

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 7, Section I

The Last Step

The beginning of Chapter 7 clearly continues Chapter 6, so a review of the end of that chapter may be helpful. “The Lessons of the Holy Spirit” presented three steps that we move through in the transformation of our consciousness, leading to “The Last Step,” which begins Chapter 7. We summarized those three steps like this:

- The beginning of thought reversal; realizing there is an alternative.
- Deciding which thought system is more desirable; wanting the alternative.
- The clear-cut choice of the Holy Spirit’s thought system and conscious rejection of everything else; committing to the alternative.

First, we allow the thoughts of the Holy Spirit into our mind, considering that they might be possible. Second, we decide these thoughts are more desirable than the ego’s (which implies that to some extent we still find the ego desirable). Third, we choose to be vigilant against the ego. Even in this third step our minds are not yet perfect; there is still something in our mind we need to be vigilant *against*.

The “last” step, then, would be when our minds totally converge with the Holy Spirit, when we become identified with Him, and nothing of the ego is left to pose a threat. It is the “fundamental change” that Chapter 6 refers to. This is known as unitive or non-dual consciousness. God will take that final step, or last step, for us. In the last step, what has taken constant effort to maintain becomes effortless, because the last shred of resistance is gone. In telling us that God takes this last step and we do not, the Course is telling us that this step isn’t something we need to be concerned about. In fact, we can’t do anything about it directly; all we can do is willingly cooperate with the first three steps, knowing that these steps get us ready for the last one. God will take that last step for us when we are ready.

Overview of Chapter 7

In Chapter 7, Jesus will discuss this last step a bit. He admits that “it is hard to explain in words” (T-7.I.6:4). But he says that because the Holy Spirit has the job of translating between Heaven and earth or between God’s Mind and our own, “He can therefore tell you something about this last step” (T-7.I.6:6). The “something” isn’t very much, however. Rather than giving us many details, He says that the three steps He presents to us are this world’s highest reflection of that last step, and get us ready for it. They represent the laws of Heaven adapted to the level of this world, and that is all we really need to concern ourselves with.

The last step might be called “living in the Kingdom of God,” which is synonymous with living in Heaven. In my opinion, when God has taken someone through the last step, they become what we might call a fully enlightened being: a Buddha or a Christ. When you see the term “Kingdom of God” in this chapter, it is referring to life in this last step—a mind totally in harmony with Divine Mind.

Jesus points out that we all have seen ourselves as outside the Kingdom. That is why understanding what life is like in the Kingdom is so very difficult for us. Understanding “living in the Kingdom of God” is as difficult for us as it is for a man to understand what being a woman is like, or vice versa—perhaps even more difficult. Because we conceive of ourselves as outside the Kingdom, life in the Kingdom seems alien and incomprehensible to us. Yet, the whole Course is telling us that life in the Kingdom of God is our natural state. What is alien, foreign, strange, and incomprehensible is our imaginary life as an ego. The three lessons are a description of the process by which we unlearn our imagined identity and remember our natural state.

Wholeness and healing are another pair of concepts that refer to our reality (wholeness) and a process of remembering that reality (healing). Something that is whole does not need healing. In terms of healing, the “last step” would be a realization of wholeness. The three steps leading up to that comprise the process of healing. Our whole function in time is healing. The shift to wholeness, where healing is no longer needed, is something that is up to God; it will come only when we are ready for it.

A dynamic runs all through the Course that is particularly clear-cut in this chapter. It is the dichotomy between what God knows to be real and what we believe to be real, which is something entirely different. I have thought of them as “absolute reality” and “relative reality.” Absolute reality as known by God is Heaven. What seems real to us is the world, which at times has seemed like Hell. Heaven is wholeness; the world is for healing. Heaven is perfection; the world is for learning and remembering who we are.

The genius of the Course is the way it weaves together the absolute and the relative, providing a way out of the apparently irreconcilable contradiction between them. It maintains the utter inviolability and changelessness of Heaven and truth, and yet it offers a journey, a path, or steps to follow, to move from the illusion of the separated world into the eternal reality of Heaven.

The Holy Spirit is like a translator Who translates the absolute truth of Heaven into terms we can understand in this world of illusion. He translates what is eternally true—for instance, that you are God’s creation, wholly lovable and wholly loving—into something that manifests within time as stages of growth. If what He knows to be true is indeed true, then you don’t need to change. You don’t really need to grow, because you have never left the Kingdom at all except in your imagination. But the Holy Spirit translates that absolute truth into something that makes sense to us in the relative state we imagine ourselves to be in. We believe we have changed from what God created; we believe that we have become unlovely and unloving. Therefore, we need an experience of growth, of change away from that unlovely state towards pure love. The more we grow, the closer we get to that state of pure love, the more we will understand we never left it.

But, because of our false belief, we need this process, this appearance of steps which gradually move towards a mind wholly integrated with God.

By looking at what we can understand of this “last step,” this culmination of growth, we can come to understand how it can be reflected in the context of our lives as we now understand them. We can understand, at least in part, why we have to take the steps we seem to be taking to get to a place we have never left in the first place.

Another theme running through the chapter is implied in the word Kingdom, namely, the theme of union with and full acceptance of one another. This journey cannot be made by ourselves. We must join with our brothers and include them in our remembering, realizing that the identity we are remembering is also theirs. “You cannot know your own perfection until you have honored all those who were created like you” (T-7.VII.6:6). We must extend the gifts of God to others in order to receive them for ourselves.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The creative power of [Ur: both] God and His creations is limitless, but they are [Ur: it is] not in reciprocal relationship. ²You [Ur: do] communicate fully with God, as He does with you. ³This is an ongoing process in which you share, and because you share it, you are inspired to create like God. ⁴Yet in creation you are not in a reciprocal relation to God, since He created you but you did not create Him. ⁵I have already told you that only in this respect your creative power differs from His. ⁶Even in this world there is a parallel. ⁷Parents give birth to children, but children do not give birth to parents. ⁸They do, however, give birth to their children, and thus give birth as their parents do.

• Study Question •

1. *In one area but not in another, God and His children are in a reciprocal relationship, that is, a relationship in which both parties play equal roles.*
 - a) *In what area are they in reciprocal relationship (1:2)?*
 - b) *In what area are they not in reciprocal relationship (1:4)?*

The first few sections of this chapter are unusually “metaphysical,” in that they deal primarily with Heaven, and not with things we would normally consider “practical.” Yet these concepts must be important for us, since so much space is devoted to them.

We’re about to talk about “the last step” that is something only God can undertake. The first several paragraphs seem designed to set the stage for that by emphasizing the primary way in which God is different from us. We are in a reciprocal (or equal) relationship with God in the sense that He communicates fully with us, and we do with Him (1:2). In a reciprocal relationship both parties play equal or complimentary roles. Thus, in regard to our communication with God, He can communicate fully with us, and we can also communicate fully with Him. By saying, “You communicate fully with God,” Jesus does not mean that we presently engage in total communication with God. In

fact, he has said several times that our communication with God is broken and incomplete. For instance, T-4.VII.6:7 and T-5.II.5:7 say:

The 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 (T-4.VII.6:7).

Direct communication was broken because you had made another voice (T-5.II.5:7).

Spirit is in “complete and direct communication” with God (T-4.VII.3:4) constantly:

All interference in the communication that God Himself wills with His Son is quite impossible here. Unbroken and uninterrupted love flows constantly between the Father and the Son, as Both would have it be. And so it is (T-14.VIII.2:14-16).

But the mind can refuse to use that ability if it chooses:

That is why the mind cannot totally lose the ability to communicate, even though it may refuse to utilize it on behalf of being (T-4.VII.3:12).

I think what is meant here is that our spirits are communicating fully with God, even though our minds may not be taking part in the conversation. The point is that, in communication, we are equal partners with God.

We are not equal, however, when it comes to creation, even though our creative power is as limitless as God's (1:1). Because we communicate with God, we are inspired to create like Him (1:3). But there is one crucial difference between God and us when it comes to creation: “He created you but you did not create Him” (1:4).

I think the “I have already told you” in sentence 5 is a reference to the difference between Creator and created mentioned in T-1.VII.5:3, where Jesus told us that “...awe is proper in the Presence of your Creator.” The Course constantly emphasizes our need to accept our secondary place as creations of God, acknowledging Him as our Creator. You may recall as well that, in Section I of Chapter 2, we were told that a failure to accept our place as creations of God was at the root of the separation; we wanted to create ourselves, or even to create our Creator!

We can illustrate the way in which we can be God's equals as creators (having the same creative power) and yet still be subordinate to Him in another sense by the relationship between parents and children in this world (1:6–8). Children inherit the ability to procreate from their parents. Like the parents, the children can give birth to more children. They do not, however, give birth to their parents! In that sense they will always be subordinate to, or derivative of, their parents. Similarly, we, as God's creations, will always be subordinate to Him and derived from Him.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹If you created God and He created you, the Kingdom could not increase through its own creative thought. ²Creation would therefore be limited, and you would not be co-creator [Ur: co-creators] with God. ³As God's creative

Thought proceeds from Him to you, so must your creative thought proceed from you to your creations. ⁴Only in this way can all creative power extend outward. ⁵God's accomplishments are not yours, but yours are like His. ⁶He created the Sonship and you increase it. ⁷You have the power to add to the Kingdom, though not to add to the Creator of the Kingdom. ⁸You claim this power when you become vigilant only for God and His Kingdom. ⁹By accepting this power as yours you have learned to remember [learned to be] what you are.

• **Study Question** •

- 2. Paragraph 2 gives an argument for why we can't turn around and create God. Please state in your own words the reasons given for why it is good that God created us but we can't create Him.*

We continue here to discuss the essential difference between God and us: He created us, and we didn't create Him. Jesus begins by explaining why this is not simply the way things are, but is actually necessary. If we were reciprocal with God in creation, "the Kingdom could not increase" (2:1). It would become "limited" (2:2), a closed loop. God would create us; we would create God; God would create us; we would create God. And that is as far as it would go. Instead, creation is an infinitely long line, as was mentioned earlier: "...all loving creation is freely given in one continuous line, in which all aspects are of the same order" (T-2.I.2:8). God creates us; we create our creations (2:3); they in turn create their creations; and so the Kingdom goes on increasing indefinitely, forever extending outward (2:4).

Furthermore, in such a closed-loop creation, we could never create with God. He would create us; we would create Him. But we would never create something else *together*. As things are in reality, we can be "co-creators with God" (2:2). Our creations are not the same as God's, but they are like God's (2:5). In Heaven, God created the Sonship and we increase it (2:6); we add to creation (although not to God Himself) (2:7).

From a practical point of view this discussion of creation does not mean a whole lot for us. Creation is something that goes on in Heaven, not on earth: "In this world it is impossible to create" (T-17.IV.2:1); "As your function in Heaven is creation, so your function on earth is healing" (T-12.VII.4:7). Still, it is a goal, something to look forward to. Through the practice of mental vigilance the Text has described, especially at the end of the last chapter, we are reclaiming our power to create (2:8). We are in the process of remembering what we are, and remembering what we are means accepting this creative power as our own (2:9).

Paragraph 3

³Your creations belong in you, as you belong in God. ²You are part of God, as your sons are part of His Sons. ³To create is to love. ⁴Love extends outward simply because it cannot be contained. ⁵Being limitless it does not stop.

⁶It creates forever, but not in time. ⁷God's creations have always been, because He has always been. ⁸Your creations have always been, because you can create only as God creates. ⁹Eternity is yours, because He created you eternal.

• **Study Question** •

3. *Without trying to understand how it is possible, try to answer this question according to this paragraph: In terms of time, who has been around longer, you or God?*



What we create is actually part of us, just as we are part of God (3:1). Likewise, our creations (our “sons”) are part of God’s Sons. My mind pictures nested Chinese boxes. God is the outside box; we are in Him; inside of us lie our creations. Because they are in us, and we are in God, they are in God (and in His Sons) as well.

“To create is to love” (3:3). This is one of the shortest, simplest, and clearest explanations of creation in the Course. Creation is the outflow of love; it is what love does: Love’s nature is expansive and extensive, it is a movement outward that cannot be contained (3:4). Since it is limitless it can never stop (3:5); it expands forever (3:6).

“...but not in time” (3:6). Some of the things discussed here we simply cannot understand. We are like beings in a two-dimensional world trying to understand three dimensions; our minds are not properly structured to hold the thoughts. We are told here that creation does not create “in time” (3:6). God, and His creations, “have always been” (3:7). Even your creations “have always been, because you can create only as God creates” (3:8). This simply does not make sense to me, or to anyone I know. How can something be created (which implies a beginning of some kind) and at the same time be eternal (which seems to apply to something that has no beginning)? Jesus even says that God “created you eternal” (3:9), putting the two contradictory words on either side of “you.” On the one side you are created, on the other side you are eternal. To our minds, either one or the other can be true, but not both. To God, somehow both are true.

One analogy may help: Think of God as the sun and creation as the light being emitted by the sun. God creates; the sun shines. Creation is a kind of eternal energy flow, a constant outpouring of life and love and light.

Another thing that helps me to partially understand this is that creation is “not in time” (3:6). Not that I can actually conceive of something that isn’t in time! But it helps me to realize that he does not mean to apply what he is saying to things that are within time. Within time, things do have a beginning and ending; something that is “created” within time is not eternal; and something that is eternal cannot be created in time. All this discussion is an attempt to describe something that is outside of time entirely. That is why I compare it to a two-dimensional being trying to understand a third dimension. We just do not have the proper frame of reference to make complete sense of this.

Why, then, talk about it if we cannot fully understand it? I think that, despite our lack of understanding, we can get something from this discussion. What I get from it is a sense

that God's creations (which include me) and my creations as well are invulnerable to what happens (or seems to happen) in time. These creations have always been. I am not waiting to create; in eternity I have always, already created (3:8)! And because God created me eternal, I am eternal (3:9). In a colloquial nutshell, we can't screw things up.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The ego, on the other hand, always demands reciprocal rights, because it is competitive rather than loving. ²It is always willing to strike a bargain [make a deal], but it cannot understand that to be like another means that no bargains [deals] are possible. ³To gain you must give, not bargain. ⁴To bargain is to limit giving, and this is not God's Will. ⁵To will with God is to create like Him. ⁶God does not limit His gifts in any way. ⁷You are His gifts, and so your gifts must be like His. ⁸Your gifts to the Kingdom must be [are] like His gifts to you.

• Study Question •

4. *The ego can't stand the lack of reciprocity in creation. How do you feel about it? Do you find it a pleasant or unpleasant idea that God created you and you can never create Him?*

The ego simply cannot accept this lack of complete reciprocity; it wants to be God's equal in every respect (4:1). If God created us, then we should be able to create God!

The authority problem is still the only source of conflict, because the ego was made out of the wish of God's Son to father Him. The ego, then, is nothing more than a delusional system in which you made your own father. (T-11.In.2:3-4)

The ego is not loving, it is competitive (4:1). It will bargain, but cannot bring likeness to God (4:2). Bargaining essentially means giving up something to get something. It is a kind of compromise in which you want everything, but realize that's impossible, so you attempt to give away as little as possible to keep as much as possible. The boy with a bag of peanuts asks his little brother, who is pestering him to have some, "If I give you three peanuts, will you leave me alone?" That's a bargain. The boy is giving up three peanuts and keeping the rest. He really wants them all, but he also wants to placate his little brother. There is no equality here, no likeness to one another at all.

To be like another, you cannot bargain with them: bargaining is a competitive stance. "To gain, you must give, not bargain" (4:3). In a bargain, both parties are grasping, contracting inward to themselves. To join together, they must turn outward and give to one another, so they fully share all they have and are. This is how God creates us like Himself, by giving Himself to us. He gives without limit (4:4-6). The Greek term for this kind of self-giving love is *kenosis*. Cynthia Bourgeault, in her book, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, calls *kenosis* the tie-rod of Jesus' teaching. It means to acknowledge in

another the same central significance that we usually, in our egos, reserve only for ourselves.

My gifts to the Kingdom must be like God's gifts to me (4:7–8). As the Workbook tells us, "Love created me like Itself" (W-pI.67.title). Because Love created me, I must, in turn, create in kind: "God is but Love, and therefore so am I" (W-pI.rV.In.4:3). "It is your Father's holy Will that you complete Himself, and that your Self shall be His sacred Son, forever pure as He, of love created and in love preserved, extending love, creating in its name, forever one with God and with your Self" (W-pI.192.1:1).

I said before that this section isn't very practical, but this part is quite practical! It is instructing us to give to the Kingdom without limit, just as God gives to us without limit. When we take this giving stance, we identify with our true nature and re-enter the flow of creation. We become conduits for the endless outflow of the Love of God. This is just what Jesus did with regard to us, as he points out in the next paragraph.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹I gave only love to the Kingdom because I believed that was what I was. ²What you believe you are determines your gifts, and if God created you by extending Himself as you, you can only extend yourself as He did. ³Only joy increases forever, since joy and eternity are inseparable. ⁴God extends outward beyond limits and beyond time, and you who are co-creator [co-creators] with Him extend His Kingdom forever and beyond limit. ⁵Eternity is the indelible stamp of creation. ⁶The eternal are in peace and joy forever.

• Study Question •

5. *Try to apply this paragraph and the concepts of this section to your own life. Can you think of some way, or ways, in which you can "extend yourself as He did"?*

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Jesus tells us (5:1) that he gave only love to the Kingdom because he believed that he was love. ("Teach only love, for that is what you are" (T-6.I.13:2).) Then, in the next sentence, he says, "What you believe you are determines your gifts" (5:2). In 2:9, he said that reclaiming our power to create would be the same as remembering what we are. What we give is closely tied to what we are, and especially to what we believe we are. If we think we are attack, we will give attack. If we believe we are love, we will give love.

Note the two parts of sentence 2. The first part we've discussed already: "What you believe you are determines your gifts." The second part is very closely related. "If God created you by extending Himself as you..." (5:2). Think of this as another logical syllogism, stating that if A is true and B is true, then C must be true:

If what you believe you are determines your gifts,

And if God created you by extending Himself as you,
THEREFORE, you can only extend yourself as He did.

In other words, since you are nothing more than an extension of God, you must extend yourself as God does. That is what Jesus realized, and that is why he behaved as he did.

What is God's giving like? It is the giving of joy, which is the only thing that increases forever because "joy and eternity are inseparable" (5:3). Who would have thought to tie joy and eternity together? I love the fact that the Course does this! It highlights joy. In speaking of how an advanced teacher of God should live, it tells us:

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

Yet, to me, the linking of joy with eternity is natural once I think of it. A mind that is eternal would have to be joyful, wouldn't it? Eternalness means freedom from fear, freedom from any threat. And, consider the reverse: If something is not eternal, how could joy be complete? There would always be the certain threat of the impending end of existence to stifle the joy. "Joy and eternity are inseparable" (5:3) makes sense when you think about it. "The eternal are in peace and joy forever" (5:6). Hallelujah! Because "the eternal" includes you and me. "Eternity is the indelible stamp of creation" (5:5). If something is not eternal, it was not created.

Therefore, if God's creations and ours are eternal, creation is always joyful! The extension of God's Kingdom, "forever and beyond limit" (5:4), is the extension of joy.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹To think like God is to share His certainty of what you are, and to create like Him is to share the perfect Love He shares with you. ²To this the Holy Spirit leads you, that your joy may be complete because the Kingdom of God is whole. ³I have said that the last step in the reawakening of knowledge is taken by God. ⁴This is true, but it is hard to explain in words because words are symbols, and nothing that is true need be explained. ⁵However, the Holy Spirit has the task of translating the useless into the useful, the meaningless into the meaningful, and the temporary into the timeless. ⁶He can therefore tell you something about this last step [Ur: but this one {this one last step} you must know yourself, because by it you know what you are. This is your being].

• Study Question •

6. *What is the goal to which the Holy Spirit (in His three lessons) is leading us (6:1-2)?*

Observe the first sentence carefully. It has two parts. One begins, "To think like God" and the second begins, "...to create like Him" (6:1). These are two parts of the goal to

which “the Holy Spirit leads you” (6:2). The rest of the two phrases give explanations of what those two parts mean. Thinking like God means sharing His certainty about what we are (which is, like Himself, Love). Creating with God means sharing with others the same perfect Love He shares with us. The second part (creating) flows out of the first (thinking), because, “What you believe you are determines your gifts” (5:2).

Have you noticed how many times this section speaks about what we think we are, and the importance of it? (2:9, 5:1, 5:2 and now again in 6:1.) This is why the focus of the Holy Spirit's effort is on our minds. What has to change is what we think about ourselves! “To this the Holy Spirit leads you...” (6:2). This is why mental vigilance is the third and last preparatory step. Remember what we were told about vigilance in the last chapter? “If you allow yourself to have in your mind only what God put there, you are acknowledging your mind as God created it” (T-6.V(C).5:4). Mental vigilance is what enables us to think with God, or to remember what we truly are as He created us (2:8-9).

He reminds us that, as he has said before (T-5.I.6:5-6), the transition from perception to knowledge, in which our minds fully share with God in the certainty of knowing what we are, is something God must do (6:3). The three steps, or three lessons, we are passing through are all preparatory to that last step. The three lessons deal with the correction of our perception, until perception is so aligned with knowledge that transfer to knowledge is possible (T-5.I.6:3-5; T-3.III.1:2,10).

Jesus admits that it is hard to explain this “last step.” We may wonder what exactly happens when our mind shifts from perception to knowledge. And that question cannot be fully answered “in words” (6:4) to our satisfaction, for several reasons.

First, “words are symbols” (6:4). However carefully we choose our words, they are still symbols, which only approximate what they symbolize. The word “tree” does not tell you anything unless you already know something about trees. You need something the symbol can refer to, an image it can evoke in your mind. We lack the right referents for the symbolic words Jesus may use to talk about this last step, precisely because what we are lacking (or at least out of touch with) is knowledge. We can use words, but if we don't know what the word-symbols refer to, the words don't mean anything.

Second, “...nothing that is true need be explained” (6:4). I think this means that when you have direct experience, explanations are unnecessary. Words are not going to get you there; the words are truly meaningful only after the fact, to describe what you know.

However, some useful application of words is possible; otherwise, why talk about it at all? It is possible because the Holy Spirit can translate words, which in themselves may be useless, meaningless, and temporary, into something that is useful, meaningful, and timeless (6:5). He can tell us something about this last step, but final comprehension, true knowing, has to come to each of us individually, by direct experience. The step is, in fact, a full awareness of the nature of our own being. It cannot be taught by words.

As I said earlier, He really does not tell us very much directly about the last step, but He does position it in relation to the steps we are now passing through. The first thing He will do, however, is to make it clear just how widely the words He must use are divorced from reality.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹God does not take steps, because His accomplishments are **not** gradual. ²He does not teach, because His creations are changeless. ³He does nothing **last**, because He created **first** and **for always**. ⁴It must be understood that the word “first” as applied to Him is **not** a time concept. ⁵He is first in the sense that He is the First in the Holy Trinity Itself. ⁶He is the Prime Creator, because **He** created His co-creators. ⁷Because He did, time applies neither to Him **nor** to what He created. ⁸The “last step” that God will take was therefore true in the beginning, is true now, and will be true forever. ⁹What is timeless **is always there**, because its **being** is eternally changeless. ¹⁰It does **not** change by increase, because it was forever created **to** increase. ¹¹If you perceive it as **not** increasing you do not know what it **is**. ¹²You also do not know Who created it [Ur: **what created it, or who He is**]. ¹³God does not **reveal** this to you because it was never hidden. ¹⁴His light was never obscured, because it is His Will to **share** it. ¹⁵How can what is fully shared be withheld and then revealed?

• Study Question •

7. *What does it mean to you that the “last step” in your awakening “was true in the beginning, is true now, and will be true forever” (7:8)? In other words, what does this fact say about your worries that you won't make it?*



We are calling this transition from perception to knowledge “the last step” and saying only God can take it, and yet, “God does not take steps” (7:1) and “He does nothing last” (7:3). We are in a learning process, but God “does not teach” (7:2). His accomplishments are not gradual, bit by bit; what God does is just done, instantly (7:1). The words “last” and “step” both imply a linear progression in time, at least to us, whose thinking is bounded by time. But to the Holy Spirit, Who does act within time (T-5.III.11:2; T-5.VI.12:5; and T-6.II.10:1) and Who does teach (T-5.III.10:1), neither word carries that implication. Within time this seems like a “step” that comes “last,” at the end of the three lessons; in eternity, it is “timeless,” “always there,” and “eternally changeless” (7:9). This is the same paradox about things “outside of time” that we encountered in paragraph 3, and in similar fashion it transcends our understanding.

God is first in the sense of primacy; that is, He is the “Prime Creator” (7:6) Who created us as co-creators, while we did not create Him. He is not first in time, because time does not apply to Him or to His creations (7:7). He, and they, exist eternally.

In some sense, therefore, this “last step”—which is the reawakening in our minds of what we are, the union of our minds with God's Mind to totally share His thought about our nature—is something that has always existed, exists right now, and will exist forever (7:8). We cannot understand how this can be. How is it possible that we are on a path to awakening which may take a long, long time, and yet—in eternity—we are already where the path is taking us? The closest I can come to understanding this is that the first part is

not really true. That is, we are not really on a path that will take a long time to travel; we are not really on a path at all. As the famous lines from the Text say:

The journey to God is merely the reawakening of the knowledge of where you are always, and what you are forever. It is a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed. (T-8.VI.9:6–7)

The entire experience is an hallucination, a mental glitch, an imaginary experience, a bad dream, and nothing more. That comes closest, I think, to explaining it, and yet I have to admit it never fully satisfies me because a very significant part of my mind does not really believe this is nothing but a dream. It's just too darn real!

That passage just quoted continues with words that really apply to our inability to comprehend this paradox:

Truth can only be experienced. It cannot be described and it cannot be explained. I can make you aware of the conditions of truth, but the experience is of God. Together we can meet its conditions, but truth will dawn upon you of itself. (T-8.VI.9:8–11)

And that, I think, is really the bottom line. Words cannot bring us to the truth. By ourselves, through our thinking and reasoning, we cannot get there. All we can do is to meet the conditions of truth, that is, learn the lessons the Holy Spirit is teaching us and practice the mental vigilance He is asking for. As we do that, “truth will dawn upon you of itself” (T-8.VI.9:11). To say the “last step” can only be taken by God is the same as saying, “The experience is of God” (T-8.VI.9:10). We cannot grasp the truth, but if we do the practice, the truth will grasp us.

This paragraph presents another paradox: Increasing the Kingdom does not change it! This is because it was created to increase (7:10). If we do not see it as increasing—if we see the Kingdom as some kind of static thing or closed system—we don't know it at all, nor do we know God (7:11–12). This reminds me of the humorous remark that the only thing that is constant is change, or, as the French put it, *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*. The Kingdom's increase is what is unchanging about it. It is constantly expanding, and we must be part of that expansion if we are part of the Kingdom. That is our place within the Kingdom; that is what is being restored to us, or we to it. Notice the phrase in 7:9: “its being is eternally changeless.” If you think of the word *being* as a verbal form rather than a noun, the activity of be-ing, that calls to my mind what I said earlier about creation being like the shining of the sun. Creation is a be-ing, and it is eternally changeless. It endlessly creates, and yet the totality does not change.

We think of the “last step” as some kind of final revelation of the truth, but it isn't that, either. How could God “reveal” what was never hidden? (7:13) God wills to share His light and so it is shared (7:14), period. We already know the truth because God has fully shared it with us (7:15). We think that the truth was somehow hidden from us, and we have to ferret it out; in fact, it shines forever within us, and our experience of revelation is nothing more than our long-delayed acceptance of what has always been given to us.

Answer Key

1. (a) Communication. (b) Creation.
2. If creation were reciprocal, the Kingdom would not increase. It would be limited. And you would not create something together with God (since He would create you and you would create Him). It would be like a “closed loop” instead of ever expanding.
3. Neither God nor you have been around any longer than the other. God and His creations “have always been” (3:7).
4. Most people at first will feel relieved that God created them, but they cannot create Him. Yet, underneath that, every one of us has an ego that somehow feels it is unfair that we can never be God’s equals. That desire to usurp God’s place is the fundamental ego craving.
5. No written answer is expected.
6. The Holy Spirit is leading us to think like God, which means to share His certainty of what we are, and to create like God, which means to share with others the same perfect Love He shares with us. Our transition into that shared thought and shared creation is what the Course calls “the last step.”
7. The last step comes at the end of time, but is actually an eternal reality in Heaven—it was true in the beginning, is true now and will always be true. That means that my worries about not making it are groundless! If what God created is always there, “eternally changeless” (7:9), then time does not apply to it (7:7). In some sense I cannot understand, the last step has already been taken and I am already awake. There is no possibility of failure! It is already done in eternity, and I am simply waiting for it to be worked out in time.