

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 4, Section VII

by Allen Watson

As an experiment, in this commentary, when the only difference between the Second Edition and the Urtext is that a word or phrase is emphasized, rather than showing the emphasis by repeating a word in red italics, for example, “very *[very]*”, I am putting a reddish background behind words, for example, “**very**”. I hope this makes it easier to read.

Creation and Communication

Overview of the Section

Although this section contains some very abstract and metaphysical discussions, its central message is the need to restore our part in God's communication network. We, as aspects of God, are meant to receive and to give love, to take up our ordained place as conduits of, or expressions of, the divine current.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹It is clear that while the [specific] content of any particular ego-illusion does not matter, its correction is more helpful in a specific context [Ur: it is usually more helpful to correct it in a specific context. Bill is right that you are too abstract in this matter.]. ²Ego-illusions are quite specific, [Ur: although they frequently change, and] although the mind is naturally abstract. ³Part of the mind becomes concrete, however, when it splits. ⁴The concrete part believes in the ego, because the ego depends on the concrete. [Ur: it became concrete voluntarily as soon as it splits {sic}. However, only *part* of it splits, so only *part* of it is concrete. The concrete part is the same part that believes in the ego, because the ego *depends* on the specific.] ⁵The ego is the part of the mind that believes your existence is defined by separation [Ur: that your existence means you are *separate*].

• Study Question •

1. *After you have read paragraph 1 and the commentary below, can you think of “a specific context” in your life that is useful in correcting the ego illusion in your mind?*

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When Jesus says, “The content of any particular ego illusion does not matter” (1:1), he bases the statement on the fact that the underlying error, in every case, is the same: believing that we are separate beings, on our own, apart from God and one another. At the

core, every ego illusion is some form of this one illusion of separation, and the correction for the core error is regaining the awareness of our Identity as the Christ. The thing is, "Ego illusions are quite specific" (1:2). When we have a problem, we see the specific problem, not the core error, and therefore we need a form of correction that is specific to the problem. The general correction does not even seem relevant to us. "Remember that I am the holy Son of God? What's that got to do with finding a job so I can eat?" You can plug your own specific problem into that question. Because we think this way, the Holy Spirit offers us solutions tailored to our specific ego illusions. We find these specific solutions more helpful (1:1).

The Course does want us to learn, eventually, to generalize; that is, to realize that all problems are the same, and the same solution applies to them all. That is the theme of Lessons 79 and 80 in the Workbook, where it says:

Everyone in this world seems to have his own special problems. Yet they are all the same, and must be recognized as one if the one solution that solves them all is to be accepted. (W-pI.79.2:1-2)

The Holy Spirit knows that, at first, we cannot leap to this level of abstraction. So, He offers help in specific contexts until we can learn to generalize. Helping us to generalize is said to be the overall aim of the Workbook exercises:

The exercises are planned to help you generalize the lessons.... (W-In.4:2)

The overall aim of the exercises is to increase your ability to extend the ideas you will be practicing to include everything. (W-In.7:1)

The natural state of the mind is abstract, not concrete (1:2). To be honest, I don't understand this. I understand what the statement means, but a mind that isn't concrete is inconceivable to me! The word *abstract* means, "existing in thought or as an idea but not having a physical or concrete existence," in other words, pure, formless ideas. My mind, like everyone's, is filled with thoughts and opinions about concrete things: specific persons, places, sensations, tastes and objects. What would my mind be like without any such thoughts? I find it nearly impossible even to imagine such a state of mind, and difficult to think of such a state as something to be desired. To be told that abstraction is the natural state of the mind staggers me. My inability to even imagine what an abstract mind would be like makes me realize how unnatural my mental state must be.

The Course tells us that God's creations, and ours as well, are "A perfect being, all-encompassing and all-encompassed, nothing to add and nothing taken from; not born of size nor place nor time, nor held to limits or uncertainties of any kind." In other words, formless, timeless, pure spirit or pure idea. An abstract mind is filled with such ideas, with no attachment or connection to form. My mind, and yours most likely, cannot really conceive of this because our minds are unnatural.

Not the whole mind is unnatural, however; just part of it, the part that has *become* concrete: the ego (1:3). The mind has been split by the separation. If you recall, we were told that "Consciousness, the level of perception, was the first split introduced into the mind after the separation..." (T-3.IV.2:1). Consciousness and perception, of course, deal

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with specifics. We were also told, “the mind is split between the ego and the Holy Spirit” (T-3.VI.7:4). This split came about because we chose to deny our oneness with God:

Your mind is one with God's. Denying this and thinking otherwise has held your ego together, but has literally split your mind. (T-4.IV.2:7–8)

As the paragraph we are studying says, “The ego is the part of the mind that believes your existence is defined by separation” (1:5).

My point here is that, if I had any doubt that my mind was dominated by the ego, this paragraph would end that doubt. Concrete thinking is ego thinking, and virtually *all* my thinking deals with concrete, specific things. When I think of any problem, I always consider it from a perspective of viewing myself as a separate being, interacting with other separate beings and objects outside of myself—which is the definitive characteristic of the ego! Of course, there is *some* abstraction. For instance, sometimes I think about love, or joy, or peace in general terms, without tying them to anything specific. But I have to be honest: I’m not even sure I would *want* to stop connecting these things to specific people and things. Passages like this make me realize how profoundly radical the Course really is.

So, because *we* are specific (or think we are), it’s best to practice with specifics rather than generalities. Saying, “I see the Christ in Jack” is more effective than saying, “I see the Christ in everyone.” We just don’t relate well to the broad abstractions. The Manual for Teachers affirms the same principle:

As symbols, words have quite specific references. Even when they seem most abstract, the picture that comes to mind is apt to be very concrete. Unless a specific referent does occur to the mind in conjunction with the word, the word has little or no practical meaning, and thus cannot help the healing process (M-21.2:1-3).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Everything the ego perceives is a separate whole, without the relationships that imply being. ²The ego is thus against communication, except insofar as it is utilized to establish separateness rather than to abolish it. ³The communication system of the ego is based on its own thought system, as is everything else it dictates. ⁴Its communication is controlled by its need to protect itself, and it will disrupt communication when it experiences threat. [Ur: While this is always so, individual egos perceive different kinds of threat, which are quite specific in their own judgment. For example, although all forms of perceived demands may be classified (or judged) by the ego as coercive communication which must be disrupted, the response of breaking communication will nevertheless be to a *specific person* or persons.] ⁵This disruption is a reaction to a specific person or persons. ⁶The specificity of the ego’s thinking, then, results in spurious [Ur: a spurious kind of] generalization

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which is really not abstract at all. ⁷It merely responds in certain specific ways to everything [Ur: to all stimuli which] it perceives as related.

• Study Question •

2. *You can most likely think of several times in your life in which the ego used communication as a way to establish separateness instead of a way to join and celebrate oneness. a) Can you think of an instance in which your ego broke off communication when it felt threatened? b) According to this passage, do our egos really want to communicate?*

The first sentence again evinces a view of reality vastly different from what we call the norm. We read, “Everything the ego perceives is a separate whole...” (2:1), and we probably think, “So? That’s how things are, isn’t it? My coffee cup is not part of my desk. My computer isn’t connected to my desk chair. My children are unrelated to my associates at work; they’ve never met.” We just take the separateness of things for granted. We don’t question it. Yet, the second part of the sentence tells us what is lacking in this perception: It does not take into account “the relationships that imply being” (2:1).

Five words, but with so much meaning! First, it tells us that all the things we perceive *are indeed* related; they are *not* separate wholes. That we do not see these relationships only tells us that we are perceiving through the ego’s eyes; it does not mean the relationships do not exist. The computer *is* related to the desk chair; my children *are* related to my co-workers. If I do not see that, my perception is faulty.

Second, it says that “relationships...imply being” (2:1). The meaning of this is expanded in the fourth paragraph, and we’ll return to it there. What I get from just this simple phrase is that, to the mind of Jesus, things that are not related do not really exist! If relationships imply being, then lack of relationship would imply the opposite, or non-being. What gives substance to our being is our inter-relatedness. Cut off and alone, we are nothing. Our true Self is related to everything and is non-specific.

Given that the ego’s perception sees nothing but separate, unrelated things, it has no interest in communication. It prefers *not* to communicate, since it thinks of itself as unrelated to any of those “other” things or “other” people. If the ego sees a way to manipulate the “other” objects in order to establish its own separateness, it will use communication to do so; that’s about the extent of its communication. If it feels threatened it will break communication at once (2:2–4).

We’ve all experienced this, on both sides of the communication link. We have broken off communication, and we have been broken off from. We have used communication to strengthen our egos, and we have had communication used like that against us. The first examples that come to mind are words like, “It’s your fault!” or “You are so selfish!” Words that lay blame on others or that put others down and puff us up by comparison. That’s what passes for communication in the ego’s world.

This kind of ego action comes in response “to a specific person or persons” (2:5). The ego then engages in “spurious generalization” (2:6), expanding that same kind of response to other persons who seem similar to the original person. Projecting our response to our mother or father onto our mate, for instance, may be an example of such false generalization. We think, perhaps unconsciously, that our mate is “the same” as one of our parents, and so we respond to them as we did to the parent in question. This is not true abstract generalization such as the spirit engages in (2:6–7).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹In contrast, spirit [Ur: the Soul] reacts in the same way to everything it knows is true, and does not respond at all to anything else. ²Nor does it make any attempt to **establish** what is true. ³It knows that what is true is everything that God created. ⁴It is in complete and direct communication with every aspect of creation, because it is in complete and direct communication with its Creator. ⁵This communication **is** the Will of God. ⁶Creation and communication are synonymous. ⁷God created every mind by communicating His Mind to it, thus establishing it forever as a channel for the reception of His Mind and Will. ⁸Since only beings of a like order can truly communicate, His creations naturally communicate **with** Him and **like** Him. ⁹This communication is perfectly abstract, since its quality is universal in application and not subject to **any** judgment, **any** exception or **any** alteration. ¹⁰God created you **by** this and **for** this. ¹¹The mind can distort its function, but it cannot endow itself with functions it was not given. ¹²That is why the mind cannot totally lose the ability to communicate, even though it may refuse to utilize it on behalf of being.

• Study Question •

3. *Write an affirmation of truth for yourself based on this paragraph.*

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If it seems difficult to understand what is meant by “communication” that is “perfectly abstract” (3:9), let the context of this paragraph define the concept for you. This abstract kind of communication is even-textured, the same for everyone. It is “universal in application” (3:9). It responds to everyone in the same way (3:1), and does so absolutely without “any judgment, any exception or any alteration” (3:9). It is God’s Will (3:5), flowing out through our minds (3:7) to reach out to other minds with divine Love, divine welcome, and enjoyment of the minds it touches. This communication is creation (3:6); creation is this communication. We were created by this outflow of God’s loving Mind, and we were created for the purpose of extending that outflow (3:10).

This constant creative flow, this pulse of life that resonates through the entire universe, is what the ego tries to deny. It contracts on itself in a hard knot, shutting out the joyous song of God that sings through every living thing. The ego contracts; the spirit communicates.

I recall a scene from the 1985 science fiction movie, "Cocoon," in which a man stood in a swimming pool with a beautiful alien woman while her mind or spirit somehow projected out from her and began to entwine with his. A look of utter bliss came over his face, and he quipped, "If this is just foreplay, I'm a dead man!" Somehow, I imagine that the communication among God's creations is similar to that. We have hints of it now and then, when we connect deeply and wordlessly with someone. There is an exchange of some sort of knowing that transcends words, and at times it can leave you breathless with surprise at the beauty of what is being communicated, which is (I believe) a shared awareness of Who we are.

In another science fiction short story, by Spider Robinson, he imagines the discovery of a new drug, called "Truth," which allows total mind-to-mind communication. Nothing can be hidden. The result is something very akin to enlightenment.

Your spirit and mine are both in constant, complete and direct communication with God and with each other (3:4). That communication does not stop just because a part of the mind refuses to recognize it. The spirit responds with perfect love to everything of God, and "does not respond at all to anything else" (3:1). I love that last part! To me it is the perfect answer of how to deal with the ego, whether in myself or in another: Don't respond to it. It isn't real, and can safely be ignored. What matters is the divine communication. Simply respond to everything real with love. We are learning to stop allowing the ego's screeching demands for attention to drown out the spirit, and to give top priority to becoming a channel for that creative communication. Our mind has distorted its function (3:11) but it cannot give itself a different function. Therefore, it cannot lose its ability to communicate (3:12). That ability can be rediscovered and restored.

Paragraph 4

4. 1Existence as well as being rest on communication. 2Existence, however, is **specific** in how, what and with whom communication is judged to be worth undertaking. 3Being is completely without these distinctions. 4It is a state in which the mind is in communication with everything that is real [Ur: **including its own Soul**]. 5To whatever extent you permit this state to be curtailed you are limiting your sense of your **own** reality, which becomes total only by recognizing **all** reality in the glorious context of its real relationship to **you**. 6This **is** your reality. 7Do not desecrate it or recoil from it. 8It is your real home, your real temple and your real Self.

• Study Question •

4. *Take sentences 6 through 8 of this paragraph as a meditation exercise. Set aside some time in meditation to recognize that what you really are is "in communication with everything that is real" (4:4), and to realize that you can*

only understand your own reality by grasping the way all reality is related to you. Turn these three sentences into a prayer.



The Course distinguishes between “existence” and “being” here and in paragraph 5. If you recall, the distinction was first made in Section III of this chapter, where it was discussing what the ego can offer us as a reward for our continued belief in separation. It said:

All it can offer is a sense of temporary *existence*, which begins with its own beginning and ends with its own ending. It tells you this life is your *existence* because it is its own. Against this sense of temporary *existence* spirit offers you the knowledge of permanence and unshakable *being*. (T-4.III.3:4–6, my emphasis)

The distinction shows up only two more times, in Chapter 7 of the Text, Sections IV and VI, so it isn't one of the major terms of the Course. When the first edition of A Course Glossary was put together, neither Robert Perry nor I thought of including these words, although we may in a later edition.

From the passage in Section III we can see that existence refers to our apparent life span as separated egos in bodies. The Course emphasizes its temporary nature, as opposed to the permanence of being. Being is eternal and of the spirit.

The current paragraph makes several other distinctions. While both rest on communication (4:1), existence deals with specifics, making clear-cut distinctions about “how, what and with whom” it will communicate, while being is in communication with everything that is real, without distinction (4:2–3). These same points were made in the preceding two paragraphs concerning the ego and the spirit. Clearly, the Course is using the term existence to represent the “life” of the ego, while being represents our life in spirit. Spirit “is in complete and direct communication with every aspect of creation” (3:4); being “is a state in which the mind is in communication with everything that is real” (4:4) including our own Soul (Urtext), which amounts to the same thing. We can say, then, that being denotes the state of a mind that is united with spirit. Existence would then denote the state of a mind that is identified with the ego.

When we limit our communication with all creation by recoiling (4:7) or contracting away from it, we “fall away” from being and back into existence; we limit or lose touch with our sense of our own reality (4:5). What we are becomes fully realized only as we consciously and willingly enter the reality of relationship with everything (4:5).

This may sound to us like a state of mind or being that is beyond our ability to grasp. Jesus assures us that this lofty state is our reality (4:6). It is our “real home, [our] real temple and [our] real Self” (4:7). I see here three things: home, a place of relatedness and joining with others; temple, a place of union with God; and Self, the place of Who we are. Whatever this state is, however lofty it seems, we belong in it. It is our native dwelling. It fulfills every aspect of our being.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹God, Who encompasses all being, [Ur: nevertheless] created [separate] beings who have everything individually, but who want to share it to increase their joy. ²Nothing real can be increased except by sharing. ³That is why God created you. ⁴Divine Abstraction takes joy in sharing [Ur: in application]. ⁵That is what creation means. ⁶“How,” “what” and “to whom” are irrelevant, because real creation gives everything, since it can create only like itself. ⁷Remember that in the Kingdom [Ur: in being] there is no difference between *having* and *being*, as there is in existence. ⁸In the state of being the mind gives everything always.

• Study Question •

5. *Imagine that you are in Heaven. How do you decide with whom to share and what to share?*

The Course speaks here of God creating individual beings (5:1), and the Urtext actually uses the word “separate” beings, yet earlier it told us, “It should especially be noted that God has only one Son” (T-2.VII.6:1). We might wonder, “Which is it? One or many?” The answer in the Course seems to be, “Both.” The line from Chapter 2 about the one Son is followed with this line, indicating plurality of sons: “If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship” (T-2.VII.6:2). There is only one Son, but that Son can also be viewed as the Sonship, composed of many individual Sons. It reminds me of particle physics and the description of the nature of light. Light is apparently both a wave and a particle; sometimes it behaves like one, sometimes like the other. Nobody understands how it can be both; it just is. Likewise, I can’t explain how there is only one Son, and also many sons who are parts of the one Sonship. It just is. From our perspective, there is one Son or many Sons, but it can’t be both. From God’s perspective, both are true. So, at times the Course speaks of one Son, at other times of many, depending on which description fits best with the situation being discussed.

Here, what is being discussed is sharing, so the plurality of Sons is appropriate. Sharing requires one who shares and at least one other who is shared with. God’s creations “want to share” all that they have “to increase their joy” (5:1). In this respect we are like God, Who, as Love, must extend His Love:

God has created It [your Self] beyond judgment, out of His need to extend His Love. With love in you, you have no need except to extend it. (T-15.V.11:2–3)

God’s creations have everything and share it. This sharing is another way to describe the communication we have with all beings. We read in the third paragraph that “Creation and communication are synonymous” (3:6). Now we are told that sharing “is what creation means” (5:5), and “Real creation gives everything” (5:6). So all three things—

creation, communication and sharing—are synonymous. Sharing is how real things are increased (5:2), and that is how creation happens.

The Urtext offers an interesting word here in place of “sharing”; it says that “Divine Abstraction takes joy in *application*” (5:4). That word, to me, implies taking what is abstract and *applying* it to specific individuals or situations. So it does mean “sharing”; the editors’ change of words isn’t inaccurate. But, given the contrast we have been seeing between the abstract and the concrete or specific, I think the word “application” provides additional meaning to this phrase. God, Divine Abstraction, takes joy in extending his Love in *specific* ways.

When I read this the first time, one question that popped into my head was, “What do we share?” Another was, “How do we share it?” And here is Jesus telling me: “‘How,’ ‘what’ and ‘to whom’ are irrelevant, because real creation gives everything, since it can only create like itself” (5:6). This is giving profusely, exuberantly and joyously, unconcerned with who is the receiver. Giving that comes from spirit, “in the state of being,” just “gives everything always” (5:8), without worrying about details. It isn’t hung up on specifics, as the ego is.

As I envision a person who embodies the spirit of this paragraph, that person is universally generous—with their money, their time, their talents, their possessions, their wisdom—and generous to everyone, without distinctions. They “take joy” in giving. It reminds me of the Bible verse, “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The Bible repeatedly states that you should praise God. ²This hardly means that you should tell Him how wonderful He is. ³He has no ego with which to accept such praise [Ur: thanks], and no perception with which to judge [Ur: your offerings] it. ⁴But unless you take your part in the creation, His joy is not complete because yours is incomplete. ⁵And this He does know. ⁶He knows it in His Own Being and its experience of His Son’s [Ur: Sons’] experience. ⁷The constant going out of His Love is blocked when His channels are closed, and He is lonely when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him.

• Study Question •

6. *What is the appropriate way to praise God?*

Once again the Course reinterprets the Bible. Nearly everyone understands the Bible’s admonition to praise God to mean, quite literally, to “tell Him how wonderful He is” (6:2). The Bible itself seems to imply that, for instance:

1 Praise the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in his mighty heavens.

2 Praise him for his acts of power; praise him for his surpassing greatness. (Psalm 150:1–2 NIV)

In Psalm 145, praise is associated with declaring God's mighty acts and the glory of His majesty, or speaking of His great goodness and His power.

The Course sees something quite different in praise. It tells us that God "has no ego with which to accept such praise, and no perception with which to judge it" (6:3); therefore, praise can't possibly mean what we have thought it meant. Praise, this paragraph tells us, is simply taking our part in creation (6:4). It is fulfilling our function as channels of His Love and power, allowing the "constant going out of His Love" (6:7) to flow joyfully through us to everyone around us, lavishing healing and blessing everywhere. To praise God is to express God; to manifest Divine Being in this world.

What does it mean that God "is lonely" when we don't fully communicate with Him (6:7)? It certainly can't mean that in the normal human sense. It must mean that "His joy is not [as] complete" (6:4) when we are asleep and not awake, because the going out of His Love is blocked (6:7). You and I are integral parts of God's eternal communication network, and He knows when that communication isn't functioning as it should.

In this depressing state the Holy Spirit reminds you gently that you are sad because you are not fulfilling your function as co-creator with God, and are therefore depriving yourself of joy" (T-7.VI.13:1).

Only by fulfilling the function given you by God will you be happy (W-pl. 64.4:1).

If each of us is a part of God, and any one of us is not joyful, God's joy is incomplete! And because we, like God, *take joy* from sharing or giving (see 5:1–4), from being the manifestation of God in the world, if we are *not* giving our joy will be diminished or absent from the Wholeness that is God.

Some have said that God, being perfect and formless, is unaware of this world or anything in it. What God knows is only Truth. If God knew of our suffering, our suffering would be true; it would be real. Therefore, so they say, He cannot know it. Yet, this section says, with extreme clarity and precision:

...His joy is not complete because yours is incomplete. And this *does* He know. He knows it in His Own Being and in its experience of His Son's experience. (6:4–6, my emphasis)

God knows something; that is the unmistakable emphasis here. God is aware of a disruption in communication. His Being somehow experiences His Son's experience, and He realizes something is amiss. That is why He has responded with the Holy Spirit, and with the Atonement. A passage in Chapter 6 affirms this understanding:

What God **does** know is that His communication channels are not open to Him, so that He cannot impart His joy and know that His children are wholly joyous. Giving His joy is an ongoing process, not in time but in eternity. God's extending outward, though not His completeness, is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him as one. So He thought, "My children sleep and must be awakened. (T-6.V.1:5–8)

Paragraph 7

7. ¹God has kept your kingdom for you, but He cannot share His joy with you until you know it with your whole mind. ²[Ur: Even] Revelation is not enough, because it is only communication *from* God. [Ur: But it is not enough until it is shared.] ³God does not need revelation returned to Him, which would clearly be impossible, but He **does** want it brought to others. ⁴This cannot be done with the actual revelation; its content cannot be expressed, because it is intensely personal to the mind that receives it. ⁵It can, however, be returned **by** that mind to other minds, through the attitudes the knowledge from the revelation brings.

• Study Question •

7. *Experiencing a revelation is not enough for us to come to know God with our whole mind. How do we come to know God with our whole mind?*

It's reassuring to see how Jesus keeps affirming that we haven't lost anything; God has preserved our Kingdom (7:1). Nevertheless, we cannot *enjoy* our inheritance until we "know it with [our] whole mind" (7:1). This apparently means a lot more than simply being completely convinced that the Kingdom is ours. I suspect the phrase "whole mind," which clearly implies an unequivocal choice to seek *first* God's kingdom in our individual mind, may also refer to our *shared* mind, the mind that is comprised of all the parts of the Sonship. The circuit of communication has to be completed, from God to you in revelation (7:2), continuing on from you to others (7:3) "through the attitudes the knowledge from the revelation brings" (7:5).

Praising God is not attempting to return revelation *to God*, "which would clearly be impossible" (7:3). Praise is extending the knowledge we have gained from revelation *to others*. We do not try to share the revelation directly; that can't be done (7:4, see W-pl. 157.6:2-3¹). What *can* be done is to demonstrate the truth through our attitudes toward our brothers and sisters that are fostered by what we have learned from the revelation of Truth, allowing us to see Christ in them beyond their egos (7:5), thus leading other minds to experience the same revelation of love for themselves. That is communication; that is the expression of creation in this world, or what the Course calls *extension*. And that, according to the Course, is our only function:

The extension of God's Being is spirit's only function.(T-7.IX.3:1)
...only extension is the mind's function. (T-8.VII.12:8)

¹ "We cannot give experience like this directly. Yet it leaves a vision in our eyes which we can offer everyone, that he may come the sooner to the same experience in which the world is quietly forgot, and Heaven is remembered for a while" (W-pl.157.6:2-3).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹God is praised whenever any mind learns to be wholly helpful. ²This is impossible without being wholly harmless, because the two beliefs must coexist [Ur: because the two beliefs {helpful and harmful} cannot coexist]. ³The truly helpful are invulnerable, because they are not protecting their egos and so nothing can hurt them. ⁴Their helpfulness is their praise of God, and He will return their praise of Him because they are like Him, and they [God and the truly helpful?] can rejoice together. ⁵God goes out to them and through them, and there is great joy throughout the Kingdom. ⁶Every mind that is changed adds to this joy with its individual willingness to share in it. ⁷The truly helpful are God's miracle workers, whom I direct until we are all united in the joy of the Kingdom. ⁸I will direct you to wherever you can be truly helpful, and to whoever can follow my guidance through you.

• Study Question •

8. *The concept of praising God has been made even clearer in paragraphs 7 and 8. In your own words, describe how we praise God.*

What all this boils down to is being *helpful* to one another—"wholly helpful," which implies "wholly harmless" (8:1–2). To whatever degree I am harmful to someone, I am obviously not helpful. The way the Course conceives of communication and creation implies an attitude of giving that is wholly benevolent. The mind that is "truly helpful" (8:3, compare with T-2.V(A.)18:2, "I am here only to be truly helpful") wills only good for everyone. William Law, the eighteenth century theologian and mystic who greatly influenced the founders of Methodism, thought this mental attitude was the essence of love; he defined love as "the eternal will to all goodness" (Law, *Spirit of Love*, 1752²).

² Now the Spirit of Love has this Original. God, as considered in himself in his Holy Being, before any thing is brought forth by him or out of him, is only an eternal Will to all Goodness. This is the one eternal immutable God, that from Eternity to Eternity changeth not, that can be neither more nor less nor any thing else but an eternal Will to all the Goodness that is in himself, and can come from him. The Creation of ever so many Worlds or Systems of Creatures adds nothing to, nor takes any thing from this immutable God. He always was and always will be the same immutable Will to all Goodness. So that as certainly as he is the Creator, so certainly is he the Blessor of every created Thing, and can give nothing but Blessing, Goodness, and Happiness from himself because he has in himself nothing else to give. It is much more possible for the Sun to give forth Darkness, than for God to do, or be, or give forth anything but Blessing and Goodness. Now this is the Ground and Original of the Spirit of Love in the Creature; it is and must be a Will to all Goodness, and you have not the Spirit of Love till you have this Will to all Goodness at all Times and on all Occasions. You may indeed do many Works of Love and delight in them, especially at such Times as they are not inconvenient to you, or contradictory to your State or Temper or Occurrences in Life. But the Spirit of Love is not in you till it is the Spirit of your Life, till you live freely, willingly, and universally according to it. (Law, *Spirit of Love*, 1752)

In an article on the “truly helpful” prayer in T-2.V, Robert Perry defines “truly helpful” as “seeing the perfection in others despite the condition of their bodies, brains or egos.” His more concise definition is “the perception of another as worthy of God’s infinite praise.” Here in Chapter 4, we read that God is praised when our mind learns to be truly helpful (8:1). I think the connection of “truly helpful” with “praise” in both Chapter 2 and here in Chapter 4 is not a coincidence. Jesus tells us that the helpfulness of the truly helpful “*is* their praise of God” (8:4, my emphasis). It is what makes them *like* God, enabling them to rejoice together with Him (8:4); a rejoicing that is the sign of restored communication (6:4 and 7:1).

To be “wholly helpful” our minds must be free of any desire to harm. That means they must be free of all judgment, attack or condemnation, free of any distinction in “to whom” their gifts are given, as was pointed out in 5:6. Our minds do not need to be *permanently* free of judgment in order to be truly helpful, though:

This does not mean the conflict must be gone forever from your mind to heal.
For if it were, there were no need for healing then. But it does mean, if only
for an instant, you love without attack. (T-27.V.2:10–12)

We can be truly helpful even if we are free of attack for only an instant. How reassuring!

Another characteristic of truly helpful people is that they do not protect their egos. Therefore, nothing can hurt them. This makes them invulnerable (8:3). That is an astounding series of statements! It implies that what makes us vulnerable is our attempts to protect the ego. We protect the ego in the mistaken idea that we *are* the ego; therefore, when the ego is injured, *we* seem to be hurt. If we break that identification with the ego, nothing can harm us! This is part of helpfulness because, if we are trying to defend our ego, we will inevitably attack the egos of others, or at least be reluctant to *help* those whom we perceive to be in competition with us. We must be free of that “defensive attack” to be truly helpful; to be free of that attack, we have to stop protecting our egos.

When we begin to accept our function and to rejoin the eternal communication, God goes out *to* us and *through* us in our helpfulness to others. Our helpfulness is our praise of Him, and He returns the praise to us (8:4–5). Joy is everywhere because of the divine current flowing through us all. Each mind that is touched by this joyful current is changed, and willingly adds its joy to the river of joy that has reached it and now would flow through it to touch other minds (8:6). The current from God has passed through us *to* them and now flows *through* them, just as it did with us.

The flow of joy, the current of communication, the extension of helpfulness—all of these are different ways of describing *miracle working*. “The truly helpful are God’s miracle workers” (8:7). *A Course in Miracles* is preparing us for just this function. Jesus directs us in this work until “all [are] united in the joy of the Kingdom” (8:7). This river of joy will eventually flood everyone’s mind. Truly, this is “a collaborative venture.” Jesus promises to guide us quite specifically to the *places* where we can be truly helpful, and to the *people* who are ready to join in the extension process by following the guidance he brings them through us (8:8).

Answer Key

1. No written answer is expected.
2. a) No written answer is expected. b) No. The ego opposes communication *except* as a tool for “establishing separateness” (2:2).
3. Use your own words. For instance, “God created me by communicating His Mind to me, and He created me to receive His Mind and Will and to extend them to other minds.” Or, “God’s Mind flows through me without judgment, exception or alteration.”
4. For example, “This interwoven web of being is my reality. I will not desecrate it; I will not inject my ego into it. I will not recoil from it; I will not contract into myself but will open myself to it. This is my real home. This is my real temple. This is my real *Self*.”
5. It’s easy; you don’t make distinctions. You just share everything with everyone always.
6. You praise God by taking part in His creation, extending love to others.
7. We come to know God with our whole mind by extending God to others. We extend the attitudes that revelation of God induces in us.
8. We praise God by being truly helpful to and not harming others, which is to say, by being miracle workers. We extend God’s Being to them, allowing God’s love and strength to flow through us to them. We demonstrate the truth by the attitudes in ourselves that arise from our knowledge of the truth.