paragraph tells us that “salvation is a collaborative venture.” As it is explained in this paragraph, what does that mean? (The phrase is given a different, but related, meaning, in T-8:IV.4:6–9.)*

Transcending the ego necessarily takes us beyond our individual self. This paragraph emphasizes the transcendence of individuality in a number of ways. Sentence 1 connects our approach and withdrawal from our brothers to our approach and withdrawal from Jesus. In other words, we might say that the true measure of our spiritual maturity is not found in our obedience to a given set of rules nor in the depth of our understanding of metaphysical and philosophical principles, but in the quality of our relationships with one another.

“Salvation is a collaborative venture” (8:2). To me, these words virtually define *A Course in Miracles*. The process of mental vigilance that has been under discussion seems, at first, to be an intensely individual thing. It leads, however, to an intensely corporate, non-individual experience. In the process of mental vigilance, we are vigilant against the ego. The ego, however, is defined as “the mind's belief that it is completely on its own” (T-4.II.8:4). What is being driven from our mind, then, is that belief. The replacement can only be the realization that we are *not* on our own; we are joined, we are connected, we are one.

If “salvation is a collaborative venture” then we cannot experience salvation by ourselves; it can only be experienced in *collaboration* with others. “It cannot be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me” (8:3). If we “disengage” from those around us we are pulling away from salvation. The habit we are forming in our practice of mental vigilance is not simply “the habit of engaging with God,” but “the habit of engaging with God *and His creations*” (T-4.IV.7:1, my emphasis).

If the first statements are not clear enough, Jesus goes on to declare that God will come to us only as we give Him to our brothers (8:4). There is no room for misunderstanding here. You cannot ignore your relationships and find God. You can *try*, but you won't find God that way. You have to come to God by way of your human relationships. This is indicated by the word “first” in Sentence 5: “Learn first of them and you will be ready to hear God.” This is “because the function of love is one” (8:6); that is, you cannot experience true love for God without experiencing it for your brothers. The Apostle John knew this back in the first century when he wrote:

If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. (I John 4:20, NIV)

Answer Key

1. Besides realizing that much of our thinking is ego-directed, and that the ego cannot be dismissed lightly, we must also realize that the ego is only a part of our belief about ourselves and has not affected our real being. Without this additional understanding, we will think that inner conflict with the ego is necessary as long as we are in this world (or think we are). If, however, we realize that the ego is not a separate thing, acting on its own, we will understand that such conflict *can* be escaped. The ego is under our own control; we are not at its mercy.
2. No written answer is expected.
3. a) The results of turning more and more often to Jesus convince us because peace and joy are better than chaos and disaster. We, and not the ego, recognize the eternal nature of God's peace and joy; this demonstrates to us that we are *not* identical with the ego.
b) Peace and joy.
4. Our wish to believe that *we* are separate is what makes *the ego* seem to be a separate thing. Our own decision, and only our decision, is responsible for the seeming reality of our separation. We choose to keep our mind apart from spirit; the ego is nothing more than the mind's device for maintaining its belief in separation.
5. By showing us how miserable we are without it, and how our misery lessens as we approach our union with God in spirit. We gradually begin to realize the spirit's worth.
6. Our mission is to live so as to demonstrate that we are not egos. The only goal we should accept, from Section IV, is to shine away the ego and to release the strength of God into all our speech and actions, which is identical to demonstrating that we are not egos. This goal and this mission will motivate our practice of mental vigilance.
7.
 - a) I offer my brothers gratitude, in recognition that they are God's creations.
 - b) I bring my gratitude to my brothers as a gift to Jesus. This is my contribution.
 - c) He, in turn, brings my gratitude to God, acknowledging Him as Creator.
 - d) Jesus leads me back to my own creations.
8. It means that we cannot find salvation alone, without the rest of the Sonship; we are saved together or not at all.

Appendix

Urtext of paragraphs 4 through 8 in original order with omitted material included.

The ego and the Soul DO NOT KNOW each other. The separated mind cannot maintain the separation EXCEPT by dissociating. Having done this, it utilizes repression against all truly natural impulses, not because the EGO is a separate thing, but because you want to believe that YOU are. The ego is a device for maintaining this belief, but it is still only YOUR willingness to use the device that enables it to endure.

My trust in you is greater than yours in me at the moment, but it will not always be that way. Your mission is very simple. You have been chosen to live so as to demonstrate that You are NOT an ego. I repeat that I do not choose God's channels wrongly. The Holy One shares my trust and always approves my Atonement decisions, because my will is never out of accord with His.

I have told you several times that I am in charge of the whole Atonement. This is ONLY because I completed by part in it as a man, and can now complete it through other men. My chosen receiving and sending channels cannot fail, because I will lend them MY strength as long as theirs is wanting. I will go with you to the Holy One, and through MY perception HE can bridge the little gap. Your gratitude to each OTHER is the only gift I want. I will bring it to God for you, knowing that to know your brother IS to know God.

A little knowledge is an all-encompassing thing. If you are grateful to each other you are grateful to God for what He created. Through your gratitude you can come to know each other, and one moment of real recognition makes all men your brothers because they are all of your Father. Love does not conquer all things, but it DOES set all things right.

Because you are all the Kingdom of God, I can lead you back to your own creations, which you do not yet know. God has kept them very safe in HIS knowing while your attention has wandered. Bill gave you a very important idea when he told you that what has been dissociated IS STILL THERE. I am grateful to him for that, and I hope he will not decide that it is true only for you. Even though dissociation is much more apparent in you, and repression is much more evident in him, each of you utilizes both.

Wisdom always dictates that a therapist work through WEAKER defenses first. That is why I suggested to Bill that he persuade you to deal with REPRESSION first. We have only just about reached the point where dissociation means much to you, because it is so important to your misbeliefs. Bill might do well, - and you could help him here, - to concentrate more on HIS dissociative tendencies and not try to deal with repression yet.

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I hinted at this when I remarked on his habit of disengaging himself, and when I spoke to him about distantiation [[“to put or keep at an emotional or intellectual distance”](#)]. These are all forms of dissociation, and these weaker forms were always more evident

in him than in you. That is because dissociation was so extreme in your case that you did not have to hide it because you were not aware that it was there. Bill, on the other hand, DOES dissociate more than he thinks, and that is why he cannot listen. He does not need to go through the same course in repression that you did, because he will give up his major misdefense AFTER he has rid himself of the lesser ones.

Do not disturb yourself about repression, Bill, but DO train yourself to be alert to any tendency to withdraw from your brothers. Withdrawal is frightening, and you do not recognize all the forms it takes in you. Helen is right that she will experience things that will cut across all her perceptions because of their stunning knowledge. You were right that this will occur when she learns to recognize what she ALREADY knows and has dissociated.

You, Bill, will learn somewhat differently, because you are afraid of all complete involvements, and believe that they lessen YOU. You have learned to be so much more clear-sighted about this that you should be ready to oppose it in yourself RELATIVELY easily. As you come closer to a brother, you DO approach me, and as you withdraw from him I become distant to you.

Your giant step forward was to INSIST on a collaborative venture. This does NOT go against the true spirit of meditation at all. It is inherent IN it. Meditation is a collaborative venture with GOD. It CANNOT be undertaken successfully by those who disengage themselves from the Sonship, because they are disengaging themselves from me. God will come to you only as you will give Him to your brothers. Learn first of them, and you will be ready to hear God as you hear them. That is because the function of love is One.

How can you teach someone the value of something he has thrown away deliberately? He must have thrown it away because he did NOT value it. You can only show him how miserable he is WITHOUT it, and bring it near very slowly, so he can learn how his misery lessens as he approaches it. This conditions him to associate his misery with its ABSENCE, and to associate the OPPOSITE of misery with its presence. It gradually becomes desirable, as he changes his mind about its worth.

I am conditioning you to associate misery with the ego, and joy with your Soul. You have conditioned yourself the other way around. But a far greater reward will break through any conditioning, if it is repeatedly offered when the old habit is broken. You are still free to choose. But can you really WANT the rewards of the ego in the presence of the rewards of God?