

# Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 5, Section VII

## The Decision for God

### Overview of the Section

The preceding section spoke of the two voices we must choose between: the voice of judgment (ego), or the voice of love (Holy Spirit). This section begins by speaking of those two voices again and how we must decide to return our minds to God.

The final paragraph, in italics, beginning, “I must have decided wrongly because I am not at peace” (6:7–11) is one of the most famous and well-loved passages in the Course. We love this passage because it gives such practical, step-by-step instructions for returning our minds to God. In the days of the first edition of the Course, without sentence and paragraph numbering, this passage was on page 83 of the Text. Marianne Williamson referred to it so often in her talks that she developed a shorthand way to refer to it: “Time to do a page 83,” she would advise a questioner. In the second edition with numbered references, the passage is on a different page, so “page 83” no longer works in referring to it. It seems far too cumbersome, however, to use the current reference. Try saying; “Do a five-seven-six, seven-through-eleven.” Page numbers differ as well in translations into other languages. Perhaps we could make the shorthand version be, “Time for a decision for God.”

Whatever we call it, I *highly* recommend to every Course student that you memorize the italicized part word-for-word, and make use of it whenever you notice you are not at peace.

### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>Do you **really** believe you can make a voice that can drown out God's? <sup>2</sup>Do you really believe you can devise a thought system that can separate you from Him [Ur: His]? <sup>3</sup>Do you **really** believe you can plan for your safety and joy better than He can? <sup>4</sup>You need be neither careful nor careless; you need merely cast your cares upon Him because He careth for **you** [1 Peter 5:7]. <sup>5</sup>You **are** His care because He loves you. <sup>6</sup>His Voice reminds you always that all hope is yours **because** of His care. <sup>7</sup>You **cannot** choose to escape His care because that is not His Will, but you **can** choose to accept His care and use the infinite power of His care for all those He created **by** it.

• Study Question •

1. *What is the overall attitude toward God that is being encouraged in this paragraph?*

The opening questions, each beginning with, “Do you really believe...” (1:1–3), can be seen as a poignant answer to Helen’s self-doubt, and to ours as we read with her. Every mind that *thinks* it is in this world has a part that *does* believe these impossible things: that its voice has drowned out God’s; that it has conceived of a thought system which has separated it from God; and that it can and will look out for its own safety and joy better than God can. Helen believed those things. So do you and I. These impotent thoughts cannot possibly overcome our fixation on God; it is foolish to think that they could. The ideas sound absurd when clearly stated like this, don’t they? My voice, drown out God’s? You’ve got to be kidding! Me, doing a better job than God of planning my life? Preposterous!

Yet, we are betrayed by our actions. We *act* as though we cannot hear God’s Voice. We struggle along, trying to run our lives, only rarely consulting God for advice. Most of the time, God is treated like a near-senile former CEO of our “company”: Unless He intrudes on us, we ignore Him; when He happens to drop in, we politely listen to His opinion and then totally ignore Him anyhow. We listen to our own voice—that of the ego—far more often than we do to God’s Voice. From our behavior, one could never guess that we believe, intellectually, that God is omniscient, wise, and wholly loving.

How *should* we live? By being “neither careful nor careless” (1:4). That seems to call for the impossible. Being careful *means* “not careless,” and vice versa, doesn’t it? How can we be *neither*? By following the biblical injunction Jesus quotes here: “You need merely cast your cares upon Him because He careth for you” (I Peter 5:7). We trust Him to take care of us. We should not be care-*less*, but neither do we need to be care-*full*; we can entirely let go of feeling responsible for our own safety. Instead of being careless, we give everything into His hands; instead of being careful ourselves, we are free of care in trusting Him.

Sentence 5 gives an alternate meaning to the Bible verse, “You are His care” (1:5). That is how J. B. Phillips actually translates the verse in “The New Testament in Modern English”: “You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern.” That’s just what we are being asked to do: listen to His Voice reminding us “always that all hope is [ours] because of His care” (1:6). How absurd to think that God, in His loving care for us, would have created us capable of cutting ourselves off from Him and from His care! We cannot “escape” from God (1:7). What we *can* do is to accept His care for ourselves, and to let His love flow through us, extending “the infinite power of His care” to “all those He created by” that power (1:7). Here again is that two-fold picture: receiving from God for ourselves and extending what we receive to others.

Of course, when we have fully incorporated the idea that we are one with God, the idea of God “caring for” us or being personally concerned with us may seem as though we are viewing God as a separate Being, a kind of super-parent. That is *not* what God is, and not how the Course really views God. For me, as much as I have, in the past, loved passages like the one quoted here from I Peter<sup>1</sup> about casting all our cares on God, I sometimes find the imagery a bit troubling because it suggests a God who is outside of me, separate from me. I find I want to re-write the verse a bit. Perhaps it should be worded like this: “Cast all your anxiety on the God within, for you are in the care of that innate divine Intelligence.” My mind is not limited to the input of my five senses and my personal experience, nor to the puny amount of power that resides in my body and brain; rather, I am “online” to Infinite Intelligence, the shared life of all the Sonship, the shared life of God. “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13).

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>There have been many healers who did not heal themselves. <sup>2</sup>They have not moved mountains by their faith because their faith was not whole. <sup>3</sup>Some of them have healed the sick at times, but they have not raised the dead. <sup>4</sup>Unless the healer heals himself, he cannot [Ur: does not] believe that there is no order of difficulty in miracles. <sup>5</sup>He has not learned that every mind God created is equally worthy of being healed because God created it whole. <sup>6</sup>You are merely asked to return to God the mind as He created it. <sup>7</sup>He asks you only for what He gave, knowing that this giving will heal you. <sup>8</sup>Sanity is wholeness, and the sanity of your brothers is yours.

### • Study Question •

2. *In 2:1–5, what reasons are given why most healers do not move mountains, raise the dead, and in general demonstrate that there is no order of difficulty in miracles?*

Here, too, it throws light on the Text to realize that Jesus was addressing Helen’s fear of being a healer who could not heal herself (2:1). He has referred previously to the fact that Helen has helped others but has not applied the ideas to herself (T-5.In.1:1–3). The lesson for us is to not fail to apply these ideas to our own lives and thinking.

Unhealed healers may sometimes heal the sick, but will be unable to move mountains, raise the dead, or be consistent in their healing ability. Clearly, Jesus is implying that if the healer *is* healed herself or himself, then she or he *will* move mountains, raise the dead, and heal consistently (2:1-3). The key is the recognition of the *first principle of miracles*: “there is no order of difficulty in miracles” (2:4; compare T-1.I.1:1 and T-2.I.5:5), and no one can recognize that principle unless their own mind is

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<sup>1</sup> 1Pet. 5:7 Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you.

healed (2:4). Their own mind cannot be healed until they have learned “that every mind God created is equally worthy of being healed *because* God created it whole” (2:5).

The principle on which any individual mind is healed is the acceptance, by *that* mind, of the worthiness of *all minds* to be healed. That is true because the thought that some parts of creation are less worthy than other parts *is the illness from which the mind suffers*. Separation is the sickness. Naturally, then, once a mind is able to bring healing to itself, it can bring healing universally. Universal healing is the only healing that exists.

We have tried to run off from God with our own minds, and to keep them to ourselves. God asks only that we return what is rightfully His (2:6), and that we accept our minds as God created them—equal with all other minds, part of them, joined with them in God. This giving of our minds will heal us (2:7). Separation *is* sickness; “sanity *is* wholeness” (2:8, Urtext emphasis). To return our minds to God is to give our minds and our lives into His care, and to allow His purpose to be carried out in and through us, and in union with all our brothers and sisters. It is to take our part in the corporate body of Christ, rather than living for ourselves alone.

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>Why should you listen to the endless insane calls you think are made upon you, when you can know [Ur: *when you know*] the Voice for God [Himself] is in you? <sup>2</sup>God commended His Spirit to you, and asks that you commend yours to Him. <sup>3</sup>He wills to keep it in perfect peace, because you are of one mind and spirit with Him. <sup>4</sup>Excluding yourself from the Atonement is the ego's last-ditch defense of its own existence. <sup>5</sup>It reflects both the ego's need to separate, and your willingness to side with its separateness. <sup>6</sup>This willingness means that you do not want to be healed.

#### • Study Question •

3. Describe the “last-ditch defense” of the ego, giving an example from your own life, if you can.

“...the endless insane calls you think are made upon you” (3:1) may refer, I believe, to the ego's shrill accusations of guilt, although it could also simply mean the non-stop demands of daily living and the other people in our lives. The ego's voice in our minds is constantly condemning us and telling us that we have not lived up to the standards it sets for us (see T-13.II.2). The interpretation of “insane calls” as guilt feelings seems logical to me because the last two sections have mentioned “guilt feelings” several times: T-5.V.7:3; T-5.V.8:1; T-5.VI.2:1. Guilt is what induces the fear in us that keeps us from appealing our case to the Higher Court of the Holy Spirit, “the Voice for God” which “is in you” (3:1). Jesus is telling us that there is no reason to listen to the accusations of the ego when we have the Great Judge Who is ready to immediately dismiss the case against us.

If we understand the phrase the other way, as the demands of life in this world, then we can see how these demands also distract us from God's Voice. Why should we let ourselves be pulled to and fro by external influences when we could be living in the flow of God's inner guidance?

God has given us His Spirit, and asks us to entrust our spirits to Him (3:2). As I pointed out in discussing T-3.II.5:1, the idea of commending our spirit to God evokes a memory of the crucifixion story, when Jesus uttered his last words, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46, KJV). As I said in that discussion, to commend our spirits into God's Hands means to entrust ourselves to His Will and to stop trying to manage our lives by ourselves. His will is to keep our spirits "in perfect peace" (3:3), which is another reference to the Bible: "Thou wilt keep [him] in perfect peace, [whose] mind [is] stayed [on thee]: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3, KJV). He is telling us that God wills to keep our spirit in perfect peace *because* our mind and spirit are set on Him—we "are of one mind and spirit with Him" (3:3). He is telling us again, in a different way, that, as we bring our minds into line with God's, we will be brought into peace. It's another way to describe mind training.

When you listen to the ego's accusations of guilt, you exclude yourself from the Atonement. Face it! Aren't you inclined at times to think, "I'm much too weak and helpless to be a miracle worker. I can't possibly accept God's peace and joy! Look at what I just did/said/thought"? Do you realize, when thoughts like that cross your mind, that what you are really saying is "I must be outside the reach of the Atonement"? Self-depreciation like that is what Jesus calls "the ego's last-ditch defense of its own existence" (3:4). The ego is frantic because you have come too close to ending its existence. It is trying, in desperation, to keep you from accepting the only thing that can heal you. So, it tells you that you are not good enough and urges you towards an impossible standard of perfection.

When you listen to these insane demands, you are siding with "the ego's need to separate" (3:5). You are making yourself different or special, not caring that you must choose a negative kind of specialness. "God may be able to save other people, but not me; I'm special! I'm *really* hopeless." The truth is simply that you *do not want to be healed!* (3:6). There is no problem in healing you—not with God, at any rate. Your guilt and your self-condemnation are nothing more than tactics designed to forestall your acceptance of the Atonement, because the ego has deceived you into believing that accepting it means *your* end as well as its own. You don't want the healing, or you would have it.

Many people struggle with this concept. "But I *do* want to be healed! It's so frustrating!" The Course says we are deceiving ourselves. With one part of our mind, we want healing, but with another part, we do not—and we are listening mostly to the part that does not. Either this is so or the entire Course is wrong, because it is founded on the idea that the power of our mind is limitless. Our mind is so powerful that it *always* gets what it wants; therefore, what you *have* is always what you *wanted* to have. If you want

healing, you have healing. If you want to be enlightened, you are instantly enlightened. If you want to hear the Voice for God, you hear It.

If you are not *aware* of any part of your mind that shuns healing and recoils from God, it does not mean that your mind is free of such hindrances but God isn't responding due to some fault on *His* part. (To blame your lack on God would be absurd, but what other explanation could there be if you *truly* want enlightenment now and don't have it?) It just means there is a vast area of your mind that you are not aware of, and that hidden part *does not want salvation!* That is why the world you see is very important to you, because *it reveals the hidden state of your mind:*

The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition. (T-21.In.1:2-5)

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>But the time is now. <sup>2</sup>You have not been asked to work out the plan of salvation yourself because, as I told you before, the remedy could **not** be of your making. <sup>3</sup>God Himself gave you the perfect Correction for everything you made that is not in accord with His holy Will. <sup>4</sup>I am making [Ur: I have made] His plan perfectly [clear and perfectly] explicit to you, and will also tell [Ur: have also told] you of your part in it, and how urgent it is to fulfill it. [Ur: There is time for delay, but there need not be.] <sup>5</sup>God weeps at the "sacrifice" of His children who believe they are lost to Him. [Ur: The "one more thing" that Bill must learn is merely that he is *not* the one more. He is both *one* and *at one*. If he will learn this *now*, he will be willing in accord with the last judgment, which is really only the Biblical reminder of the inevitability of self-*inclusion*. This is what "Physician, heal thyself" really means. Bill has frequently observed for *himself* that this is hard to do. He has, however, been perfectly aware of *just* what *you* should do about it. You might ask him for me whether he does not think he might be dissociating *himself* from his own awareness, since he is so clear about the remedy for *you*. You might also remind him that to whatever extent he separates himself from you, he is separating himself from *me*. This *is* a collaborative venture. Let me therefore return his own ideas to him, so that you can share them and thus help each other to help me.]

### • Study Question •

4. *"But the time is now" (4:1). This line, the word "urgent" in sentence 4, and the fifth sentence's words, "God weeps," all call to mind the line, "Delay...is tragic in time" (VI.1:3). Although the Holy Spirit has infinite patience while we are in time, what attitude is He trying to instill in us? Spend a while examining your own heart to see if you embody this attitude.*



The ego uses guilt to make us delay our acceptance of the Atonement. “But the time is now” (4:1). There is no need to wait! We do not have to work out how to be saved; we could not even if we tried, as Jesus told us earlier in the chapter (4:2; compare to T-5.IV. 2:10). We don’t have to work it out because God already has given us the Holy Spirit as “the perfect Correction for everything you made that is not in accord with His holy Will” (4:3). Not only so, but Jesus is making the plan of correction “perfectly explicit” (4:4) to us. He will tell us the plan and explain our part in it, and the urgency of our part in the plan (4:4). Think of that! We have the entire Trinity at work on our behalf. God the Father made the plan and gave us the Holy Spirit, Who carries out the plan in us, while Jesus the Christ explains it to us. Delay is so needless, the pain brought on by delay is so pointless, that “God weeps” at the so-called sacrifice we experience when we believe that we are lost to Him.

I don’t think this means that God literally weeps. As Ken Wapnick has often pointed out, God does not have tear ducts. He does not have a body. Weeping isn’t possible. Clearly, this is a figure of speech, but that does not weaken the statement. Rather than making the statement meaningless or weak, it gives the statement *more* meaning and *more* impact. Let’s examine it a moment.

In human terms, if I were told that you weep at the thought of starving children, it would convey to me, in strongest terms, that the starvation of children is *not* something you desire or approve of. To the contrary, you desire to see such starvation put to an end. Here, in being told that God weeps at our “sacrifice,” we are meant to understand that what we may think of as the suffering and sacrifice required of us in order to reach God *is not His Will*. He does not desire sacrifice from us; He does not approve of it; He desires to see it put to an end. He has already done everything He can to end it, by giving us His Correction in the form of the Holy Spirit, and giving us Jesus to explain His plan for us in painstaking detail.

The Urtext material at the end of the paragraph is clearly addressed to Bill, as was, very probably, the whole paragraph. All of us, just as Bill did, need to realize that we are not the “one more,” the one left behind still needing redemption. We have *been* redeemed! We are already healed; it has all been given to us. We need only accept that our inclusion in God’s Kingdom is *inevitable*. So many of us can see very clearly what others need to do to find release, as Bill could see what Helen needed, but we find healing *ourselves* too hard. That is the classic description of an unhealed healer.

## Paragraphs 5 & 6

[Ur: But let me first remind you of something I told you myself.] <sup>1</sup>Whenever you are not wholly joyous, it is because you have reacted with a lack of love to one of God’s creations [Ur: to some Soul which God created]. <sup>2</sup>Perceiving this as “sin” you become defensive because you expect attack. <sup>3</sup>The decision to react in this way is yours, and can therefore be undone. <sup>4</sup>It cannot be undone by repentance in the usual sense, because this implies guilt. <sup>5</sup>If you allow yourself

to feel guilty, you will reinforce the error rather than allow it to be undone for you.

6. <sup>1</sup>Decision [Ur; Decisions] cannot be difficult. <sup>2</sup>This is obvious, if you realize that you must already have decided not to be wholly joyous if that is how you feel. <sup>3</sup>Therefore, the first step in the undoing is to recognize that you actively decided wrongly, but can as actively decide otherwise. <sup>4</sup>Be very firm with yourself in this, and keep yourself fully aware that the undoing process, which does not come from you, is nevertheless within you because God placed it there. <sup>5</sup>Your part is merely to return your thinking to the point at which the error was made, and give it over to the Atonement in peace. <sup>6</sup>Say this to yourself [Ur: Say to yourselves the following,] as sincerely as you can, remembering that the Holy Spirit will respond fully to your slightest invitation:

*<sup>7</sup>I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace.*

*<sup>8</sup>I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise.*

*<sup>9</sup>I want [Ur: will] to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.*

*<sup>10</sup>I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.*

*<sup>11</sup>I choose [Ur: will] to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me.*

• **Study Question** •

5. *What is “repentance in the usual sense” and why won’t it resolve the problem (5:3–5)?*

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And now, having set the stage, Jesus proceeds to do exactly what he said he is here to do: to explain the plan of salvation to us so that it is “perfectly explicit” (4:4). I am going to treat these two paragraphs as a unit so that I can more effectively summarize them.

**The steps leading up to the problem (5:1–2)**

- 1) Something or someone, possibly yourself, says or does something that triggers an adverse reaction in you.
- 2) You decide to react to this situation or person (or to yourself) with a lack of love—fear, anger, judgment, withdrawal, or attack.
- 3) As a result, you lose your joy. The loss of joy involves these sub-steps:

- a) You perceive your response as “sin” and judge yourself for it.
- b) You expect some kind of attack (from the other person or from God) in retaliation for your unloving response.
- c) You become defensive.

That is how the problem develops. It describes the way we descend into guilt and fear, probably dozens of times, perhaps more, every day. The question we face is: How can we restore our joy? How can we return to full communion with God? (These are the same question.)

### **Improper attempts to solve the problem**

The key to solving the problem lies in the third sentence of paragraph 5, which is heavily emphasized in the Urtext: We are the ones who have made the decisions, and we can undo them. Our unloving response was *our own decision*. No one else, nor any external force, has constrained us to react without love. Likewise, our reaction to our unloving response—our judgment of it as “sin,”—our guilt, our fear of attack—are all our own choice. We alone have decided to respond and react as we have done; therefore, we can reverse these decisions (5:3).

Guilt, however, is definitely not part of the healing process; in fact, it is contraindicated. “Repentance in the usual sense” (5:4), according to the American Heritage Dictionary, means “remorse or contrition for past conduct or sin.” The same dictionary defines *guilt* as “remorseful awareness of having done something wrong.” Clearly, then, “repentance in the usual sense” is the same thing as remorse and guilt. Repentance, in the sense of remorse and guilt, cannot be the solution because *guilt is the problem!* Guilt is what is producing our fear and keeping us apart from God. If we allow ourselves to feel guilty, we will simply reinforce the original error (5:5).

The Greek term in the New Testament that is translated by the English word *repent* is *metanoia*, which means, literally, a change of mind, or thinking differently. I love the way *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary* defines it: “to perceive afterwards.” Vine parses the Greek roots: *meta*, “after,” implying “change,” *noeō*, “to perceive,”; *nous*, “the mind, the seat of moral reflection.” It “signifies to change one’s mind or purpose.” Rather than speaking of sorrow and guilt over wrongdoing, the original meaning agrees precisely with what the Course is teaching: changing the way we *think* about ourselves and the world.

Another thing to notice about the process set forth by the Course is that it does not involve changing the other person at all! It is purely about changing our choice of how to respond.

Before I go any further into the solution, however, I want to linger a bit over the way we discover the problem, and to point out some things that may hinder or short-circuit the healing process.

First, the healing only becomes possible when I notice and admit that I am “not wholly joyous” (5:1). If I never notice my feelings, I may never begin to heal. If I bury and deny my unloving reaction to my brothers and sisters, hiding it from myself because I don’t want to admit to having such unholy feelings, I will never be motivated to change my mind.

As Jesus taught earlier, denial can be either healthy or unhealthy (T-2.II.2:1–4). Healthy denial is denying that any form of error can hurt me. Unhealthy denial is an attempt to conceal something. Burying or repressing my feelings is unhealthy denial. To have my joy restored, I first must allow myself to feel joy’s absence. This may mean experiencing my anger completely, instead of trying to shut down the feeling. It may mean deliberately going into my sadness. Not that I should act it out or let it take me over; just that I should fully acknowledge what I am feeling, while I simultaneously realize that what I am feeling is purely the result of my own decisions (6:2). I am not wholly joyous because *I decided* not to be wholly joyous. “I choose the feelings I experience” (T-21.II.2:4), the Course teaches.

Second, I cannot allow myself to feel guilty for having such dark feelings. I need to realize that my perception of them as “sin” is hindering my healing rather than helping it. An unloving response to my brother or sister is not something useful, nor is it a skillful way to interact. Unloving response does not heal anyone. Unloving response does not reflect the truth. For all of these reasons, unloving response is a *mistake*, but it is not a *sin*. The choice to respond in this way needs to be undone, but it does not need to be *punished*. It does not make me a bad person.

### **What to do when we are not joyous**

I see five simple steps presented in paragraph 6, summarized in the italicized portion. The five steps, in my own words, are:

1. Recognize the Problem
2. Be Responsible for the Solution
3. Choose Peace
4. Refuse Guilt
5. Listen to the Holy Spirit

#### **1. Recognize the Problem**

*“I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace” (6:7).*

When you notice that you are not at peace or not wholly joyous, the very *first thing* you should do is acknowledge that your condition is the result of your own active decision, not what someone else did. You chose to feel this way (6:2–3). When you choose not to love you are choosing not to be joyful, because “There is no difference between love and joy” (T-5.In.2:3). Use alternate words if you like: “I must have made a bad choice. I am choosing to feel angry. I decided not to love.” Use whatever words work for you at the time.

This is a crucial step. We usually convince ourselves that our anger, hurt, pain, or distress—whatever the form our lack of love is taking—is caused by someone else. “You

make me so angry!” is a common way of thinking. Often it is very difficult to break free from this perception even when we *know* that the Course is correct. This is why Jesus admonishes us to “Be very firm with yourself in this” (6:4). We dare not let any taint of such thinking remain or it will pollute all our thinking.

It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way. There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but yourself affects you. There is nothing in the world that has the power to make you ill or sad, or weak or frail. But it is you who have the power to dominate all things you see by merely recognizing what you are. As you perceive the harmlessness in them, they will accept your holy will as theirs. And what was seen as fearful now becomes a source of innocence and holiness (W-pI.190.5:1-8).

As long as we refuse to accept that the problem is in our own minds, the healing cannot begin. If we are not at peace, it is because *we made a wrong decision* about how to react to our brother or sister. “It is impossible that happenings that come to [us] were not [our] choice” (T-21.II.3:2).

## 2. Be Responsible for the Solution

“*I made the decision myself, but I can also decide otherwise*” (6:8).

By accepting responsibility for the original decision, I recognize that I can decide otherwise. I can choose to let God’s Love flow through me, rather than react in anger. “The power of decision is my own” (W-pI.152.Title). I must acknowledge the power of my mind to miscreate in order to recognize its power to heal. My “power of decision is the determiner of every situation in which [I] seem to find [myself]...” (T-21.II.3:3).

We are often afraid of the word *responsibility* because we associate it with blame and guilt. Real responsibility is just realizing that the source and solution of our upsets are not outside us, but within us.

You are the only one in control of your life. You are the only person who thinks thoughts in your mind. *Acknowledging your responsibility is also recognizing your power*. You can reverse the judgment you made against your brother or yourself. Your interpretation was simply mistaken. Recognizing that, you can make your upset disappear.

Sometimes we are so locked into our perceptions that, when we feel our feelings and are honest about them, we really don’t *want* to let go of the upset yet. That’s okay. Go ahead and be angry! Don’t fake it. Don’t push yourself beyond where you really are. Don’t think, “I should not be angry.” Trying to make the feeling go away will just increase your guilt and make the situation worse. The Course never tells us not to be angry. It just tells us to recognize that when we *are* angry, we are the ones who are choosing that feeling, and nothing outside ourselves can be blamed for it. The Course says, “Anger is never justified” (T-30.VI.1:1). That doesn’t mean, “Don’t be angry,” but it does mean, “Don’t try to blame your anger on anything outside your own thoughts.”

In T-30.I.8–9, the Course suggests that if you can't seem to let go of your feelings, you can at least notice that "I don't like the way I feel now" and, because you do not like the feeling, admit to yourself that "I hope that I have been wrong." That may open the way to a desire for peace.

### 3. Choose Peace

*"I want to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace"* (6:9).

The original wording was, "I WILL to decide otherwise." It is not the expression of a wish, but the declaration of a firm choice. I am taking charge of my mind and directing its movement, determining what it will choose.

This is the *choice for peace*. I open up to God to have my mind changed about the situation. Do I want to hold onto my anger, my sadness, my judgment, or whatever form of upset I have? Or do I want peace? Which is more important to me? Would I rather be right, or be peaceful? (T-29.VII.1:9). It is possible to experience peace even in the midst of "upsetting" circumstances. In reality there *are* no upsetting circumstances, there are only upsetting thoughts *about* circumstances.

### 4. Refuse Guilt

*"I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him"* (6:10).

Don't make yourself wrong for the reaction you had to your sister or brother. Refuse to feel guilty. There is absolutely nothing to feel guilty about; your reaction was, in reality, a distorted call for love. Only your negative interpretation of that reaction makes you feel guilty. (The negative interpretation is based on a negative belief about your self; i.e., that you are a bad person.)

If you get angry, if you attack someone else, if you give in to depression, that is not a cause for guilt. *There is no cause for guilt*. You made a mistake, yes; you made a wrong decision, yes. But that does not alter who and what you are. You are Love. You are the Son of God. You don't deserve punishment; you don't need to make yourself miserable to pay for what you did. For a moment you forgot who you are; that is all. In forgetting, you thought you saw sin in yourself. You can choose to remember who you are, right now. You can translate that perception to one of love. You will see your brother differently. You will see yourself differently.

All you need to do is turn it over to God and change your mind about it, that is, to make the decision over. You allow the Holy Spirit to decide for you; you decide with Him for God. If you do that, the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of your wrong decision. That is such an amazing statement! As Jesus said two sections ago (T-5.V.7:9), undoing is the key to the solution because it eliminates the guilt. When the Holy Spirit is done with His job, the consequences of our mistaken choices have been erased.

He may show us that we have a part to play, some action to take, or He may not. We will know what to do or say: "For Your Voice will tell me what to do and where to go; to whom to speak and what to say to him, what thoughts to think, what words to give the world" (W-pII.275.2:3).

## 5. Listen to the Holy Spirit

“I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me” (6:11).

You let Him take the guilt away, and in response, you listen to His Voice and do what it tells you. You hear His thought about the situation. It is not up to you to interpret the events of your life. It is not up to you to decide what is true and what is not. God has already decided that, and the Holy Spirit will “decide for God for [you].” The only decision you have to make, the only choice, is to listen to the Holy Spirit instead of the ego. You might say that the only real decision is the decision not to make decisions by yourself (T-7.X.6:5–8 and T-30.I.2:1–4).

The Holy Spirit will always interpret everything that arises in you or your brother as some form of love, or a call for love (T-12.I.3:1–4). Any action you then see fit to take will be one that is toward joining with the other person.

Notice how all this is dealing primarily with your own feelings of guilt. The ego is going to tell you that you are a bad person, that your anger or hurt feeling has separated you from God and from your brother. The Holy Spirit is going to tell you that nothing bad has happened, and nothing has been lost; you are still perfectly one with God. What you *did* or what you *felt* has not changed what you *are*. All that happened was that you interpreted your brother and yourself incorrectly; if you let Him, the Holy Spirit will translate your perceptions.

All of this is dealing with your own guilt feelings, and the other person is seemingly forgotten! You are changing *your mind*, not changing circumstances or other people. As you change your mind (which is the source of all your experience), you will see your experience begins to change also, but that is not the first objective. You don't have to change anything. Leave that part to God. Don't try to fix the other guy; let go and let God.

As you change your thoughts about yourself, and decide differently about yourself, you will begin to see how the same thing that is true of you is true of the other person. They are making the mistake of choosing to react without love, out of fear. You'll see how that isn't anything to be angry about, and your desire toward them will shift from trying to defend yourself or trying to attack them, to wanting them to find the same peace of mind that you have found. Your forgiveness of yourself will lead naturally to forgiving the other person as well.

Notice how similar this whole process is to what Jesus began to describe way back in Chapter 4, Section IV. There, he said:

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*. In every case you have thought wrongly about some brother God created, and are perceiving images your ego makes in a darkened glass. Think honestly what you have thought that God would not have thought, and what you have not thought that God would have you think. Search

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sincerely for what you have done and left undone accordingly, and then change your mind to think with God's.

When you feel guilty, remember that the ego has indeed violated the laws of God, but *you* have not. Leave the "sins" of the ego to me. That is what Atonement is for. But until you change your mind about those whom your ego has hurt, the Atonement cannot release you. While you feel guilty your ego is in command, because only the ego can experience guilt. *This need not be.* (T4.IV.2:1-5; 5:1-6)

As a final remark on this remarkable section, let me encourage you once more to *memorize these lines*. The effort will repay itself hundreds of times over.

## Answer Key

1. We are being encouraged to trust God, and to entrust our lives into His keeping. We cannot be separated from Him, and He can plan for our safety or provide for our joy far better than we can ourselves. To borrow a catch phrase: “Let go, and let God.”
2. The healers failed to demonstrate the equality of miracles because 1) their faith was not whole; 2) they did not heal themselves; 3) they did not learn that every mind is *equally* worthy.
3. The “last-ditch defense” of the ego is to get us to exclude ourselves from the Atonement; that is, to think that we are not worthy of it, or to provoke fear of approaching God. Our “fear” of God is really a *refusal* to be healed. For example, when I have done something of which I really feel ashamed, I may delay for days, or longer, before I finally come to God for healing. I may think I feel afraid or unworthy of approaching God, but since God isn’t condemning me, all my supposed fear can be is a refusal to have the ego thoughts washed out of my mind.
4. The Holy Spirit has infinite patience, but He does not want us to continue to suffer unnecessarily. He presents salvation as urgent, and urges us to accept it *now*. The attitude He encourages in us is one of holy impatience about getting home.
5. Repentance in the usual sense is remorse for past wrongdoing, or guilt. It won’t solve the problem because guilt itself is the problem.