

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 8, Section IX

Healing as Corrected Perception

This section, “Healing as Corrected Perception,” discusses the practical effects of seeing the body as a means rather than an end. In particular, it addresses how this changed concept of the body affects our understanding of healing.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹I said before that the Holy Spirit is the Answer. ²He is the Answer to **everything**, because He knows what the answer to everything is. ³The ego does not know what a **real** question is, although it asks an endless number. ⁴Yet you can learn this as you learn to question the value of the ego, and thus establish your ability to **evaluate** its questions. ⁵When the ego tempts you to sickness do not ask the Holy Spirit to heal the body, for this would merely be to accept the ego's belief that the body is the proper aim of healing. ⁶Ask, rather, that the Holy Spirit teach you the right *perception* of the body, for perception alone can be distorted. **7Only perception can be sick**, because only perception can be wrong.

• Study Question •

1. *When we are sick we normally want our bodies to be healed, and set out to bring that about. What does the Course say about this goal? What should we pray for: the healing of the body, or something else?*

This paragraph contains the most direct statement of the Course's opinion about physical healing and its importance. *It is not the body but the mind that is the object of healing.* The preceding section ended on a very positive note, telling us that when we use our bodies in accordance with our true function, which in this world is healing, our bodies will be healthy. That message is likely to awaken our desire to have such a perfectly healthy body, if our bodies are currently sick or impaired in some way (as is the case with most of us). We may begin, therefore, to ask the Holy Spirit to heal our bodies.

Jesus has already told us “the Holy Spirit is the Answer” (1:1–2; see also T-5.II.2:5, T-5.III.5:3, T-6.IV.1:1). Whenever we have a need or a question, we can ask the Holy Spirit for His assistance. He Himself is God's response to all of our questions and requests. He always answers. We might expect, therefore, that all that we need do in order to have a healthy body is to ask the Holy Spirit.

A key factor in learning to interact with the Holy Spirit, however, is learning to ask *meaningful* questions and make *meaningful* requests. If we make a request that cannot be answered, or a request that has no *meaningful* answer, the answer of the Holy Spirit may be silence, or a simple “No.” Questioning really originated with the ego (T-3.IV.3:1, T-6.IV.2:6), and all of the questions the ego asks *are* meaningless (1:3). If we listen to our

ego it will always fill our minds with meaningless questions and requests. One of the elements of our growth process will be learning to recognize such questions as the ego's distractions, and to eliminate them from our minds (1:4).

We already know from everything we have read up to this point that the body is an invention of the ego, originally designed to reflect our separation from God and from one another. We know that the ego is constantly trying to get us to identify with our bodies, in order to ensnare us in separateness. We have just completed two long sections of the Text that spoke of the ego's mistaken perception of the body as an end rather than a means. Having that awareness, it should not surprise us to learn that when we pray for the healing of the body, our prayer is actually a request originated by the ego! The Course specifically enjoins us *not* to ask for bodily healing, because to do so directly supports the ego's idea that the body is the end and not the means. (Sentence 5 is one that any person interested in physical healing ought to memorize: "When the ego tempts you to sickness do not ask the Holy Spirit to heal the body, for this would merely be to accept the ego's belief that the body is the proper aim of healing".)

The body can be part of the *means* of healing, but it is not the *end* or "aim" of healing. You may wonder, if you do not ask for bodily healing, what *should* you ask for when you are sick? Simple: Ask that your *perception* of the body be healed or corrected (1:6).

Remember that the previous section told us that healing comes from abandoning all loveless use of the body, and allowing the Holy Spirit to interpret everything for us (including our own bodies), guiding us into the fulfillment of our divine function (T-8.VIII.9:8–10). What we are seeing in this new paragraph is simply how that principle applies to prayers concerning sickness. Health does not come from focusing attention on the body in any way, whether through forms of physical healing or through *forms of mental attempts to heal the body*. Health comes from entirely restructuring our perception of the body and its purpose. It comes from healing the mind and its perceptions. Sickness exists at the level of the mind's perception, not in the body (1:7).

If I am sick, at some level I have shared the ego's perception of the body as what I am, and as a means of attack or getting what I want. I need to have that perception healed; I don't really need to have the body healed. The body isn't me. I am a mind, and healing must occur at that level if it is to be truly effective and lasting. The Holy Spirit's goal is to unite our minds in perceiving only a single purpose for the body: communication, with the end of joining minds together (see 9:1–2, T-2.VI.3:1–7, and T-2.IV.2:3–6).

It's important to realize that the Course does not tell us to avoid all forms of physical remedy for illness. In fact it tells us the exact opposite (see T-2.IV.4). While it is important to recognize that physical healing should not be our goal, I think it is equally important to realize that, when we *do* believe we are bodies, we need to take care of them, and failing to do so is in fact a form of self-attack engendered by the ego. If, for us, taking care of them means taking medication or utilizing some form of physical therapy, then that is what we should do. If setting aside thoughts of healing our bodies, and concentrating purely on healing our minds, raises the level of our fear, then that is the wrong approach for us *at this time*. Some day, perhaps, we will be ready to do that. But since healing always involves a *reduction* of our fear, anything that *increases* our fear is obviously not healing!

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Wrong perception is the wish that things [is *distorted willing, which wants things to*] be as they are not. ²The reality of **everything** is totally harmless, because total harmlessness is the condition of its reality. ³It is also the condition of your awareness of its reality. ⁴You do not have to **seek** reality. ⁵It will seek you and **find** you **when you meet its conditions**. ⁶Its conditions are part of **what it is**. ⁷And this part only is up to you. ⁸The rest is of itself [*Itself*]. ⁹You need do so little because your little part is so powerful that it will bring the whole to you. [*You need do so little, because It is so powerful that your little part WILL bring the whole to you.*] ¹⁰Accept, then, your little part, and let the whole be yours.

• Study Question •

2. *As it does in more than one place, the Course plays on the two meanings of the word “condition” here. It refers both to the state of reality, and also to the prerequisite for becoming aware of it. What is the “little part” we must do in order for all of reality to find us? (2:9).*

When we *want* to see something in a distorted manner we *will* see it that way; just wanting things to be other than they are is enough to warp our perceptions (2:1). We see attack all around us because our egos want us to see attack. Yet, “The reality of everything is totally harmless” (2:2).

Do you—like me—find that hard to believe? The strength of our disbelief is the measure of our desire to perceive attack. If we are to believe the Course, all the attack we see is a distorted perception, a hallucination that results from the projection of our own attack thoughts. Because we see *ourselves* as attackers, we see attackers everywhere.

This is why *harmlessness*, the absence of attack, is the prerequisite for vision (2:3). Reality *is* harmless, but to *see* that or to be aware of it, your mind must be harmless. If your mind believes that it is harmful and attacking, it will project that attack onto reality and obscure reality’s true harmlessness.

We think there is something we must *do* in order to find reality. We think that reality is somehow hidden and obscure (How could that be?), so we have to seek for it. Not so! Reality will become self-evident to us the moment we stop blinding ourselves with our own guilt, our own belief that we are no longer the loving beings God created (2:4–10). Reality is a powerful thing; that’s why we need do so little. All we need is to shift our thinking. We do not have to change or reshape anything in the material world; all we need to change is what we think about ourselves—about our minds! Changing our minds may not seem like a very significant thing to do, but it is far more powerful than we realize. In accepting the harmlessness of our own minds, we are harmonizing our minds with all of reality. The moment we do that, all of reality will *of Itself* come flooding into our awareness.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Wholeness heals **because** it is of the mind. ²All forms of sickness, even unto death, are physical expressions of the fear of awakening. ³They are attempts to

reinforce sleeping [*Unconsciousness*] out of fear of waking [*Consciousness*].
⁴This is a pathetic way of **trying not to see** [know] by rendering the faculties for seeing [knowing] ineffectual. ⁵“Rest in peace” is a blessing for the living, not the dead, because rest comes from waking, not from sleeping. ⁶Sleep is withdrawing; waking is **joining**. ⁷Dreams are illusions of joining, because they reflect the ego's distorted notions [*illusions of joining, taking on the ego's distortions*] about what joining is [*what joining means, if you are sleeping under its guidance*]. ⁸Yet the Holy Spirit, too, has use for sleep, and can use dreams on **behalf** of waking if you will let Him.

• **Study Question** •

3. *The Course often uses physical sleep as an analogy for spiritual sleep, or our condition of spiritual unconsciousness. How does this paragraph connect sickness to spiritual sleep?*

The first sentence seems to be disconnected from the rest of the paragraph until you realize its connection to the two sentences that ended the *preceding* paragraph. In the Urtext this sentence is, in fact, the final sentence of the preceding paragraph. Those lines told us that the little we do—electing to be harmless—is enough to bring us everything (2:9). If we simply accept harmlessness for ourselves, the entirety of reality will become ours (2:5, 10). That wholeness is what will heal us (3:1). Wholeness exists or occurs *within the mind*, which is where healing must happen—not at the bodily level.

Yet wholeness *does* bring healing to the body. Why? Because physical illness always grows out of a disturbed and frightened *mind*. This paragraph makes an exceedingly important assertion about sickness: Sickness is a physical expression of our fear of waking up (3:2). It is a way of dulling our consciousness (3:3–4). It is one way that we withdraw from Jesus or God (7:5). We all know from experience that sickness and pain make it difficult for us to think clearly, and give us a desire to sleep and to rest a lot. Bodily illness seems to have the power to cloud our minds, and that is precisely *why* the mind sometimes chooses to make the body sick.

In order to understand why we should not make the healing of the body our aim, but rather the healing of our *perception* of the body, it is important to recognize that a sick body is only the symptom of a problem in the mind. Even *death* is a symptom of our mental fear of awakening (3:2). Lest we make the mistake of thinking that death can be a positive goal, in that it can bring us rest, Jesus tells us plainly that “rest comes from waking, not from sleeping” (3:5). In death we are cutting ourselves off from all the living. Therefore, it is an act of separation and cannot be a positive move, because “waking is joining” (3:6).

The last two sentences shift the focus from spiritual sleep to bodily sleep, and this continues into the next paragraph. To me this seems like a kind of sidebar that Jesus throws in, brought to mind by the discussion of spiritual sleep. Yet if you reflect on what is said about physical sleep, you can generalize the meaning to apply to our entire “dream” of life in this world. Our nighttime dreams are often an opportunity for the ego to express its wishes more openly and directly than it does in our waking dream—what we commonly call “real life.”

In many of our dreams, we dream about joining with another person in some way (3:7). Sexual dreams are an obvious example. That is most likely what is meant here, because the Course indicates that the ego tries to use the body to achieve joining (T-1.II.1:2-3, T-17.III.2:6). It could possibly have other meanings; it might, for instance, refer to dreams of dominion over others. Most of our dreams are expressions of the ego; that should be evident from their content. However, the Holy Spirit can also make good use of our sleep (3:8). Whether or not He does so is really up to us, as the next paragraph makes clear.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹How you wake is the sign of how you have used sleep. ²To whom did you give it? ³Under which teacher did you place it? ⁴Whenever you wake dispiritedly, it was not given to the Holy Spirit [it was *not of the Spirit*]. **5Only** when you awaken joyously have you utilized sleep **according to His [the Holy Spirit's] purpose**. ⁶You can indeed be “drugged” by sleep, if [but this is *always because*] you have **misused it on behalf of sickness**. ⁷Sleep is no more a form of death than death is a form of unconsciousness. ⁸**Complete unconsciousness is impossible**. ⁹You can rest in peace only **because you are awake**.

• Study Question •

4. *Reflect on the patterns of your own sleep and the way you wake up in the morning. As you read this paragraph, what ideas come to mind about ways you might improve the quality and usefulness of your sleep?*

I have often been amazed at the conscious control the mind can have over what goes on during sleep. Most people don't realize how easy it is to affect what goes on in sleep by what you do right before sleeping. Years ago, I was given an assignment in a seminar I was taking. I was told to do a five-minute physical relaxation meditation at bedtime, and then, while in deep relaxation, to spend two or three minutes quietly affirming to myself, “When I dream, I will wake up, remember my dream, and write it down.” I was to do this every night for one week. I was very skeptical, because I am one of those people who are not aware, most of the time, that they have dreamed at all. I could count on one hand the dreams I'd remembered up until that time.

The first few nights nothing happened. Then, one night in the middle of the week, I woke suddenly. I came sharply awake, so much so that I thought there must have been some loud noise that woke me. But I heard nothing and could not recall hearing anything. I decided must have wakened because I had to go to the bathroom, so I got up to do so, but that was not the problem. I was actually puzzled about why I had wakened when suddenly a dream I'd been having came flooding into my memory in great detail! I realized my mind had followed my instructions and had wakened me when I was having a dream. I wrote it down, and for the next three or four nights I woke up every night to write down a dream.

My point here is not that there is merit in writing down dreams, although some people may benefit from doing so. (I've never been attracted to the idea; to me, dreams are too much the fruit of the ego.) My point is that what we do just before sleeping and the

mental suggestions we give ourselves will heavily influence what our minds do during the night. If, as this paragraph suggests, we give our sleep to the Holy Spirit rather than to the ego, it can have almost miraculous effects on our lives.

How do you wake up in the morning? Do you feel joyous or dispirited, or even drugged? If we awaken dispirited we have not allowed the Holy Spirit to make use of our time while sleeping (4:1). Let us find new ways to turn our sleeping time over to the Holy Spirit (see #4 in the Answer Key below for some suggestions). The Holy Spirit can teach us during the night if we open our minds to Him before we sleep.

Sometimes sleep is compared to death, and people who retreat into sleep to escape life are said to be tending toward suicide. But death does not have to be like that. I love the humor in sentence 7: Sleep is not a form of death. There is a *vast* difference between being unconscious and being dead! Besides, Jesus points out, "Complete unconsciousness is impossible" (4:8), which is good news.

The final sentence swings us from physical sleep back to spiritual sleep once more. The only true rest comes from awakening, not from sleeping; from increased awareness, not from diminished awareness (4:9).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Healing is release from the fear of waking and the substitution of the decision [will] to wake. ²The decision [will] to wake is ~~the reflection of the will to love, since all healing involves replacing fear with love.~~ ³The Holy Spirit cannot distinguish among degrees of error, for if He taught that one form of sickness is more serious than another, He would be teaching that one error can be more **real** than another. **4**His function is to distinguish **only** between the false and the true, **replacing** the false **with** the true.

The true objective of healing is clearly to heal the mind, not the body. Everything that is said about healing in this paragraph applies to the mind; trying to make it apply to the body would be nearly impossible. What is it that heals us? It is the transformation of the mind, changing it over from an active, fear-driven *resistance* to awakening to an equally active *determination* or *will* to wake up.

One of the things I have enjoyed about Buddhism as I have studied it is the emphasis on making an active decision to awaken. The simple vow, "I take refuge (or go for refuge) in the Buddha," means, "I make a commitment to awakening." "Buddha" is a symbol of "the enlightened one," and to seek security in the enlightened one means that you are seeking enlightenment. The Buddha within is pure mindfulness, pure awareness, and pure wakefulness. In Course terms, it is the Holy Spirit. This vow is simply the vow to wake up and to identify with that pure mind of the Holy Spirit within us.

That mental shift is what brings healing. All the physical medicine in the world can only alleviate symptoms, and that only temporarily; real healing means having a *mental transplant*, removing our fear and replacing it with love (5:2). When that healing occurs in the mind, the body will be healed as well (T-31.III.6:1-2). The particular form of physical sickness does not matter, because to the Holy Spirit there is no real difference in forms (5:3). They are all nothing but errors, and all errors are corrected by the truth. All the Holy Spirit does is to help us find the false ideas in our minds, and to replace them with the truth (5:4).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The ego, which always wants to weaken the mind, tries to separate it from the body in an attempt to destroy it. [The ego, which always weakens the will, wants to separate the body from the mind. This is an attempt to destroy it.] ²Yet the ego actually believes that it [the ego] is protecting it. ³This is because the ego believes that mind is dangerous, and that to make mindless is to heal. ⁴But to make mindless is impossible, since it would mean to make nothing out of what God created. ⁵The ego despises weakness, even though it makes every effort to induce it. **6The ego wants only what it hates.** ⁷To the ego this is perfectly sensible. ⁸Believing in the power of attack, the ego wants attack.

• Study Question •

5. *This paragraph discusses the ego's belief about the mind, and the action taken by the ego as a result. What is the ego's belief, and what action does the ego take as a result of this belief?*

The pronouns are the key here and, unfortunately, what “it” refers to every time isn't all that clear. My understanding of it may differ from yours. But here is my version, starting from the Urtext, in which I have replaced the pronouns with the noun I think they refer to:

The ego, which always WEAKENS the will, wants to SEPARATE the body from the mind. This IS an attempt to DESTROY the body. But the ego actually believes that the ego is PROTECTING the body. This is because the ego believes that MIND IS DANGEROUS, and that to MAKE MINDLESS is to heal.

It helps to take the first three sentences in reverse, since 2 is explaining the reason behind 1, and 3 explains the reason behind 2. Remember that the ego believes your mind has attacked God and succeeded. It also recognizes in some fashion that your mind has the power to dispel the ego itself. In a distorted fashion, it recognizes your mind's power. Therefore, it views the mind as dangerous, and believes that to protect and heal your body it must make you mindless (6:2–3). The ego wants to destroy your *mind*—to make you mindless. It believes that the way to do this is to separate your mind from your body (6:1), although in so doing it is actually destroying *both* body and mind.

What does it mean to separate the body from the mind? I think the ego does this in two ways: first, in your thought system, directing you to believe that the body is autonomous, acting on its own without the mind; and second, in the literal sense of getting rid of the mind by killing the body.

Neither way will work, because mind cannot be destroyed, and God's creations cannot be annihilated (6:4). If the ego destroys your body, your mind will endure. If, within your mind you identify with the body, you cannot possibly do so entirely, any more than you could become entirely unconscious (4:8). The ego's attempt to make you mindless cannot succeed, thank God!

The ego is such a bundle of contradictions! (6:6). It hates attack; yet it wants attack (6:8). It hates weakness (6:5); yet it tries to weaken the mind. I confess that, at times, I have a hard time comprehending what the Course says about the ego because the ego seems insane. Of course, it *is* insane, and it is pointless to try to make sense out of its

thoughts; they don't *make* sense. The picture that emerges clearly for me is one of a self-destructive, self-contradicting, and totally irrational mindset. I can easily believe that my ego is out to separate my mind from my body, and to destroy *both* body and mind in a mad attempt to protect what it (the ego) thinks that I am.

What follows is an entire paragraph from the Urtext that was omitted from the Course—probably because it seems to be only marginally related to the topic under discussion. But it is a great lead-in to the following paragraphs about our ability to do whatever Jesus asks of us.

[You have begun to realize that this is a very practical course, because it means *exactly* what it says. So does the Bible, if it is properly understood. There has been a marked tendency on the part of many of the Bible's followers, and also its translators, to be entirely literal about fear and *its* effects, but *not* about love and *its* results. Thus, "hellfire" means burning, but raising the dead becomes allegorical. Actually, it is *particularly* the references to the outcomes of love that should be taken literally because the Bible is *about* love, being about *God*.]

Although it is a kind of aside, the primary point here is that biblical miracles such as raising the dead should be taken literally, because they are "outcomes of love."

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The Bible enjoins you to be perfect, to heal **all** errors, to take no thought of the body as separate and to accomplish all things **in my name**. ²This is not my name alone, for ours is a shared identification. ³The Name of God's Son is one, and you are enjoined to do the works of love **because** we share this oneness. ⁴Our minds are whole **because** they are one. ⁵If you are sick you are withdrawing from me. ⁶Yet you **cannot withdraw from me alone**. ⁷You can only withdraw from yourself *and* me.

• Study Question •

6. *Christians often end prayers with the phrase, "...in Jesus' name." How does Jesus reinterpret the idea of praying or doing things in his name?*

I am struck by four words in the first sentence: "perfect," "all," "no," and "all." The Bible (as seen by the Course) is as absolute as the Course. We aspire to perfection. We are seeking perfect healing. We are striving toward a state of mind in which there is "no thought of the body as separate" (7:1). Above all, we are looking to do *everything* in the name of Jesus.

Jesus takes liberties with the words of the Bible here, as he often does in the Course. For instance, the original quotation about the body—which in the King James Version begins with the words, "Take no thought"—reads like this in a more recent translation:

Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? (Matthew 6:25, NIV)

The words “as separate” don’t appear in the Bible, so that is clearly an interpretation Jesus is making of the original words. However, since he was the person who spoke the original line, he is surely entitled to amend it! Whereas the ego believes the body and mind need to become separate, the Bible, as well as the Course, teaches us to eliminate such thoughts entirely, and to realize that the body is *not* a separate entity from the mind (see T-8.VII.11:4). I think what this means in practice is that we do not make the body the focus of our efforts; we do not view it as an end in itself. In itself (as a separate entity) it is nothing.

To do things in the name of Jesus does not have the meaning that Christians typically give it: that we are doing it as the representatives of Jesus, or that we are asking things of God based on the merits of Jesus rather than our own. We share in his name because we share in his identity (7:2). So doing things in his name means doing them *as one*, doing them in identification with the shared identity of the Christ.

Fear of awakening equates to fear of God, and to fear of Jesus, because Jesus exemplifies God manifest in a human. If we withdraw from him, however, we are simultaneously withdrawing from *ourselves* because we share the same identity (7:6–7). Therefore, for any one of us to be whole means recognizing and accepting our union with everyone, including Jesus. And *that* is what it means to act in his name.

Paragraph 8

You have surely begun to realize that this is a very practical course, and one that means exactly what it says. I would not ask you to do things you **cannot** do, and it is impossible that I could do things **you** cannot do. Given this, and given this **quite literally**, nothing **can** prevent you from doing **exactly** what I ask, and **everything** argues *for* your doing it. I give you **no** limits because God lays none upon you. When you limit **yourself** we are **not** of one mind, and that **is** sickness.⁶ Yet sickness is not of the body, but **of the mind**.⁷ All forms of sickness [*disfunction*] are [*merely*] signs that the mind is split, and does not accept a **unified purpose**.

• Study Question •

7. *Try turning sentences 8:1–3 into a personal affirmation, linking them with the list of things we are asked to do in 7:1, and spend some time meditating on it. For example: The Course means exactly what it says. Jesus would not ask me to do anything I cannot do....*

Given that list in the previous paragraph of things we are asked to do—a list that includes being perfect and healing every error—when Jesus tells us that the Course “means exactly what it says” (8:1), it can be a bit confrontational and threatening. We often find it easy to take the negative things he says literally, such as how insane we are, but much harder to take the *positive* things literally. Does he *really* mean that we should be able to heal *all* sickness with equal ease? Does he really expect us to completely transcend our ego and to detach ourselves from our identification with the body? Yes, he does. We are capable of far more than we believe. In the Bible, Jesus told his disciples:

I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. (John 14:12, NIV)

He is saying the same thing here (8:2–3). We *can* do it and we have every *reason* to do it. We are unlimited (8:4); nothing can stop us if we choose to follow Jesus and to do as he did. Sickness is the result of our reluctance to be like Jesus (8:5–7). We have not yet *entirely* accepted our function to live *only* as a manifestation of God, *only* as love, and *completely without* attack. Once more Jesus returns to that theme of having a totally “unified purpose” (8:7). That is the key. The whole purpose of the Course is to bring us to that unified purpose by gently but firmly divesting our minds of all competing purposes.

I don't want to gloss over the very succinct statement of the Course's position on sickness: “Sickness is not of the body, but of the mind” (8:6). It could not be stated more clearly: Sickness is a sign that the mind is split and refuses to accept a unified purpose (8:7). Sickness is a limitation. In our shared identity with Jesus we have no limitations and can therefore do whatever he asks of us. Our belief that we cannot do what he says is simply another form of our withdrawal from union with him.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹The unification of purpose, then, is the Holy Spirit's **only** way of healing. ²This is because it is the only level [the level of the mind] at which healing **means** anything. ³The re-establishing of meaning in a chaotic thought system *is* the [only] way to heal it. ⁴Your task is only to meet the conditions **for** meaning, since meaning itself is of God. ⁵Yet your **return** to meaning is essential **to His**, because **your** meaning is **part** of His. ⁶Your healing, then, is part of **His** health, since it is part of His Wholeness. ⁷He cannot lose this, but you *can* [you can] not know it. ⁸Yet it is still His Will for you, and His Will **must** stand forever and in all things.

• Study Question •

8. *What is our only task in healing? (Compare 9:4 with 2:2–4.)*

I think the first sentence neatly sums up the message of this section: Finding a unified purpose heals us (9:1). The Holy Spirit heals us, mind and body, by bringing our minds into holding a single purpose: fulfilling God's Will for us, or extending God's Being (T-7.IX.3:1). That is the focus of the Course. As students of the Course, that must be the focus of our practice. While physical healing is a certain result of our work with the Course, it is only a side effect. It is not the main event. Uniting the mind's purpose is working at the only level on which true healing can occur (9:2–3).

When Jesus says our “task is only to meet the conditions for meaning” (9:4), he is clearly referring to the previous mention of “condition” in paragraph 2. There, that condition was defined as accepting the harmlessness of our own minds. If you will recall, however, the opening paragraph of this chapter also spoke of conditions: *Peace* is the condition (or state) in which the Kingdom exists, and therefore attaining peace is the condition (or prerequisite) for the restoration of our knowledge of the Kingdom. The

thought is the same here. Our mind must be healed for us to resume our function as God's extensions. We cannot find our true meaning without that unification of our mind; that is the condition we must meet.

God's health and ours are inextricably intertwined. Although God cannot really lose His health, *we* can lose our awareness of health (9:7)—and we *have*, which is precisely why our bodies manifest sickness. Despite the appearance of illness we display, God's Will for perfect health and wholeness has never changed and never will (9:8). We *will* know that wholeness; it is inevitable. If we will give up attack, give up all loveless use of the body, and give up our investment in separation and separate purposes—all three of which are different ways of saying the same thing—we will have met the conditions for wholeness. To that end, the Course, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are all working together to bring our minds to the point where we meet the conditions of knowledge and meaning, and reawaken fully to our shared identity in God.

Answer Key

1. We are specifically advised *not* to ask for the healing of the body, but instead to ask that the Holy Spirit teach us the right perception of the body (1:5–6).
2. To become totally harmless, i.e., to give up attack. This means we must be healed of the perception that we are a body and that the body is for attack.
3. Sickness (even terminal illness) is actually a form of spiritual “sleep,” a means of making ourselves unaware because we are afraid of awakening (3:3). It is a way we withdraw from our Self, our brothers, and God.
4. The Course tells us that if we give our sleep to the Holy Spirit we will awaken joyously (4:4–5). The way we wake up indicates how well we have used our sleep (4:1). I find myself thinking of several ways I might improve my sleep time:
 - a. Form a habit of doing spiritual reading just before falling asleep
 - b. Spend time immediately before sleep practicing my *Workbook* lesson, and fall asleep with its words in my mind
 - c. Consciously pause to dedicate my sleep time to the Holy Spirit every night
 - d. Play a tape recording of spiritual thoughts at low volume, timed to go off in a half hour, as I fall asleep
5. The ego views the mind as a dangerous enemy that must be eliminated. It tries to do this by separating it from the body (6:1,3).
6. To do things in Jesus’ name is actually to do them in the name of the one Son of God, an identity we share with Jesus. Therefore, it means to relinquish our desire to be separate and to join ourselves with him in oneness. Sickness is one form of our withdrawal from our shared identity.
7. No written answer is expected.
8. Our only task is to meet the condition for meaning, which is to give up our investment in separation and attack (9:4). That implies giving up all loveless use of the body and reaffirming our union with the Wholeness of God’s Son.