

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 9, Section IV

The Holy Spirit's Plan of Forgiveness

Legend:

blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~strikethrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

This section, “The Holy Spirit’s Plan of Forgiveness,” continues the discussion of the previous section. That section said that if we want healing, we must overlook our brothers’ errors. If we instead focus on our brothers’ errors and condemn our brothers for them, we will make those errors real in our minds, and thus reinforce the apparent reality of *our own* errors as well. This section builds on that theme, and begins the Course’s in-depth teaching on forgiveness¹, by contrasting two very different plans of forgiveness. The ego’s plan is to “see error clearly first, and then overlook it” (4:4); the Holy Spirit’s plan is to look “beyond error from the beginning” (5:3). Only by listening to the Holy Spirit can we extend true forgiveness to our brothers, and thus find it for ourselves.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Atonement is for all, because it is the way to **undo** the belief that **anything** is for you **alone**. ²To forgive is to **overlook**. ³Look, then, **beyond** error and do not let your perception rest **upon** it, for you will believe what your perception **holds**. ⁴Accept as true only what your brother **is**, if you would know yourself. ⁵Perceive what he is **not** and you **cannot** know what you are, **because** you see **him** falsely. ⁶Remember always that your Identity is shared, and that Its sharing **is** Its reality.

• Study Question •

1. *In sentences 3–5, how are we told to treat errors, and what are we to look for in one another?*

A recurring theme has been that our conception of individual selves is in error; in fact, we are all one Self. In Section II we read:

¹ Up to this point, forgiveness has been mentioned only 22 times in the Text, and four of those times were in the final two paragraphs of Section III.

You can no more pray for yourself alone than you can find joy for yourself alone. Prayer is the restatement of inclusion, directed by the Holy Spirit under the laws of God. Salvation is of your brother. The Holy Spirit extends from your mind to his, and answers *you*. You cannot hear the Voice for God in yourself alone, because you are not alone. And His answer is only for what you are (T-9.II.6:1-6).

In the previous section we were again told, “Atonement is no more separate than love” (T-9.III.7:6). That theme is taken up again here: “Atonement is for all.” Nothing is for any one of us alone (1:1). In fact, atonement is what *undoes* the belief that we can have anything separately.

Our function is not only not the correction of errors; we are meant to *forgive* them. Forgiveness *overlooks* the error of the individual self; it looks *beyond* it, not allowing perception or thought to linger on that illusory disguise and its mistakes, to see *only* what your brother truly *is*—which is the shared Self. He, or she, is *me*. When we forgive, we do not focus on the errors in an attempt to correct them. We look past them and affirm the truth. It's only as we do this that we can come to know our true Self, because there is only One Self. The Self of the other *is* our Self. (1:2–4)

If we allow our perception of the other to dwell upon his or her faults, we are allowing ourselves to see “what he is not” (1:5). This blocks our vision of the Self in him, and since that Self is our own Self, we “cannot know what [we] are” (1:5). The only Identity that is real, the only one we can truly know, is One that is shared (1:6). What we are remembering is that our True Self is the same Self for all of us. As the Course puts it emphatically:

God has but one Son, knowing them all as one. (T-9.VI.3:5)

It should especially be noted that God has only *one* Son. If all His creations are His Sons, every one must be an integral part of the whole Sonship. The Sonship in its oneness transcends the sum of its parts. However, this is obscured as long as any of its parts is missing. That is why the conflict cannot ultimately be resolved until all the parts of the Sonship have returned. Only then can the meaning of wholeness in the true sense be understood (T-2.VII.6:1-6)

This is a core teaching of the Course:

I cannot go without you, for you are a part of me (S-1.V.3:9).

No one is crucified alone, and yet no one can enter Heaven by himself (W-pI.134.17:7).

To Him we go together. Take your brother's hand, for this is not a way we walk alone (W-r5.Int.9:5-6).

Redemption must be one. As I am saved, the world is saved with me. For all of us must be redeemed together (W-pII.295.1:4-6).

Together is your joint inheritance remembered and accepted by you both. Alone it is denied to both of you (T-31.II.11:1-2).

This is why, as long as we do not forgive a brother, we cannot know our True Self. Recently, on a TV show, I saw a woman interviewed who has normal legs and can walk, but is looking for a doctor to sever her spinal column so that she can become a paraplegic. She suffers from a rare brain disorder in which the brain does not recognize

some part of the body as part of oneself. She feels as though her healthy legs are not part of her. When we are condemning a brother or sister, we are doing the same thing as that woman: we are disowning a part of our Self.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹You have a **part** to play in the Atonement, but the plan of the Atonement is beyond you. ²You do not understand [**know**] how to **overlook** errors, or you would not make them. ³It would merely be further error to believe either that you do **not** make them, or that you can **correct** them without a **Guide to correction**. ⁴And if you do not **follow** this Guide, your errors will **not** be corrected. ⁵The plan is not yours **because** of your limited ideas about **what you are**. ⁶This sense of [**But this**] limitation is where **all errors arise**. ⁷The way to **undo** them, therefore, is not *of you* but *for you*.

• Study Question •

2. Paragraph 2.

(a) *Can we overlook errors in one another by ourselves? Why, or why not?*

(b) *Who can enable us to overlook errors?*

(c) *Explain as best you can: “The way to undo [errors], therefore, is not of you but for you.”*

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So clearly, our part in the Atonement plan is to forgive our brothers and sisters by overlooking their errors. That’s the plan—but the plan is “beyond you” (2:10! Sometimes when people read the Course, they get that it is insisting that forgiveness is the only road out of hell (W-p1.198.4:1), but they are nevertheless completely frustrated because they just cannot forgive someone. They have no idea how to do it! And that is just what Jesus acknowledges here. Forgiveness is our part in the plan, but we don’t know how to overlook errors (2:2). The proof that we don’t know how is that we are still making errors ourselves (2:2). We need instruction; we need a Guide (2:3). Unless we accept our need of divine help, and unless we *follow* the guidance of the Holy Spirit in overlooking the errors of others, our own errors won’t be corrected (2:4).

We have such a limited idea about what we are that our own errors, and our inability to overlook the errors of others, are inevitable if we continue to rely on ourselves alone (2:5–6). You say, “I can’t forgive”? You are absolutely correct! You can’t—by yourself. You need to turn to the Inner Guide, the Holy Spirit, for assistance and instruction. Stop trying to forgive. Stop trying to figure out *how* to forgive. Just ask, “Help me to see this differently.”

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The Atonement is a lesson in sharing, which is given you because *you have forgotten how to do it*. ²The Holy Spirit merely reminds you of the natural use of your abilities [**of what is your natural ability**]. ³By **reinterpreting** the ability to **attack** [**which you did make,**] into the ability to **share**, He **translates** what you have made into what God created. ⁴[**But**] If you would accomplish this **through**

Him you cannot look on your abilities through the eyes of the ego, or you will judge them as *it* does. ⁵All their harmfulness lies in the **ego's** judgment. ⁶All their **helpfulness** lies in the judgment of the Holy Spirit.

• **Study Question** •

3. *(a) Is forgiveness something foreign to us, or a native ability we have forgotten (1–3)? (b) What do you suppose is meant by our looking at our abilities through the eyes of the ego?*

Here we read an interesting definition of Atonement: “a lesson in sharing.” What we share is an Identity—the Identity of God’s Son. It is a lesson in sharing in that as we learn to overlook errors in our brothers and sisters, we come to the realization that we share with them the same perfect Identity. Our problem is that we have forgotten how to share our Identity with one another (3:1).

As God’s creations, we once knew how to share our Identity. We still have the ability to do so (3:2); we just need to be reminded of how to do it. The Holy Spirit reminds us by “reinterpreting the ability to attack into the ability to share” (3:3). That’s an intriguing phrase, isn’t it? How can an ability to attack become an ability to share? What do the two things, apparently opposites, have in common?

When I attack someone in the sense of judging or condemning them, then, from the ego’s perspective, the perfect outcome would be having that person *admit their guilt* and be willing to suffer the consequences, whatever they might be. In a way, I am trying to get them to share my judgment or my perception of them. I want the idea of judgment that is in my mind to be in *their* mind. In other words, I want to share my idea of judgment.

When I share with someone, in the sense the Course is endorsing here, it’s actually very similar. Instead of sharing an idea of judgment, I want to share with the other person the idea of their innocent perfection as a holy child of God. But in both cases, it involves the sharing of an idea. The very activity of mental projection that we engage in when condemning another person can be redirected into sharing with them the miracle of their divine wholeness. Instead of sharing with them an image of their ugliness and guilt, we share an image of their beauty and innocence.

There is a caveat, however. We can’t evaluate our abilities “through the eyes of the ego” (3:4), or we will continue to judge both ourselves and our brothers and sisters. To me this implies what has often been said already in the Course: We just don’t believe that we can truly work miracles! We cannot believe that *we* are meant to save the world. We think we are too weak, too little, too ineffectual to fulfill the function God is calling us to fulfill. We look at our interactions with one another through the ego’s eyes and we see our failures. We see ourselves as harmful beings (3:5). But seen with and through the Holy Spirit, we are infinitely capable and completely competent to help our brothers and sisters to awaken to their own magnificence (3:6). Forgiveness is our native ability.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The ego, too, has a plan of forgiveness because you are **asking** for one, though not of the right teacher. ²The **ego's** plan, of course, **makes no sense** and

will not work. ³By following its plan you will merely place yourself in an impossible situation, to which the ego **always** leads you. ⁴The ego's plan is to have you **see error clearly first**, and **then** overlook it. ⁵Yet how **can** you overlook what you have made real? ⁶By seeing it clearly, you **have** made it real and *cannot* overlook it. ⁷This is where the ego is forced to appeal to "mysteries," insisting [**and begins to insist**] that you must accept the meaningless to save yourself. ⁸Many have tried to do this in my name, forgetting that my words make **perfect** sense because they come from **God**. ⁹They are as sensible now as they ever were, because they speak of ideas that are eternal.

• **Study Question** •

4. **(a)** *The ego's plan of forgiveness is presented in this paragraph. In your own words, briefly describe this plan and why it will not work. (b) How is this plan of the ego related to "The Correction of Error," where we are told that seeing errors as real and trying to correct them is of the ego?*

Because everyone naturally wants some way to be forgiven, and because we all recognize that, for our relationships to work at all we need to forgive others, the ego tries to fill that demand. We want a plan for forgiveness? "Okay," the ego says; "Here's the plan." The only problem is that the ego's plan won't work! (4:1-2)

If we try to do what the ego suggests we run into a brick wall; we can't do what is asked of us. I'm fairly sure that all of us have tried to forgive someone because we knew that we "should" forgive them, and found that we just couldn't do it. We were probably following the ego's plan, which is to "see error clearly first, and *then* overlook it—a task that proves impossible for anyone who bothers to try. (4:3-6)

Those of us who have been raised in traditional religions have probably encountered the "appeal to 'mysteries'" spoken of here (4:7). We may say things like, "I will forgive but I can never forget," which eviscerates the meaning of forgiveness entirely; what we are saying is that, although the person is as guilty as sin, we magnanimously won't inflict the punishment they deserve. But we still believe they deserve it! Somehow this travesty of justice is supposed to be a holy thing. What's really going on is that our ego is inflating itself for being so holy and "forgiving" of this despicable person. We have turned Jesus' words (even the words from the gospels such as those about forgiving seventy times seven) into empty, meaningless sounds. We've forgotten that his words came from God, and that *he meant what he said*. His words are eternal (4:8-9). As he claimed in the Bible, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away" (Matthew 24:35).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Forgiveness that is learned of **me** does not use fear to **undo** fear. ²Nor does it make real the **unreal** and then destroy it. ³Forgiveness through the Holy Spirit lies simply in looking beyond error from the beginning, and thus **keeping** it unreal for you. ⁴Do not let any belief in its realness enter your mind [*at all*], or you will also believe that you must **undo** what you have made in order to **be** forgiven. ⁵What has no effect does not exist, and to the Holy Spirit the effects of

error are *[totally]* nonexistent. ⁶By steadily and consistently cancelling out **all** its effects, **everywhere and in all respects**, He teaches that the ego does not exist and **proves it**.

• **Study Question** •

5. *(a) Contrast the plan of forgiveness of the Holy Spirit with the ego's plan, identifying the key factor of difference. (b) How does the plan of the Holy Spirit demonstrate that the ego does not exist (5,6)?*

The central point of the Holy Spirit's kind of forgiveness seems to lie in the phrase, "simply...looking beyond error from the beginning" (5:3). What does that mean to you? It can't possibly mean that you just don't notice that your husband is a drunk, or that your business partner cheated you out of \$2000. It can only mean that you don't label those things as "sin" and you don't label the person as "guilty" as a result. You do not allow these things to define his or her identity to you, and you do not allow yourself to feel injured by them. Your spirit is invulnerable, and nothing outside of you can hurt you:

It is your thoughts alone that cause you pain. Nothing external to your mind can hurt or injure you in any way. There is no cause beyond yourself that can reach down and bring oppression. No one but yourself affects you. There is nothing in the world that has the power to make you ill or sad, or weak or frail (W-pI.190.5:1-5).

That is what you are affirming when you look beyond error from the beginning. You refuse to be "at the effect" of what others say or do.

Failure to do this, the Course says, will boomerang back on you. If you see the errors of others as sins that make them guilty and define them as unworthy, you will see your own errors in the same way (5:4). Certainly, most of us find it difficult to accept that "the effects of error are *totally* nonexistent" (5:5). But that is really the flip side of saying that nothing outside your mind can hurt you. The lynchpin on which it all turns is what we mean by "you." If you identify with your body or your ego, *they* can be hurt—but they are not *you*!

This is what the final sentence, 5:6, is getting at. If you (with the aid of the Holy Spirit) can demonstrate that your brother's ego has had absolutely zero effects on you, "everywhere and in all respects," then—because what has no effects does not exist—the Holy Spirit in you has proven that the ego does not exist.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Follow the Holy Spirit's teaching in forgiveness, then, because forgiveness **is** His function and **He** knows how to fulfill it perfectly. ²That is what I meant when I said that miracles are **natural**, and when they do **not** occur something has gone wrong. ³Miracles are merely the sign of your willingness to follow the Holy Spirit's [*His*] plan of salvation, recognizing [*in recognition of the fact*] that you do **not** understand [*know*] what it is. ⁴His work is **not** your function, and unless you accept this you **cannot** learn what your function **is**.

• Study Question •

6. (a) *How do we try to do the work of the Holy Spirit for Him?* (b) *Do we need to understand how forgiveness works, or how to forgive, in order to fulfill our function? Explain your answer.*

Here, Jesus says that “forgiveness is His [the Holy Spirit’s] function” and “His work is *not* your function” (6:1, 6:4), yet in the Workbook he clearly has us repeat, “Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world” (W-pI.62). What is he trying to tell us? Is forgiveness our function or isn’t it? I believe that what he is getting at in this and the next paragraph is that we should not try to figure out, on our own, how to forgive. We should not follow the ego’s plan of forgiveness, which is to make the error real and then try to overlook it. Rather, we must “follow the Holy Spirit’ teaching in forgiveness” (6:1) by looking past the error from the get-go. Forgiveness and miracles are not something we can do without direct connection with the Holy Spirit (6:2,3).

It has to be an act of faith, because we are being asked to follow the plan *knowing* that we do not understand what it is! (6:3). As the Twelve Step programs assert, we need to recognize the Higher Power. We need to step back and let Him lead the way (W-pI.155). Later in the Text, Jesus tells us to repeat to ourselves that we don’t know what anything is, and that we must allow the Holy Spirit to instruct us:

I do not know what anything, including this, means

And so I do not know how to respond to it.

And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now.

By this refusal to attempt to teach yourself what you do not know, the Guide Whom God has given you will speak to you. He will take His rightful place in your awareness the instant you abandon it, and offer it to Him (T-14.XI.6:7-11).

That attitude and behavior, I believe, is what is being called for here.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The confusion of functions is so typical of the ego that you should be quite familiar with it by now. ²The ego believes that **all** functions belong to **it**, even though it has no idea what they **are**. ³This is more than mere confusion. ⁴It is a particularly dangerous combination of grandiosity **and** confusion that makes the ego likely to attack anyone and anything for no reason at all. ⁵This is exactly what the ego **does**. ⁶It is [*totally*] unpredictable in its responses, because it has no idea of what it perceives [*what it heard*].

• Study Question •

7. *Why does the ego try to take over the function of the Holy Spirit in forgiveness?*

As Jesus points out, he has often made the point that the ego thinks “all functions belong to it” (7:1–2). When he says it is a “dangerous combination of grandiosity and confusion” (7:4), he is saying that the ego doesn’t know what it is doing but it utterly and doggedly convinced that it must be in charge. It’s a bit like me, a klutz in the kitchen,

thinking that I can cook a 7-course gourmet meal. He goes on to say that this combination makes it likely for the ego to “attack anyone and anything for no reason at all,” which is exactly what it *does* (7:4–5). Why? To me, what I picture is someone lashing out in blind panic, because he or she is trying to do something vastly beyond their capabilities (7:6). And that is how we will behave if we try to heal anyone (or forgive them) without depending on the Holy Spirit to guide us.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹If you have [If one has] no idea what is happening, how appropriately can you expect [expect him] to react? ²You might ask yourself, regardless of how you may **account** for the reaction, whether its unpredictability places the ego in a sound position as your guide. [But you might still ask yourself, regardless of how you can *account* for the reactions, whether they place the ego in a very sound position as a guide for yours;]. ³Let me repeat [It seems absurd to have to emphasize repeatedly] that the ego's qualifications as a guide are singularly unfortunate, and that it is a remarkably poor choice as a teacher of salvation. [Yet this question, ridiculous as it seems, is *really* the crucial issue in the whole separation fantasy.] ⁴Anyone who elects a totally insane guide **must** be totally insane himself. ⁵Nor is it true [It is not true] that you do not realize [know] the guide is insane. **6**You realize it because I realize it [You know it because I know it], and you **have** judged it by the same standard I have.

• Study Question •

8. *The ego does not understand what it perceives, so its responses are erratic and unpredictable. The ego is therefore a remarkably poor choice as guide. When we choose to follow the ego, are we unaware of its insanity?*

The ego's reactivity is unpredictable. We've all experienced it. Given the ego's ignorance of what's really happening, we could expect nothing else (8:1). When your ego flares up, you may as well remind yourself that that's just what it does. “So what else is new?” But if that is so, shouldn't we be questioning our blind following of this insane guide? (8:2) In fact, we *do* know better! It seems ridiculous, Jesus admits, to bring this up over and over, but we need it. Choosing to follow an insane guide is an insane thing to do (8:4)—yet we *do* it. And this issue of following the ego versus following the Holy Spirit “is *really* the crucial issue in the whole separation fantasy” (Urtext).

We know better; yes, we do. We *know* the ego is insane because Christ in us knows it (8:6). And we've experienced the unfortunate results of our insanity. That's the good news, because although we are still dragging our feet, still listening to our egos, something in us *knows better*, and that bodes well for the future.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹The ego literally lives on borrowed time, and **its** days **are** numbered. ²Do not fear the Last Judgment, but welcome it and do not wait, for the ego's time is “borrowed” from **your** eternity. ³This **is** the Second Coming that was made **for** you as the First was created. ⁴The Second Coming is merely the return of **sense**.

⁵Can this **possibly** be fearful?

• **Study Question** •

9. *Why should we welcome, long for, and even hasten the Last Judgment and Second Coming?*

Because we really do know that the ego is insane, we will eventually get wise and firmly, decisively, choose against it and let it go. “Its days are numbered” (9:1)—Hallelujah! That’s why we need not fear the Last Judgment. It is our own judgment against the ego; it is the release from insanity; it is the translation from time to eternity. *Our* eternity! (9:2) It brings about the Second Coming, the “return of sense” to take the place of nonsense, the return of our minds to Christ consciousness. Why should we fear that? (9:3–5)

Paragraph 10

10. ¹What can be fearful but fantasy, and who turns to fantasy unless he despairs of finding satisfaction in reality? ²Yet it is **certain** that you will **never** find satisfaction in fantasy, so that your **only** hope is to change your mind about **reality**. ³Only if the decision that reality is fearful is **wrong** can **God** be right. ⁴And I **assure** you that God *is* right. ⁵Be glad, then, that you **have** been wrong, but this was only because you did not know who you **were**. ⁶Had you known [*remembered*], you could no more have been wrong than God can.

• **Study Question** •

10. *We have decided reality is fearful, which is shown by our judgment on it, and by our condemnation of our brothers. Our fantasy that reality is fearful must be wrong, and we must be willing to recognize we have been wrong. Why have we made this mistake about the reality of the world and our brothers (5, 6)?*

If you were to learn that the money you thought you had in the bank was all a fantasy, something your mind made up, that would be a terrible thing. Learning that the things we depend upon to nurture and satisfy us are mere fantasies, figments of a disturbed imagination—*that* is fearful (10:1). Fantasies never satisfy simply because *they are fantasies*. Fantasizing about a good meal is not the same as actually eating a good meal, and nowhere near as satisfying (10:2).

So why have we turned to fantasy, the fantasy of the ego, of separate identities, of seeking satisfaction in outward pleasures? Why do we invest in anger and try to “get satisfaction” for the wrongs that have been done to us? We’ll never find satisfaction there. It must be that we have decided to give up on reality! We’ve lost sight of what we are, who and what our brothers and sisters are, and what our relationship with them and with God is; we’ve decided that reality cannot satisfy us, and it is our thoughts about *that* that have to change (10:2). We must realize that we have been wrong about reality, and we have to admit that we’ve been wrong (10:3–5). “God *is* Love, and I *do* want Him” (T-9.I.9:7). But even in urging us to admit we’ve been wrong, Jesus gently reassures us,

“this was only because you did not know who you were” (10:5). In our true Self, we can never be wrong! (10:6) We can learn to affirm reality to everyone:

I bless you, brother, with the Love of God, which I would share with you. For I would learn the joyous lesson that there is no love but God's and yours and mine and everyone's (W-pI.127.12:4-5).

Paragraphs 11 & 12

11. ¹The impossible can happen **only** in fantasy. ²When you search for reality in fantasies you will not find it. ³The symbols of fantasy are of the ego, and of **these** you will find many. ⁴But do not look for meaning in them. ⁵They have no more meaning than the fantasies into which they are woven. ⁶Fairy tales can be pleasant or fearful, [pleasant or fearful, pretty or ugly,] but **no one** calls them **true**. ⁷Children may believe them, and so, for a while, the tales **are** true for them. ⁸Yet when reality dawns, the fantasies are gone. ⁹**Reality** has **not** gone in the meanwhile. ¹⁰The Second Coming is the **awareness** of reality, not its **return**.

12. ¹Behold, my child, reality is here. ²It belongs to you and me and God, and is perfectly satisfying to all of us. ³Only **this** awareness heals, because it is the awareness of truth.

• Study Question •

11. (a) *What is referred to by “fantasy” and “symbols of fantasy?” What is meant by “the impossible?”* (b) *We are told not to look for meaning in the symbols of fantasy; what does this mean in practice?*
12. *What, then, can bring us satisfaction if fantasies cannot do so?*

The separation, which is impossible, is a fantasy. Looking for satisfaction in any form of separateness or specialness will never satisfy because to think we are separate is a fantasy; it isn't real (11:1–2). Separation fantasy can take many forms. We may seek satisfaction in a body, in a relationship, in personal wealth, in fame, in popularity, or in a myriad of other ways. We may seek to be better than or more than others in some way. But the joke is on us because there are no others. Everyone is us. Eric Butterworth used to suggest that instead of saying, “God and I are one,” we should say, “God and I *is* One,” because “God and I” is really singular, One, not plural. None of the forms of separation can satisfy because none of them is real (11:3–5).

Our fantasies, like fairy tales, can be “pleasant or fearful, pretty or ugly,” but whatever they are, they aren't true (11:6). Are we as naïve as children who believe in the Easter Bunny or the reality of the Littlest Mermaid? We are when we seek satisfaction in the symbols of the ego. Let Reality dawn upon you! Do so and the fantasies are gone (11:8) (Yes, the pleasant with the fearful; sorry).

When Reality dawns, nothing has really changed. Reality has always been here; it is here *now* (11:9; 12:1). The dawn of Reality is the Second Coming, the *awareness* of Oneness, not its *return* (11:10). “It belongs to you and me and God” (12:2). It is ours *now*.

Section Summary

The only thing that can bring us satisfaction is reality; the awareness of truth as God Created it. Therefore, what needs healing is our own perception. What must be avoided is any form of making the error real in some way; reacting in any way to error makes it real. We do not attempt to correct error, nor to judge it, nor to overlook it after making it real. We overlook it from the beginning, looking beyond it to the reality of our brothers. We seek no satisfaction in the fantasies of separateness. We cannot do this alone; we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We turn errors, both our brothers' and our own, over to the Holy Spirit and let Him deal with them. He is the only one who can correct them. We recognize that we do not know what anything is and cannot judge, and we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth of Utter Oneness to us.

Appendix

Here's a relevant quotation from Alan Watts' book, *The Book: On the Taboo Against Knowing Who You Are*:

Yet we can still awaken the sense that all this, too, is the self—a self, however, which is far beyond the image of the ego, or of the human body as limited by the skin. We then behold the Self wherever we look, and its image is the universe in its light and in its darkness, in its bodies and in its spaces. This is the new image of man, but it is still an image. For there remains—to use dualistic words—"behind," "under," "encompassing," and "central" to it all the unthinkable IT, polarizing itself in the visible contrasts of waves and troughs, solids and spaces. But the odd thing is that this IT, however inconceivable, is no vapid abstraction: it is very simply and truly yourself.

In the words of a Chinese Zen master, "Nothing is left to you at this moment but to have a good laugh!" As James Broughton put it:

*This is It
and I am It
and You are It
and so is That
and He is It
and She is It
and It is It
and That is That.*

Answer Key

1. We are told to overlook error, to look beyond it to the truth. The truth (Christ) in one another is what we are to look for.
2. **(a)** No, we cannot overlook errors by ourselves because we do not understand how; our ideas about what we are are too limited. **(b)** We have a Guide (the Holy Spirit) to correction of errors. If we follow Him our errors will be corrected. **(c)** Our errors can be undone, and we can undo the errors of others with His help, but the means or the power to do it does not come from us, but from the Holy Spirit.
3. **(a)** Forgiveness is a natural use of our abilities that we have forgotten how to do. We have misused our abilities and made them into a means of attack; the Holy Spirit reinterprets them into what God created, the ability to share. **(b)** Our ability to share, seen through the eyes of the ego, becomes a mechanism of projection through which we lay guilt on others; it therefore becomes a source of guilt in ourselves. Seen as the ego sees us, our abilities are harmful; seen as the Holy Spirit sees them, they can be helpful.
4. **(a)** The ego's plan of forgiveness is to "see error clearly first, and then overlook it." The error is first made real, and then by some magic we are supposed to overlook it. The problem in this approach is that once the error is seen as real, it *cannot* be overlooked. **(b)** This plan is closely parallel to the ego's approach to correcting errors, and can, in fact, be seen as a part of that plan. One way of "correcting" errors is to "forgive" them. Both have in common the fact that the error is first made real.
5. **(a)** The key difference between the ego's plan and the Holy Spirit's is that error is kept unreal from the beginning. The Holy Spirit does not "make real the unreal and then destroy it." He sees errors as having no effects; and what has no effects does not exist. If error does not exist, then there is nothing to forgive. **(b)** This plan of forgiveness demonstrates that the ego does not exist by cancelling out (or denying) all effects of the ego. Again, what has no effects doesn't exist.
6. **(a)** Forgiveness is His function, not ours; He knows how to fulfill His function perfectly. All we do is follow His plan, while realizing at the same time we do not understand it. When we try to forgive on our own, we are trying to do His work for Him. **(b)** No, we do not need to understand how forgiveness works in order to fulfill our function. In fact, we need to recognize that we don't understand it or we won't be able to fulfill our function!
7. The ego tries to take over the Holy Spirit's function in forgiveness because the ego believes that all functions belong to it. It is just another manifestation of the ego's grandiosity.
8. No. Jesus says that because he realizes the ego is insane, so do we, having judged it by the same standard he applies.
9. We should welcome the Last Judgment because it is only the return of sense, which cannot be fearful. It means the end of the ego's insanity.

10. We have been mistaken about the nature of reality because we did not know who *we* were. (Our judgment on ourselves has been projected onto all of reality.)
11. **(a)** “Fantasy” refers to all the insane dreams of the ego, all of its projections in an attempt to replace reality with something of its own making. “Symbols of fantasy” refer to any of the specific forms that fantasy appears to have taken: bodies, special relationships, the world, etc. We are told not to look for meaning in any of them. “The impossible” refers to the overall illusion of separation; we could read, “The separation can happen only in fantasy.” **(b)** It means not looking for meaning in anything in this world, not trying to find satisfaction in anything but the reality of God. We do not seek to change the world; that is seeking meaning in fantasy. We do not try to “fix” situations; we forgive them.
12. The only thing that can bring us satisfaction is reality; the awareness of truth as God Created it. Therefore, what needs healing is our own perception. What must be avoided is any form of making the error real in some way; reacting in any way to error makes it real. We do not attempt to correct error, nor to judge it, nor to overlook it after making it real. We overlook it from the beginning, looking beyond it to the reality of our brothers. We cannot do this alone; we need the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We turn errors, both our brothers’ and our own, over to the Holy Spirit and let Him deal with them. He is the only one who can correct them. We recognize that we do not know what anything is and cannot judge, and we allow the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to us.