

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 6, Section V(C)

The Lessons of the Holy Spirit: Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom

Overview of the Section

We move on now to the third lesson of the Holy Spirit, “Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom” (T-6.V(C)). As you will recall, I said these lessons have two levels, the surface content and the deep content. Another way of looking at the various levels of these lessons is to say that the Holy Spirit is teaching us *indirectly*. The *direct* or surface lessons are the rather simple, positive directives, like “Do only this” spoken to a child. The *indirect* lessons are what the Holy Spirit aims to achieve in teaching us these lessons.

For instance, with the first lesson, the direct content was teaching that to have, we must give all to all. At a deeper level, this lesson was “the undoing of the getting concept” (T-6.V(B).3:1). The initial aim of the Holy Spirit in this first lesson is to break up the ego thought system by introducing a thought that is so antithetical to the ego that to accept it will mean the ego’s undoing. Ultimately, this will result in our mind’s abandoning its identification with the ego and the body.

The second lesson teaches us to recognize peace as preferable to conflict, and to begin learning that in order to have peace, we must teach peace or give it to others. The deeper level of this lesson is that giving attack (rather than peace) is never justified. In learning this lesson we are also learning to *prefer* the thought system of the Holy Spirit to that of the ego.

This third lesson, on the surface, is about mental vigilance. At a deeper level, it is teaching us that we are responsible for what we think. In learning this, we come to a clear choice *for* God and *against* the ego, seeing that the ego is wholly undesirable. It represents an advanced stage of the spiritual journey, when we have really learned that there is no order of difficulty in miracles. That there is vigilance indicates that we have not entirely transcended the ego, but this part of the journey culminates in a non-dual consciousness, an undivided heart, when we have come to see with a single eye, as Jesus put it in Matthew 6:22.

Ken Wilber’s distinction between *states* and *stages* is very useful. States of consciousness come and go; stages of consciousness are permanent. We may temporarily experience a taste of the third stage (which I will call *vigilance* and which the Buddhists call *mindfulness*). We may even have a peak mystical experience of non-dual awareness. But these states of consciousness last only for a brief time, and then we drop back into our “normal” mental state.

We need to recognize that very, very few have even begun this third stage of the journey *as a stage*, a lasting mind-set. Some of us are in the second step, still learning to prefer truth to falsehood, or even just in the first step, the very beginning of the journey. We might suppose that professional therapists, for instance, have moved a long way toward mental wholeness. Yet Jesus told us, “Most professional therapists are still at the very start of the beginning stage of the first journey” (P-3.II.8:5). If that is true of them, isn't it likely just as true of us?

In a sense, the entire journey consists of nothing but the transfer of our allegiance from the ego to God. We begin with minds dominated by our egos. In the first stage, the Holy Spirit gains a foothold in our minds. As the seed thus planted grows, we pass through severe mental conflict until we increasingly realize we prefer the thoughts of the Holy Spirit to those of the ego, and teach what we want to learn. We have entered the second stage. Finally, we decide once and for all to choose just one thought system—the Holy Spirit's. Though temptations from the ego remain, we are vigilant against them; we are committed to God and only to God.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹[Ur: For your own salvation you *must* be critical, because *your* salvation *is* critical to the whole Sonship.] We said before that the Holy Spirit is evaluative, and **must** be. [Ur: Yet His evaluation does not extend *beyond* you, or you *would* share it. In *your* mind, and your mind *only*, He sorts out the true from the false,] ²He sorts out the true from the false in your mind, and teaches you to judge every thought you allow to **enter** it in the light of what God **put** there. ³Whatever is **in accord** with this light He retains, to strengthen the Kingdom in you. ⁴What is **partly** in accord with it [**truth**] He accepts and purifies. ⁵But what is **out of accord entirely** He rejects by judging against. ⁶This is how He keeps the Kingdom perfectly consistent and perfectly unified. ⁷ [**But what you must**] Remember, however, that what the Holy Spirit **rejects** the ego **accepts**. ⁸This is because they are in fundamental disagreement about everything, being in fundamental disagreement about **what you are**. ⁹The ego's beliefs on this crucial issue vary, and that is why it promotes different moods. ¹⁰The Holy Spirit **never** varies on this point, and so the **one** mood He engenders is joy. ¹¹He **protects** it by rejecting everything that does **not** foster joy, and so He alone can keep you wholly joyous.

• Study Question •

1. *The Holy Spirit sorts out your thoughts into three categories, mentioned in sentences 3 through 5. What are the three categories of thought, and what action does the Holy Spirit take in regard to each category?*



To be self-critical in a certain sense is not only okay, it is *critical* that we do so! (That may be another of those puns Jesus snuck in to attract Bill Thetford.) To focus heavily on our own individual salvation is necessary because every one of us is vital to the wholeness of the Sonship (*Sentence 1 in the Urtext*). I think, here and usually, it may be helpful to substitute the words “enlightenment,” “awakening,” or “deliverance from separated consciousness” for “salvation.” So we can paraphrase the first part of the sentence: “You *must* be critical to be delivered from your separated consciousness.” And you must be delivered from separated consciousness in order for the Sonship to be whole.

To be critical means to be discerning, to be discriminating; the word does not have the sense here of censorious or fault-finding. It means that we must learn to evaluate our thoughts.

The Holy Spirit is “evaluative” (1:1). This word carries the sense of comparing the relative value of things, which is exactly the intended meaning here. “He sorts out the true from the false in your mind” (1:2). We’ve seen the general idea before in discussing the Last Judgment (the last section of Chapter 2), which the Course depicts as a process of sorting out the true thoughts, or the loving thoughts, from the false ones.

The omitted lines from the Urtext make it very clear that this kind of evaluation of thoughts is to be applied “in *your* mind, and your mind *only*,” and does not “extend *beyond* you,” that is, it’s not your job to evaluate anyone’s thoughts but your own! We far too easily fall into the trap of labelling the thoughts of the people around us as coming from their egos. It’s not our job! In Chapter 9, Jesus makes this abundantly clear in no uncertain terms:

The alertness of the ego to the errors of other egos is not the kind of vigilance the Holy Spirit would have you maintain (T-9.III.1:1).

We are not meant to be critical or evaluative in relation to the thoughts of others, but we *must* be in relation to our own. We are aided in this task by the Holy Spirit.

I like this image of the Holy Spirit *sorting* our thoughts. I think most of us are quite aware that our thoughts are a real jumble of true and false, a very mixed bag. For me, it is comforting to think that a very wise, very gentle Teacher is at work helping me learn to sort the true thoughts from the false ones. Perhaps even more importantly, He *teaches us* to judge the thoughts we allow to enter our minds (1:2). He can help us sort them properly, but we alone must accept or reject the thoughts.

There are three categories of thoughts. **First** are those that are in accord with “the light of what God put” (1:2–3) in our minds. These thoughts the Holy Spirit guides us to retain, so that they strengthen the Kingdom in us (1:3).

Second, there are mixed thoughts, partly in accord with the light but mixed, perhaps, with ego motives; these the Holy Spirit “accepts and purifies” (1:4), cleansing them of the taint of ego. I’ve often had mixed thoughts such as these. We read earlier (T-1.VII.1:1–3) how the ego will co-opt miracle impulses (pure thoughts) and distort them into physical impulses, for instance. Another example I experience is the temptation to pride or self-aggrandizement that comes with becoming known as “a good Course teacher.”

Such mixed thoughts need to continually be submitted to the Holy Spirit for purification. Workbook Lesson 151 describes this process perfectly:

And then we watch our thoughts, appealing silently to Him Who sees the elements of truth in them. Let Him evaluate each thought that comes to mind, remove the elements of dreams, and give them back again as clean ideas that do not contradict the Will of God.

Give Him your thoughts, and He will give them back as miracles which joyously proclaim the wholeness and the happiness God wills His Son, as proof of His eternal Love. And as each thought is thus transformed, it takes on healing power from the Mind which saw the truth in it, and failed to be deceived by what was falsely added. All the threads of fantasy are gone. And what remains is unified into a perfect Thought that offers its perfection everywhere. (W-pI. 151.13:3–14:4)

Third, there are thoughts wholly of the ego and “out of accord entirely” (1:5) with the light. Such thoughts the Holy Spirit judges against and rejects, and He guides us to banish them from our minds. This entire evaluative process is the way the Holy Spirit maintains the unity and consistency of the Kingdom (1:6).

The ego, of course, being the mirror opposite of the Holy Spirit in its thoughts about what you are, *accepts* everything the Holy Spirit rejects (1:7–8). The ego’s thoughts about your identity are *not* consistent. This variance is what produces “different moods” in us (1:9). If the ego is choosing to see us through rose-colored glasses in some overblown, puffed-up manner, we may feel “high.” If, on the other hand, the ego’s pendulum of self-judgment has swung the other way, viewing us as miserable sinners or useless failures, we may be extremely depressed.

A mind governed by the Holy Spirit, however, remains on an even keel. It is *consistently joyful* because the Holy Spirit consistently perceives the mind’s perfection and holiness (1:10). You may recall the earlier instruction we were given about what to do whenever we are not “wholly joyous” (T-5.VII.5–6 and T-4.IV.2), which told us to practice mental vigilance, to evaluate our moods and choose to think differently. This section is describing the same process. When we have entered this third stage, we have entered in wholeheartedly to such mental vigilance, happily allowing the Holy Spirit to keep us wholly joyous “by rejecting everything that does not foster joy” (1:11).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The Holy Spirit does not teach you to judge others [Ur: does not teach your mind to be critical of others minds], because He does not want you to teach error and learn it yourself [Ur: to teach your errors and learn them yourselves]. ²He would hardly be consistent if He allowed you to strengthen what you must learn to avoid. ³In the mind of the thinker, then, He is judgmental, but only in order to unify the mind so it can perceive without judgment. ⁴This enables the mind to teach without judgment, and therefore to

learn to *be* without judgment. ⁵The undoing is necessary only in your mind, so that you [Ur: cannot *project* it {judgment}.] will not project, instead of extend. ⁶God Himself has established what you can extend with perfect safety. ⁷Therefore, the Holy Spirit's third lesson is:

8Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom. [Ur: 8Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom.]

• **Study Question** •

2. *Suppose you discern that a friend is entertaining thoughts that are a mixture of God and the ego. How do you deal with such thoughts in your friend?*

Jesus now re-emphasizes what he said at the start of the last paragraph: Though the Holy Spirit is most definitely teaching us to judge our own thoughts (1:2), He is not teaching us to judge others! (2:1). I have not really understood the Course when I find myself using what it says to condemn other people, or to denigrate what they do and say. “Oh, brother! You are projecting! It isn’t what I did that hurt your feelings; you are doing it to yourself.” I cannot say strongly enough that *this is not the proper use of the Course*. “The alertness of the ego to the errors of other egos is not the kind of vigilance the Holy Spirit would have you maintain” (T-9.III.1:1). Judgment and condemnation are not what we are trying to learn; they are what we are trying to avoid (2:2).

The Holy Spirit *is* judgmental, but only *within our mind* (2:3). He judges judgmental thoughts and rejects them so that our minds may perceive *without judgment* (2:3). Perceiving without judgment allows us to *teach* (or extend) without judgment, and—since what we teach, we learn—we learn thereby to *be* without judgment. We perceive our brothers without judgment; we extend non-judgment to them (i.e., full appreciation); and thereby we learn that we, ourselves, are not judged, but fully appreciated (2:4, compare with T6.V(A).4:7).

There is no need to “undo” anything externally; the only undoing required is what occurs in your mind (2:5). Let’s apply that personally with added emphasis: *My mind is the only thing that needs undoing*. If the mistaken thought in your mind is undone, you will extend instead of project (2:5). And since *only* the mind is the area of concern, the Holy Spirit’s third and final lesson is “Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom” (2:7–8). There can be no doubt that Jesus is again driving home the crucial importance of mental vigilance, of guarding our thoughts.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹This is a major step toward **fundamental** change. ²Yet it still has an aspect of thought **reversal**, since it implies that there is something you must be vigilant *against*. ³It has advanced far from the first lesson, which is merely the beginning of the thought reversal [Ur: which was *primarily* a reversal], and also

from the second, which is essentially the identification of what is more desirable. ⁴This step, which follows from the second as the second follows from the first, emphasizes the dichotomy [Ur: *dichotomy*] between the desirable and the undesirable. ⁵It therefore makes the ultimate choice inevitable.

• Study Question •

3. *Ask yourself if you are willing to practice the sort of vigilance being spoken of here. Be honest with yourself. You may want to try discussing the matter with Jesus.*

Notice that this third step, this mental vigilance, is still *not* the “fundamental change” that keeps being referred to in this section (see B.2:1; B.2:5; B.4:4; and B.9:2); it is “a major step toward” it, but it is *not* that final change. “Fundamental change” must be the same thing as the “qualitative shift” mentioned in T5.I.7:6 or the “ultimate choice” in 3:5; it is the “last step” (which we will discuss a bit more as we encounter it later in this section and in the next chapter), the final transfer of perception to knowledge, the shift from split-mindedness to an undivided mind, to a non-dual consciousness. This third step still involves reversal of thoughts, or the undoing of errors, because if we are to be vigilant, there must be something *against which* we are vigilant (3:2). The ego still “lives.” The third step culminates in setting aside the ego, but we are not quite there yet.

And yet, we’ve come a long way from the first step, and have advanced even beyond the second step. The first step was just “the beginning of thought reversal” in which we allowed a thought into our minds that did *not* come from the ego; the second step was when we began to identify which thought system is more desirable (3:3). But, in this third step, the division between desirable and undesirable has become clear as crystal (3:4). It “emphasizes the *dichotomy* between the desirable and the undesirable.” Dichotomy means the division between two incompatible things. Clearly, there is still “two-ness” and not yet Oneness. But, we have made our choice against the ego and for God. We have set watchmen on the ramparts to sound the alarm when the ego speaks, and to silence it. The “ultimate choice” is therefore “inevitable” (3:5). We *will* transcend the ego entirely.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹While the first step seems to increase conflict and the second may still entail [Ur: *still entails*] conflict to some extent, this step calls for consistent vigilance [Ur: *effort*] against it. ²I have already told you that you can be as vigilant against the ego as for it. ³This lesson teaches not only that you can be [Ur: *not that you can be*], but that you *must* be. ⁴It does not concern itself with order of difficulty, but with clear-cut priority for vigilance. ⁵This lesson is unequivocal in that it teaches there must be no exceptions, although it does not deny that the temptation to make exceptions will occur. ⁶Here, then, your consistency is called on despite chaos. ⁷Yet chaos and consistency cannot coexist

for long, since they are mutually exclusive.⁸ As long as you must be vigilant against anything, however, you are not recognizing this mutual exclusiveness, and still believe that you can choose either one.⁹ By teaching *what* to choose, the Holy Spirit will ultimately teach you that you need not choose at all.¹⁰ This will finally liberate your mind [Ur: will] from choice, and direct it towards creation within the Kingdom.

• Study Question •

4. *How does the practice of this third step bring about our learning that there is no order of difficulty in miracles?*

You can see the progression of the three steps if you consider their relationship to conflict. The first step seems to increase conflict; the second step still involves vacillation and conflict (with one thing “more desirable” than another, but still a pull in both directions); the third step, however, actually consists in *guarding against conflict* (4:1). In this stage, your mind is not in conflict about following the ego. Rather, it is consistently watchful against it (4:2–3). There is no thought that one thought of the ego is more difficult to resist than another is; the single, “clear-cut priority” is that *all* ego thoughts are equally rejected (4:4).

In the practice of this third lesson, the mind is *learning* that it cannot vacillate; “there must be no exceptions” (4:5). Yet the mind is still not pristinely pure: “the temptation to make exceptions will occur” (4:5). The ego will still rear its ugly head. We will be tempted to make exceptions—for instance, to withhold forgiveness from just one person, or to refuse to let go of judgment in one certain area. That is precisely why the lesson calls for us to be vigilant. We are vigilant *against exceptions*. To be vigilant means “keenly watchful to detect danger; wary; ever awake and alert; sleeplessly watchful” (Random House Dictionary). In this stage, we cooperate with the Holy Spirit as He sorts the true from the false in our minds. It is a period of watchful self-evaluation, a time in which we willingly bring our thoughts to the Holy Spirit for His help in judging them.

In the first step, the ego was strong in our minds, and the conflict with the ideas of love seemed great; in the second step, the balance was tilting away from the ego towards the Holy Spirit. Now, we are firmly aligned with Him, and are ever watchful for remnants of the ego thought system that still persist in our minds. If conflict arises, we do not despair, but take it as a warning signal; the conflict is exactly what we no longer want. We are “vigilant against the ego” (4:2). This stage brings a relief from conflict precisely because we are guarding our minds to keep conflict out.

If we must be vigilant, it implies that we still think we have a choice (4:8). The Holy Spirit goes along with our belief in choice and teaches us what to choose. Ultimately we will learn there is no need for choice at all (4:9). We will realize that the ego is madness and the Holy Spirit is sanity, so that only one direction makes any sense at all. We are as

God created us; there is no choice in the matter. This will free our minds from choice and liberate us for creation (4:10).

The Course seems filled with this kind of paradoxical statement. We are taught to choose in order to learn that choosing is neither necessary nor even possible. We are led to use our bodies to communicate in order to learn that bodies are not necessary for communication. We are taught to use time to learn that no time is needed. Each of these irreconcilable pairs illustrates the function of the three steps or lessons in relationship to the “fundamental change” or last step. The initial lessons operate on the perceptual level, within the illusion, leading us to a point at which we can be brought to transcend the illusion entirely, like water being brought to a boil, at which point it ceases to be liquid and transforms into a gas. Section V began with the words, “When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone.” These three lessons are the way to move ourselves toward that goal.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Choosing through the Holy Spirit will [Ur: only] lead you to the Kingdom [to it]. ²You create by your true being, but what you are you must learn to remember. [You create by what you are, but this is what you must learn.] ³The way to remember [learn] it is inherent in the third step, which brings together the lessons implied [inherent] in the others, and goes beyond them towards real integration. ⁴If you allow yourself to have in your mind only what God put there, you are acknowledging your mind as God created it. ⁵Therefore, you are accepting it as it is. ⁶Since it is whole {not divided, conflicted}, you are teaching peace because you believe [have believed] in it. ⁷The final step will still be taken for you by God, but by the third step the Holy Spirit has prepared you for God. ⁸He is getting you ready for the translation of *having* into *being* by the very nature of the steps you must take with Him.

• Study Question •

5. *List some of the ways in which you do not acknowledge “your mind as God created it,” or accept your mind “as it is” (5:4–5).*

Evaluating our thoughts according to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, or choosing through Him, leads us “to the Kingdom” (5:1), or, in other words, back to full identification with our true, shared Self as God’s creation. The Kingdom means a non-dual or unitive consciousness, a state of mind in which all our thoughts are aligned with God and we see only the Oneness. In the Kingdom, we will again consciously function as creators. This cannot occur until we have fully remembered our true, spiritual nature, since creation is something that arises out of our “true being.” But since we have forgotten that we now must “learn to remember” it (5:2).

Often in this paragraph the Urtext uses the single word “learn” instead of “learn to remember” or “remember.” This learning is, of course, a remembering of what we once knew; therefore, I believe it makes sense to add the word “remember” here.

The third step is how you learn to remember what you are (5:3). It is inherent in this step because it is a step of *integration*. My word for integration is single-mindedness (or simply *singleness*). In the practice of mental vigilance, you are refusing to allow anything into your mind except what God put there in the first place. That *is* “acknowledging your mind as God created it” (5:4), and therefore, it *is* remembering what you are. “. . .you are accepting it [your mind] as it is” (5:5). God created our mind whole and undivided, and that is “as it is” right now; we are merely accepting that as fact. The practice of mental vigilance is thus designed to restore your memory of your true nature.

I often pray, as did the Psalmist, “Give me an undivided heart” (Psalm 86:11).

By accepting the wholeness of your mind, devoid of conflict, you will be “teaching peace because you believe in it” (5:6). An undivided heart or mind is a mind at peace. You teach what you believe you are (M-In.2:10), so if you have accepted the wholeness of your mind you will communicate the lack of conflict that implies. In this third step “the Holy Spirit has prepared you for God” (5:7). The lessons very carefully make you ready to move from having into being (5:8), which is that fundamental change or last step into singleness, or unitive awareness, which is taken by God. How the lessons make us ready is discussed in the next two paragraphs.

Paragraphs 6 & 7

6. ¹You learn first that *having* rests on giving, and not on getting. ²Next you learn that you learn what you teach, and that you want to learn peace. ³This is the condition for identifying with the Kingdom, since it is the condition of the Kingdom. ⁴[But] You have believed that you are without the Kingdom, and have therefore excluded yourself from it in your belief. ⁵It is therefore essential to teach you that you must be included, and that the belief that you are not is the only thing that you must exclude.

7. ¹The third step is thus one of protection for your mind, allowing you to identify only with the center, where God placed the altar to Himself. ²Altars are beliefs, but God and His creations are beyond belief because they are beyond question. ³The Voice for God speaks only for belief beyond question, which is the preparation for *being* without question. ⁴As long as belief in God and His Kingdom is assailed by any doubts in your mind, His perfect accomplishment is not apparent to you. ⁵This is why you must be vigilant on God's behalf. ⁶The ego speaks against His creation, and therefore engenders [*does engender*] doubt. ⁷You cannot go beyond belief until you believe fully [wholly]. [Ur: No one can extend a lesson he has not learned fully. Transfer, which is extension, is the measure of learning because it is the measurable result. This, however, does not

mean that what it transfers *to* is measurable. On the contrary, unless it transfers to the whole Sonship, which is immeasurable because it was created *by* the Immeasurable, the learning itself *must* be incomplete.]

• Study Question •

6. Paragraphs 6 and 7 summarize the progression of the three lessons. How does the third lesson prepare you for what is beyond belief and beyond question?

How do the lessons prepare us to move from having to being? In the first lesson, we learn the general principle that “having rests on giving, and not on getting” (6:1). Then, in the second lesson, you learn to teach what you want to have (6:2). You identify what you want, and what you want is to identify with the Kingdom. You *have* the Kingdom by *being* in it. You must accept and teach that you *are* part of the Kingdom, while excluding any belief that you are *not* part of the Kingdom (the notion that we are not part of the Kingdom is the core of all the ego’s thoughts) (6:3–5). Accepting one and excluding the other *is* vigilance, which is the content of the third lesson.

In that third lesson you are identifying “only with the center, where God placed the altar to Himself” (7:1). The Holy Spirit teaches you to wholly accept the truth of what you *are*, and in doing that you recognize what you *have*. Thus, the three lessons lead us step by step from *having* to *being*.

The third lesson is a giant move toward single-mindedness, referred to as *wholeness* or as *integration*. This is what other spiritual teachings refer to as non-dual or unitive awareness. The doubts and questions the ego has raised about your identity are being dismissed, and what remains is certainty, “beyond belief” and “beyond question” (7:2). Until you have come to the point of “belief beyond question,” you cannot make the transition to “being without question” (7:3), because the unquestioning belief is the preparation for the unquestioned being. The presence of doubts in your mind prevent you from wholly accepting “God’s perfect accomplishment” in you (7:4).

How many of us are utterly free from such doubts? None that I know of! The remaining doubts are the reason we need to be vigilant (7:5). The voice of the ego is still heard within our minds, speaking against God’s creation and causing us to doubt what we are (7:6). Such doubts must be eliminated. We must believe fully, or *wholly* in the sense of a single, unified belief, before we can transcend belief entirely (7:7), and simply *know*.

I can’t imagine why the four sentences that follow this paragraph in the Urtext were omitted. I suspect it was not deliberate, because what they say is integral to the logical flow of the teaching here. Our individual attainment of unitive consciousness is not the final goal. Once we have fully learned the lesson, the truth of our being, we go on to *extend* that awareness to others. And we know that we have learned it when we see that awareness being extended to others; transfer is “the measurable result” of learning, and therefore, “transfer...is the measure of learning.” You know how much you have learned by how much your learning transfers to others, to the Sonship. The Sonship itself is

immeasurable—that is, without limit, infinite. And our learning is not complete until it transfers to the entire, immeasurable Sonship. This is true, I believe, because the true nature of our Identity *is* the Sonship; it is a shared Identity. We are moving from “me” to “we.”

If, as I think, few of us are in this third stage of the journey, and even fewer have arrived at singleness, why talk about it? Because knowing the goal is helpful, even in the beginning stages. The three stages are not strictly linear, one beginning as the previous one ends. They overlap; they operate simultaneously. Even as we begin the first stage, our minds are already learning to be vigilant. Even in the beginning of the journey, we can be encouraged by the realization that we are simply learning to remember what we always and already are.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹To teach the whole Sonship without exception demonstrates that you perceive its wholeness, and have learned that it is one. ²Now you must be vigilant to hold its oneness in your mind because, if you let doubt enter, you will lose awareness of its wholeness and will be unable to teach it. ³The wholeness of the Kingdom does not depend on your perception, but your awareness of its wholeness does. ⁴It is only your awareness that needs protection, since being cannot be assailed. ⁵Yet a real sense of being cannot be yours while you are doubtful of what you are. ⁶This is why vigilance is essential. ⁷Doubts about being must not enter your mind, or you cannot know what you are with certainty. ⁸Certainty is of God for you. ⁹Vigilance is not necessary for truth, but it is necessary against illusions.

• Study Question •

7. *Paragraph 8 speaks of the importance of eliminating all doubt. Examine your own mind and try to identify lingering doubts about your being.*

This paragraph makes much more sense with the inclusion of the omitted Urtext material we've just discussed.

Remembering what *you* are involves remembering the wholeness of the Sonship without exception, because the Sonship *is* what you are (8:1). Therefore, one kind of doubt requiring your vigilance is doubt about your brothers. If you lose the awareness of the wholeness of the Sonship, you will not be able to teach it (8:2). How you perceive the Sonship doesn't change the being of the Sonship. If you fail to perceive Its wholeness, It is still whole. But your *awareness* of Its wholeness *does* depend on your perception (8:3). The awareness, then, is what is being protected by your vigilance (8:4). You need to watch the way you perceive people, both yourself and others.

Here is a key sentence: "...a real sense of being cannot be yours while you are doubtful of what you are" (8:5). When you accept perceptions that see anyone as outside

of the Sonship, you *are* doubtful about what you are, because any doubt about the Sonship is a doubt about yourself; therefore, you must be vigilant (8:6). You must watch against “doubts about being” (condemning perceptions of yourself or your brothers) and keep them from entering your mind. This is the only way you can ever arrive at knowing “what you are with certainty” (8:7). God has given you certainty (8:8), but illusions can obscure it; therefore, vigilance is necessary to keep illusions out of your mind (8:9).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Truth is without illusions and therefore within the Kingdom. ²Everything outside the Kingdom is illusion. ³When you threw truth away you [Ur: But you must learn to *accept* truth because *you threw it away*. You therefore] saw yourself as if you were without it. ⁴By making another kingdom that you valued, you did not keep *only* the Kingdom of God in your mind, and thus placed part of your mind outside it. ⁵What you made has [Ur: thus] imprisoned [divided] your will, and given you a sick mind that must be healed. ⁶Your vigilance against this sickness is the way to heal it. ⁷Once your mind is healed it radiates health, and thereby teaches healing. ⁸This establishes you as a teacher who teaches like me. ⁹Vigilance was required of me as much as of you, and those who choose to teach the same thing must be in agreement about what they believe.

• Study Question •

8. *According to this paragraph, what is the way to heal your mind of its self-manufactured sickness and imprisonment “outside” the Kingdom of God?*

The third lesson reverses the separation, because in the separation we did not keep *only* God’s Kingdom in our minds, and therefore saw ourselves outside His Kingdom. In the third lesson, we are vigilant to keep *only* His Kingdom in our minds. Ultimately, this restores our ability to recognize that we are in His Kingdom. The picture is quite simple: Our imagined exile from the Kingdom was caused because we allowed “another kingdom” (9:4), the ego’s domain, to enter our minds. Simply reversing that policy and keeping the ego out solves the problem.

“Truth” is the way things are, or what is real. If something is true, it isn’t illusion; if something is illusion, it isn’t true. That’s self-evident. God’s Kingdom contains all truth, and only truth; it is the sum total of Reality (9:1). Anything that is *not* in the Kingdom is illusion (9:2). That follows from the first statement. If everything that is real is in the Kingdom, then anything “outside” the Kingdom must not be real; it must be an illusion.

The Course has a consistently unified view of reality: “...only truth is true” (W-pI. 152.11:1), it declares.

Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, because that is where the laws of God operate truly, and they can operate only truly because they are the laws of truth.

But seek this only, because you can find nothing else. There *is* nothing else. God is All in all in a very literal sense. All being is in Him Who is all Being. You are therefore in Him since your being is His. (T-7.IV.7:1–6)

...it is impossible to deny the simple truth. For there is nothing else. God is everywhere, and His Son is in Him with everything. (T-14.II.8:5–7)

The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect Oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this Oneness, and nothing else within. (T-18.VI.1:4–6)

Yet, although nothing *but* the Kingdom of God exists, where all is truth, when your mind rejected truth, it caused you to see “yourself as if you were without it” (9:3)—that is, as if you were *outside of* the Kingdom. The only way you could dismiss truth from your mind was to dismiss your mind from the truth! You made “another kingdom that you valued” (9:4) when you made a separated identity for yourself. Making that kingdom displaced God’s Kingdom in your mind, and seemed to displace your mind from God’s Kingdom. You have trapped yourself within your mind’s sick illusions (9:5).

Virtually no one is actually *aware* of having done all this. What we *are* aware of, nearly universally, is a sense of being separated from God, or outside of His Kingdom. The Course is telling us how that sense of separation came about, and its remedy is based on its analysis of the problem. The problem is that we allowed something besides God’s Kingdom (the ego) into our minds. The solution, therefore, is to become vigilant *against* the ego, and to set out to allow *nothing but* God’s Kingdom in our minds (9:6).

Vigilance will heal your mind. Once it is healed—which is saying a lot!—“it radiates health, and thereby teaches healing” (9:7). For our mind to be healed in this way, and to this extent, is the goal of the Course. We are not talking about something at the start of the journey; we are talking about its end, when your mind is kept free of the ego’s pollution. This is the state in which you have become a teacher of God, “a teacher who teaches like” Jesus (9:8). We arrive at that high estate just as Jesus did: through vigilance (9:9), accepting only God’s truth in our minds, and rejecting all the lies and illusions of the ego.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹The third step, then, is a statement of what you **want** to believe, and entails a willingness to **relinquish everything else**. [I told you that you were just beginning the second step, but I also told you that the third one *follows* it.] ²The Holy Spirit will enable you to take this step [*will enable you to go on*], if you follow Him [*if you follow Him*]. ³Your vigilance is the sign that you *want* Him to guide you. ⁴Vigilance **does** require effort, but only until you learn [**but only to teach you**] that effort **itself** is unnecessary. ⁵You have exerted **great** effort to preserve what you made **because** it was **not** true. ⁶Therefore, you must now turn your effort **against** it. ⁷Only this can cancel out the **need** for effort, and call upon

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the being which you both *have* and *are*. ⁸This recognition is wholly without effort since it is *already* true and needs no protection. ⁹It is in the perfect safety of God. ¹⁰Therefore, inclusion is total and creation is without limit.

• **Study Question** •

9. *State whether the following sentence is true or false, and explain the reason for your answer: "To exist in Heaven is effortless; therefore, as we progress along the path to Heaven we need exert no effort whatsoever."*

The essence of the third step is a declaration of “what you want to believe,” which includes the unflinching realization that in order to have it, we will have to let go of everything else that conflicts with it (10:1). In a very challenging section later in the Text called, “The Last Unanswered Question,” it says:

Until the last decision has been made, the answer is both “yes” and “no.” For you have answered “yes” without perceiving that “yes” must mean “not no.” (T-21.VII.12:3–4)

What this means is that until we reach this last step, we equivocate. We are saying “yes” to God, but we have not said a firm and decisive “no” to the ego. We are saying “yes” to *both*, failing to realize that a “yes” to the ego is a “no” to God; therefore, we are saying “both ‘yes’ and ‘no’” to God. The third step comes about when we realize that “‘yes’ means ‘not no.’” We cannot continue valuing the ego if we want to have our place in God’s Kingdom. We have to let it go. We must become absolute, single-minded.

If being so utterly single-minded seems beyond your capability, relax! Just choose to follow the Holy Spirit, and He “will enable you to take this step” (10:2). You invite Him to guide you by choosing to be vigilant! (10:3). In other words, if you make the effort, He will underwrite your efforts. He will empower them.

“Effort? It takes *effort*?!”

Yes, it does; the Course is very clear on that point: “Vigilance does require effort...” (10:4). Jesus explains this by telling us that because we have been forced to exert incredible effort to preserve the ego because *the ego isn't true* (10:5), we now must nullify that effort by turning our efforts *against* the ego (10:6). This will cancel out the need for effort entirely, and draw out “the being which you both have and are” (10:7). This is another of those seemingly paradoxical statements. We must exert effort to achieve effortlessness, just as we must use the body to learn we are not bodies, and choice to learn we have no choice. At the end of the journey our body is gone, effort is gone, and choice is unnecessary, but *during* the journey, the body, choice, and effort all serve a purpose.

When our minds have been purified of the ego illusion, the recognition of our being is utterly effortless, because what we are is “already true and needs no protection” (10:8). Vigilance eventually produces a state of mind in which vigilance is no longer required.

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The ego is gone; our being is “in the perfect safety of God” (10:9), and includes everything. Our creation then will be without limit (10:10).

When we have completed this third step, our minds will have converged with God's Mind, and we will be ready for the final step, which God Himself will take. That last step will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Answer Key

1. The three categories are: (1) *Thoughts that are in accord with the light of God in our minds*: The Holy Spirit retains these thoughts in our minds; (2) *Thoughts that are partly in accord with this light*: The Holy Spirit accepts these thoughts and purifies them; (3) *Thoughts that are entirely out of accord with this light*: The Holy Spirit rejects these thoughts.
2. It is not your job to judge your brother's thoughts, just your own. You may need, however, to deal with your own thoughts *about* your brother's thoughts.
3. No written answer is expected.
4. Order of difficulty only arises with degrees of desirability, and the third step shows us that there are no such degrees, only the need to always choose for God.
5. Individual answers will vary. Some examples might include: Believing my mind wants to attack; believing that I prefer separateness; accepting that I am guilty; thinking I am less than wholly loving.
6. You cannot go beyond belief until you believe fully, that is, until you believe without question and without doubt. By its vigilance against the questions of the ego, the third lesson brings you to such singleness of mind.
7. No written answer is expected.
8. "Your vigilance against this sickness is the way to heal it" (9:6). The way out of our mind's sickness is to be vigilant *against* the sickness, or to catch ego thoughts before they can take root in our mind.
9. False. Heaven is an effortless state. But we exerted effort to make our illusions of separation, and so we must exert effort *against* what we have made. Only this will cancel out the need for effort.