

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 11

Section VIII.6–15

The Problem and the Answer (part 2)

We are continuing our study of Section VIII, “The Problem and the Answer,” begun in the last study guide, resuming at paragraph 6.

First, a brief review of the section so far: Our freedom rests upon our own choice. We can choose the problem or we can choose the answer. The problem is our perception of the world, which is full of guilt and attack; the answer is the new perception of the real world offered to us by the Holy Spirit, in which all are equally innocent. Jesus has already told us that the only question we ever need to ask ourselves is, “Do I want the problem or the answer?” (4:6). We must be willing to recognize what we do not know, and like little children, to ask to be taught.

Paragraphs 6 & 7

6. ¹The Holy Spirit will give you only what is yours, and will take nothing in return. ²For what is yours **is** everything, and you share it **with** God. ³That **is** its reality. ⁴Would the Holy Spirit, Who wills only to **restore**, be capable of **misinterpreting** the question you must ask to learn His answer? ⁵You *have* heard the answer, but you have misunderstood the **question**. ⁶You believe [**You have believed**] that to ask for guidance of the Holy Spirit **is to ask for deprivation**.

7. ¹Little child [**children**] of God, you do not understand your Father. ²You believe in a world that takes, because you believe that you can get by taking. ³And **by** that perception you have lost sight of the real world. ⁴You are afraid of the world **as you see it**, but the real world is still yours for the asking. ⁵Do not deny it **to** yourself, for it can **only** free you. ⁶Nothing of God will enslave His Son whom He created free and whose freedom is protected by **His** Being. ⁷Blessed are you who are willing to [**you who will**] ask the truth of God without fear, for only thus can you learn that His answer **is** the release from fear.

• Study Question •

1. *List some ways in which you have believed, or still do, that asking for guidance means loss (6:6).*

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Paragraph 5, which we studied last time, spoke about our fear that, if we allow God to direct our lives, He will demand sacrifice from us. It said that this is actually a form of projection: We believe that when we ask from God we are, in a sense, stealing, or taking something away from Him. Since we think we would be taking, we believe that God will

demand something in return. Yet the truth is that we already have what we are asking for: "The Holy Spirit will give you only what is yours" (6:1).

For instance we may be afraid to ask His guidance in regard to a particular relationship because we have the nagging suspicion that He will tell us to give it up, or to accept its imperfection. He never asks us to give up anything except our illusions, which are worth nothing. Jesus tells us that we cannot possibly ask for too much or for something we don't deserve because *everything is ours*; everything belongs to us and is ours by right (6:2). He has told us this before (for instance, T-1.IV.3:7, T-4.III.9:2,5, and T-10.II.3:7), but we are slow to accept it.

We literally have *everything*. That is a mind-boggling notion, one that is based on the fact of our unity with one another and with God. Our minds, habituated to thinking in terms of separation, cannot grasp how *we* can have everything and yet *others* can *also* have everything, while simultaneously we "share it with God" (6:2). We have a hard time wrapping our minds around this concept of unity, but unity is intimately tied into the idea of our possessing everything, as T-4.III.9 points out:

God has given you everything. This one fact means the ego does not exist, and this makes it profoundly afraid. In the ego's language, "to have" and "to be" are different, but they are identical to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows that you both have everything and are everything. Any distinction in this respect is meaningful only when the idea of "getting," which implies a lack, has already been accepted. That is why we make no distinction between having the Kingdom of God and being the Kingdom of God" (T-4.III.9:2-7).

Transcending the ego and recognizing the truth of having and being all things is really the same thing.

We cannot possibly ask for what *does not* belong to us because *everything* belongs to us. But we don't properly understand that our Father only gives, and has given us all things (7:1). We believe in separateness and, as a corollary of that belief, we believe that the way to have things is to *take* them from others, and we therefore believe that things can be taken from us (7:2). That is not reality, but illusion; the reality is that everything belongs to everyone in a shared oneness (6:2-3). Our sight of the illusion—the world of taking—has hidden the real world from us (7:3).

This is what Jesus means when he says we "have misunderstood the question" and therefore don't receive the answer (6:5). We have a mistaken idea about what asking His guidance means. We think that to ask the Holy Spirit for His help is asking Him to take over; it means submission, loss of control, and a violation of our independent will (6:6). That simply *cannot* be true because we *cannot* be deprived of *anything*; we have *everything* (see also T-4.IV.3:2-3 and T-7.VII.8:2-3).

When Jesus calls us "little child" (7:1) he is not referring to our gentle innocence but to our massive ignorance and immaturity, and our lack of understanding. Let's admit it: we *do* "believe in a world that takes" (7:2). So we think of God that way, too. We think of God as a giant "ego." But He isn't like that. Our picture of the world and our picture of God are the same as our picture of ourselves: "For as you see the Son you see yourself, and as you see yourself is God to you" (S-2.I.3:10). We see God as a giant Taker because the ego thinks we have gotten where we are by taking. We think we are *takers* and so we think everyone else, including God, is a *taker* also. That is how we have lost sight of the

real world (7:3), in which no one is a taker. That's the problem, and because we don't see the problem in ourselves we don't see the Answer when it is offered.

The only one depriving you of anything is yourself! (7:5; see also T-11.IV.4:1-2). Jesus assures you that "Nothing of God will enslave His Son whom He created free" (7.6). God created you free. You will remain free forever because you are part of His Being and share in His eternal freedom. His Will is for you to be free; why would He ever enslave you?

The reason we don't ask the Holy Spirit to help us is we don't believe that His Will *is* our freedom. We believe that asking is going to get us enslaved, instead of freeing us. Jesus knows that, which is why He is so patient with us, and why we need to be patient with ourselves and with other people. It often takes a long time to overcome all that buried fear. I think of children who have been deprived of love in infancy, or even animals that have been abused by their first owner. Children develop what is called "attachment disorder," and have difficulty relating socially. Animals who have been mistreated in their early life still react with mistrust even after years of patient, loving care.

We are somewhat like that in our fear of God's help, although our disorder is based on imaginary causes. Our fear of being deprived by God is slow to heal. When it crops up, I think we need to be gentle with ourselves. It may help to say, "Oh! I am being afraid of God again! How silly!" Then, just quietly ask for help. We don't need to judge ourselves for our fears. We don't need judgment; we need love, even from ourselves.

Paragraph 7 ends with another blessing. Earlier in the chapter, Jesus repeated and modified his statement about the resurrection, saying that those who believe in it without having first seen are blessed (T-11.VI.1:5). Now, he says that we are blessed if we "are willing to ask the truth of God without fear" (7:7), which is a brief way of summing up the current topic. Really, it's talking about the same thing as the earlier blessing. By believing that loving thoughts lie within a brother, even though we cannot see them, we have *asked* to see them. The blessing we receive is the answer to our request: we see the Son of God. We see the Christ. We see the real world. Until we actually ask and actually see, the message that God offers us only "release from fear" and not servitude will remain mere theory (7:7).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Beautiful child of God, you are asking only for what I promised you. ²Do you believe I would **deceive** you? ³The Kingdom of Heaven *is* within you. ⁴Believe that the truth is in me, for I **know** that it is in **you**. ⁵God's Sons have nothing they do not share. ⁶Ask for truth of any Son of God, and you have asked it of me. ⁷Not one of us but has the answer in him, to give to anyone who asks it **of him**.

• Study Question •

2. *Given that this section is all about changing our perception, denying the reality of the ego and seeing only loving thoughts as real, what do you think sentence 6 means? Does it mean:*
 - a. *When you have a question, ask anyone for the answer and God will answer you through them.*
 - b. *When you have a question, ask the answer from anyone who recognizes that they are a Son of God, and God will answer you through them.*
 - c. *When you see anyone, look for the truth within them (the loving thoughts behind the facade of their ego) and you will find it.*

I love the way Jesus addresses me: “Beautiful child of God” (8:1). That is what I am, and what you are. He uses the phrase, I think, to remind us, in the midst of our doubts about our worthiness, that we are each God’s child. As Jesus said in the Gospel of Luke, if a child asks his father for a fish, will he offer him a snake instead? If you, the beautiful child of God, ask for truth and freedom, will your Father send you a lie and slavery?

If we ask God for the truth, we will be blessed. We are not being pushy in asking. Jesus says he promised us the truth. He asks us if we believe that he would lie to us (8:2)—and I’m sure that none of us believe that he would, or we would not be studying his book! He does not mention the exact promise he is referring to, but there was more than one in the Gospels:

And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. (Luke 11:9, KJV; see also verses 10–13)

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32, KJV)

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you for ever--the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. (John 14:16–17, NIV)

He then quotes another saying of his from the Gospels, although he does not mention this time that he is quoting: “The Kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:21; compare with 8:3). He exchanges the phrase “Kingdom of Heaven” for “Kingdom of God,” which the Bible often does as well, and emphasizes the word “is,” to counteract our doubt that it is so. He asks us to believe in him, to trust that he is telling us the truth (8:4), but it is more than that. He is asking us to believe that he is the Christ, one with God and one with the truth, and thus *incapable* of lying. Somehow, our believing that about *him* is linked to our believing it about *ourselves*. “God’s Sons have nothing they do not share” (8:5). If we recognize goodness in him we will recognize it in ourselves; *he* sees it in *us* (8:4).

Not only is this so concerning Jesus and myself; it is the same with anyone. If I believe in the loving mind of Christ in any brother or sister and ask to see it, it is the same as asking Jesus (8:6). When he asks us to trust *him*, therefore, he is really asking us to trust the Christ in *everyone*.

To ask the truth of a Son of God means to ask it of the person in front of you, the one who gives you problems, or whoever shows up in your life. *All of them* have the truth in

them—that is, have the Christ in them—waiting to answer you (8:7). You ask the truth of someone by being willing to doubt your own interpretations of that person and asking the Holy Spirit to show you the truth about them.

When you ask something of a Son of God, *the Father answers* (9:1). There is a beautiful workbook lesson that emphasizes what is being taught here: “Give me your blessing, holy Son of God.” (Lesson 161). To ask the truth of a brother or sister is to ask them, within your mind, to bless you, to be your savior instead of your crucifier (WpI.161.9:6–7). Say to him, “I would behold you with the eyes of Christ, and see my perfect sinlessness in you” (W-pI.161.11:8).

There is another way in which I like to apply sentence 7; I like applying it to myself! “I have the answer in me, to give to anyone who asks.” Of course, that is the lesson we are all ultimately learning: When I ask truth of a brother and receive the answer, it awakens my awareness that the truth is in me as well. I like to use this sentence to encourage myself: The answer is in me, and I can give it to anyone who looks to me for help. Each of us is far more capable of bringing blessing to the world than we realize. Each of us has the Holy Spirit with us, ready to coach us and to assist us as we extend ourselves to the people around us.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Ask anything of God's Son and his Father will answer you, for Christ is not deceived in His Father and His Father is not deceived in Him. ²Do not, then, be deceived in your brother, and see only his loving thoughts as his reality, for by denying that his mind is split **you will heal yours**. ³Accept him as his Father accepts him and heal him unto Christ, for Christ is his healing **and yours**. ⁴Christ is the Son of God Who is in no way separate from His Father, Whose **every** thought is as loving as the Thought of His Father by which He was created. ⁵Be not deceived in God's Son, for thereby you **must** be deceived in yourself. ⁶And being deceived in yourself you **are** deceived in your Father, in Whom no deceit is possible.

• Study Question •

3. *Bring to mind some brother or sister that you have perceived recently in a negative light, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you see only their loving thoughts as their reality (9:1).*

Seven times in this paragraph, Jesus speaks about being “deceived in” someone (9:1–2,5–6). What does that phrase mean? I tried to look it up in my usual dictionary, but couldn't find any reference. I then searched on the Internet; nothing. Finally, I found a mention of this usage in the full *Oxford English Dictionary*. (Two of the examples given come from Shakespeare's writings, which Helen Schucman loved.) It is a fairly archaic usage meaning “to be mistaken about” or “to be in error about” someone. I believe that is the primary sense here, although there may also be a flavor of “misled about” in the words used here. Try reading over the paragraph and substituting “mistaken about” for “deceived in,” and see if that helps clarify the meaning. Then try it with “misled about.”

The general sense here is that our egos have caused us to perceive our brothers incorrectly. We see them in a way that does not reflect the truth about them. We need help to rectify our perception, and for that we need help from a source that sees clearly. That Source is Christ, Christ *in our brother*. If we appeal to the Christ in each other, if we call forth the highest in those around us, the Highest will answer! (9:1).

To refuse to be mistaken about, or misled concerning, our brother, means to deny the lies the ego tells us about him (that he is evil, or that he is partly evil, with a split mind) and to deliberately choose to believe that *only* his loving thoughts are his reality (9:2). That is not as simple as it sounds. We usually think we are doing well if we can perceive *some* loving thoughts amidst the unloving ones. We might say, "Well, he is often curt and rude, but sometimes he can be very helpful," or something to that effect. That, however, is still seeing the person with a split mind, part good and part not so good, part loving and part not. The Course is telling us that true perception will see *nothing but* the loving thoughts as real. I don't think this means we don't perceive the unloving thoughts. I think we will see them, but we will see them as calls for love rather than as "unloving." We will not believe that they tell us the truth about the person. We will believe, and we will eventually *know*, that our brothers are pure love and nothing else.

If we can do that—admittedly a tall order—then our mind, too, will be healed (9:2). If we accept a false picture of a brother we will accept that same false picture about ourselves (9:5), and even about God Himself (9:6). What we accept as the truth about our brother is what we will accept as the truth about ourselves (9:3). And the truth is that we are the Christ, God's Son, "in no way separate from [the] Father," with thoughts as loving as God's own (9:4).

Just stop and reflect on that a moment: That line is speaking about *you*. Try turning that sentence into a First Person affirmation: "I am in no way separate from the Father."

What does all this have to do with "the problem and the answer"? Just this: if you want the *problem*, you will see your brother's *hateful* thoughts as his reality; if you want the *answer*, you will see only his *loving* thoughts as his reality. You will deny that his mind is split; you won't accept his ego as what he really is. You won't let his ego deceive you about him and therefore you will no longer let *your* ego deceive you about yourself. Instead of seeing your brother or sister as the problem, you will begin to see them as the answer of God!

When you have learned to do this with everyone and everything in the world, you will be in the *real world*, which becomes the subject in the next paragraph.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹In the real world there is no sickness, for there is no separation and no division. ²Only loving thoughts are recognized, and because no one is without **your** help, the Help of God goes with **you** everywhere. ³As you become willing to **accept** this Help **by asking for It**, you will give It **because you want It**. ⁴Nothing will be beyond your healing power, because nothing will be denied your simple request. ⁵What problems will not disappear in the presence of God's Answer? ⁶Ask, then, to learn of the reality of your brother, **because this is what you will perceive in him**, and you will see **your** beauty reflected in his [*him*].

• **Study Question** •

4. *List the characteristics of the real world that are mentioned in this paragraph. What do they tell you about its relationship to the physical world as we know it?*

Here we have a clear relationship established between transcending the perception of evil (another way of describing what the Course means by “forgiveness”) and the Course’s term for enlightened perception, “the real world.”

When it says that the real world has no sickness, I believe it is speaking of how we perceive the world. It does not mean that there is no appearance of sickness in the physical world. It is true even now that sickness does not truly exist, because all sickness is an illusion, just as separate bodies are illusions; yet we still *see* bodies and *see* sickness. A person living in the real world does not see bodies and sickness as reality; he or she sees beyond that illusion and, with the mind (not necessarily with the physical senses) perceives a reality in which there is no sickness.

A brother may believe he is sick, but if I am living in the real world, I will not see him as “sick,” I will see him as whole—just deceived or mistaken about himself. T-28.IV.3 gives a clear description of how a mind “in the real world” sees someone who is still deluded:

Like you, your brother thinks he is a dream. Share not in his illusion of himself, for your identity depends on his reality. Think, rather, of him as a mind in which illusions still persist, but as a mind which brother is to you. He is not brother made by what he dreams, nor is his body, "hero" of the dream, your brother. It is his reality that is your brother, as is yours to him. Your mind and his are joined in brotherhood. His body and his dreams but seem to make a little gap, where yours have joined with his (T-28.IV.3:1-7).

Naturally, as more and more minds attain the real world, there will be less and less physical manifestation of sickness, but the world does not have to be entirely free of such manifestation before you or I can attain the real world. To a person in the real world, such manifestations are just the dying gasps of the ego, just meaningless clouds in the shape of forgotten ideas. The Course describes them in picturesque imagery as “wind-swept leaves” on the landscape of the mind (W-pI.186.9:5-6).

No sickness, no separation, no division. Sickness cannot exist without separation, as we have seen before (T-7.II.1:2-4, T-11.II.1:1, and T-10.III.2:7). I firmly believe that the more we recognize our oneness, and the more we bolster our sense of connection with one another, the less we will be sick. Recently I heard of a study that was done of the health of people who were part of some kind of spiritual community, compared with people who were *not* part of such a community. The physical health of the people in community was significantly better than the health of the other group. To me, this supports the idea that joining in oneness has a direct, positive effect on our health.

When we live in the real world, we recognize only loving thoughts (10:2), just as we have been seeing in the preceding discussion. I keep quoting T-12.VII.8:1 because it so aptly sums up this oft-repeated message: “When you want only love you will see nothing else.” We are going through what seems like a complex learning process to absorb this

one simple lesson: See only the loving thoughts in your brothers and yourself. That is what “Teach only love” means, as well (T-6.III.4:9).

There is so much hidden in a phrase in the Course! Consider the latter part of sentence 2: “...because no one is without your help, the Help of God goes with you everywhere.” We would probably think of this in reverse order: because God’s Help is with us, no one is without our help. The Course turns that on its head. It says the reason that God’s Help accompanies us is that we have opened our minds to extend help without exception to everyone we encounter. We have ended our selectivity and discrimination, and have come to accept that everyone is equally worthy of our love. In other words, our willingness to *give* help is what invites help to be given to us, and what ensures that miracles will follow our footsteps. The Workbook describes a person living in the real world with this beautiful imagery: “His step is light, and as he lifts his foot to stride ahead a star is left behind, to point the way to those who follow him” (W-pI.134.12:5). That understanding—that God’s Help is given to us because we are asking it for others—is borne out in the rest of the paragraph (10:3–6). We will be able to heal anything; we will receive whatever we ask for (10:4). The key is that we approach God seeking help for our brothers, rather than just for ourselves. When we ask, the Holy Spirit will show to us the true nature of our brother or sister, and that vision will show us the truth about ourselves as well (10:6).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹Do not accept your brother’s variable perception of himself for his split mind is yours, and you will not accept **your** healing without his. ²For you share the real world as you share Heaven, and his healing **is** yours. ³To love yourself is to **heal** yourself, and you cannot perceive part of you as sick and achieve your [*own*] goal. ⁴Brother, we heal together as we live together and love together. ⁵Be not deceived in God’s Son, for he is one with himself and one with his Father. ⁶Love him who is beloved of his Father, and you will learn of the Father’s Love for **you**.

• Study Question •

5. *Try to apply the teaching of this section to a specific person in your life, using the first sentence as a guide. Review the person mentally, and list some of the ways in which his or her self-perception changes from one time to the next. Then, remind yourself of the truth of the eternal, unchanging Self that he or she shares with you.*

Our vision of the real world and our perception of our brothers are one and the same thing. If we see our brother as sick or split-minded, we will see everything that way, including ourselves. The real world is a shared perception, and must include everything, especially our brothers. We cannot receive our own healing unless we refuse to accept our brother’s ego as his reality (11:1).

A true perception of those close to us—the ones we might call our brothers in the flesh, or the ones we are close to without being physically related—is our most difficult test. It’s easy to love at a distance. Loving close up is what’s hard. That’s where we prove

the reality of our love. Have you ever noticed that the way other people see themselves varies with the wind? One moment they see themselves as gentle, loving, and wise; the next moment they feel as though they are utterly devoid of compassion and understanding. One moment they are in the peak of health; the next day they are sick as a dog. A healer does not accept that variance, but sees the person's unchanging, eternal nature as the Christ. That unified perception is what brings healing.

When you refuse to see the ego as real in another, you will learn to refuse to see your own ego as real. You will not transcend your own ego unless you also transcend the sight of your brother's ego. "His split mind is yours" (11:1). You cannot achieve the real world unless you are willing to share it with everyone you know! (11:2). Your brother is a part of you, and since "to love yourself is to heal yourself" (11:3), healing yourself means loving your brother. You can't see your brother's mind as sick and believe in the wholeness of your own mind, because your minds are one.

"Brother, we heal together as we live together and love together" (11:4) is a line well worth memorizing. Many people are trying to practice the Course as a solitary path, but the Course itself tells us again and again that the solitary path cannot succeed:

Everyone is looking for himself and for the power and glory he thinks he has lost. Whenever you are with anyone, you have another opportunity to find them. Your power and glory are in him because they are yours. The ego tries to find them in yourself alone, because it does not know where to look. The Holy Spirit teaches you that if you look only at yourself you cannot find yourself, because that is not what you are (T-8.III.5:3-7).

It is impossible to remember God in secret and alone. For remembering Him means you are not alone, and are willing to remember it. Take no thought for yourself, for no thought you hold *is* for yourself. If you would remember your Father, let the Holy Spirit order your thoughts and give only the answer with which He answers you. Everyone seeks for love as you do, but knows it not unless he joins with you in seeking it. If you undertake the search together, you bring with you a light so powerful that what you see is given meaning. The lonely journey fails because it has excluded what it would find" (T-14.X.10:1-7).

I don't mean that you cannot begin practicing the Course unless someone else practices with you—although having a spiritual partner is a terrific aid, and being part (even for a short time) of a spiritual community that is practicing the Course can give a tremendous boost to your practicing! Of course, you can start by yourself, with Jesus as your partner. However, probably the very first thing Jesus will instruct you to do is to begin including everyone close to you in your perception of the Kingdom of God. If God loves them, we must love them in order to accept God's Love for ourselves (11:6).

If you refuse to be misled by the ego-disguises your brothers are wearing and choose instead to acknowledge the Christ in them, you will find people being attracted to you. You will also see yourself in the same beneficent light (11:6). People with such a deeply loving attitude towards themselves and those around them tend to awaken the same thing in others. You won't be alone for long!

Paragraph 12

12. ¹If you perceive offense in a brother pluck the offense from your

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mind, for you are offended by Christ and are deceived in Him. **2**Heal in Christ and be not offended by Him, for there is no offense **in** Him. ³If what you perceive offends you, you are offended in **yourself** and are condemning God's Son whom God condemneth not. ⁴Let the Holy Spirit remove **all** offenses [offense] of God's Son against himself and perceive no one but through **His** guidance, for He would save you from **all** condemnation. ⁵Accept His healing power and use it for all He sends you, for He wills to heal the Son of God, in whom He is not deceived.

• Study Question •

6. *How can we perceive our brothers without offense?*

The first sentence of this paragraph, I believe, is another indirect reference to a saying of Jesus in the Gospels: "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell" (Mark 9:47, NIV). Here in the Course, Jesus gives a much gentler version of the saying, one probably closer to his original meaning. If you were to substitute the word "perception" for "eye" in the saying from Mark, and change "to sin" to "to see sin," it would read: "If your perception causes you to see sin, pluck it out [of your mind]." To see sin in a brother is a mistake; we are being misled concerning our brother, and in so doing we are imputing sin to Christ himself (12:1). Jesus is urging us to pluck out, not our eyes that bring us the sensory input, but the thoughts in our mind that *interpret* that input and label it "sin."

When you feel offended by someone, *you are the one with the problem*. What you see is your interpretation, motivated by the thought in your mind, and it is false. Pluck it from your mind; deny its reality; and bring it to the Holy Spirit for healing (12:4). Ask to see the truth instead of your interpretation. "You are condemning God's Son whom God condemneth¹ not" (12:3), and that means you are condemning yourself.

Allow the Holy Spirit to apply His healing power to every person He sends into your life. The Holy Spirit will send all kinds of people your way. Your mission in life is to accept them and heal them unto Christ, to use the healing power of your mind for everyone He sends to you (12:5)

¹ When the Course uses archaic language forms like the "eth" ending it usually signals a quotation or paraphrase from the Bible. However, I cannot find a direct reference to the word "condemneth" that fits what Jesus says here. The nearest thing to it seems to be I John 3:20: "For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." I suspect Helen's mind may have "heard" an indirect quotation or paraphrase where none was intended, although the meaning—that God does not condemn His Son—is clearly in the Bible. Another instance, from Romans:

"[There is] therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.... Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? [It is] God that justifieth. Who [is] he that condemneth? [It is] Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again..." (Romans 8:1,34–35).

Paragraph 13 & 14

13. ¹Children perceive frightening ghosts and monsters and dragons, and they are terrified. ²Yet if they ask someone they trust for the [real] meaning of what they perceive, and are willing to **let their own interpretations go in favor of reality**, their fear goes with them. ³When a child is helped to translate his "ghost" into a curtain, his "monster" into a shadow, and his "dragon" into a dream he is no longer afraid, and laughs happily at his own fear.

14. ¹You, my child [children], are afraid of your brothers and of your Father and of yourself [yourselves]. ²But you are merely **deceived** in them. ³Ask what they **are** of the Teacher of reality, and hearing His answer, you too will laugh at your fears and replace them with peace. ⁴For fear lies not in reality, but in the minds of children who do not **understand** reality. ⁵It is only their **lack of understanding** that frightens them, and when they learn to perceive truly they are not afraid. ⁶And because of this they will ask for truth again when they are frightened. ⁷It is not the **reality** of your brothers or your Father or yourself that frightens you. ⁸You do not know what they **are**, and so **you** perceive them as ghosts and monsters and dragons. ⁹Ask what their reality is [Ask of their reality] from the One Who knows it, and He will tell you what they are. ¹⁰For you do **not** understand them, and because you are deceived by what you see you **need** reality to dispel your fears.

• Study Question •

7. *What key willingness in a child can lead to the child's freedom from the fear of his or her illusions (13:2)?*
8. *What should we do when we perceive something in another person that frightens us or seems to threaten us?*

Once more Jesus compares us to children. Notice that the comparison is exactly the same one he made before, in paragraph 2. The intervening paragraphs have really been amplifying this single point: we need to be like little children, who are willing to recognize that their interpretations of things may be misinformed, and to ask a wise adult to interpret for them. Like children we need to let go of the condemning, judging interpretations foisted on us by our egos and to ask the Holy Spirit to show us the loving thoughts behind the ego disguise.

The analogy that is drawn is vivid and, for most of us, very familiar. Nearly everyone has experienced nighttime fears as a child, or as an adult has gone through the experience with their children. As children, we have believed that a curtain is a ghost or a moving shadow thrown on the wall by a tree branch blowing in the wind is some kind of monster. I remember, as a child, being afraid to drape my arm over the edge of the bed because I feared that there might be a monster underneath who would grab me, pull me down, and eat me. I was terrified, and you've probably experienced that same irrational terror. Our fears of one another are like that, Jesus says. The fluttering of an insubstantial ego is making us believe our brother is a monster, but he is not.

But children, although easily fooled as we are, often are wiser. They realize that they *don't know* what they are seeing and so they cry out, "Mommy! Daddy!" And Mommy or Daddy comes, and gently reassures them that they are safe. They show the child that the ghost was only a curtain; the dragon was just a shadow on the wall (13:3). And the child falls back to sleep in their arms.

That is exactly the process the Holy Spirit is leading us through. The way we perceive people around us and the world itself is as unreal as the ghost in the bedroom that is really a curtain, blowing in the breeze. We fear both God and man and even fear ourselves (14:1), but our fears are groundless (14:2). If we are willing to let go of our interpretations and to ask the Holy Spirit to show us the true meaning of what we perceive, we, too, will laugh happily at our own fear (14:3). We'll fall asleep in His arms.

It isn't the reality of anything that frightens us (14:7); it is our own mindless interpretations that scare us to death. When we are afraid, we don't know what we are seeing. We need to learn to let go of what we think is the truth and to ask the Holy Spirit what is *really* true. (14:9)

What you are seeing in everyone around you, the things that frighten you and dismay you, are only projections of thoughts you have had about yourself. You see the problem everywhere in a myriad of forms because you believe in the reality of the problem in yourself.

Paragraph 15

15. ¹Would you not exchange your fears for truth, if the exchange is yours for the asking? ²For if God is not deceived in you, you can be deceived only in **yourself**. ³Yet you can learn the truth about [of] yourself from [of] the Holy Spirit, Who will teach you that, as part of God, deceit in **you** is impossible. ⁴When you perceive yourself without deceit, you will accept the real world in place of the false one you have made. ⁵And then your Father will lean down to you and take the last step for you, by raising you unto Himself.

We might paraphrase the question in sentence 1 like this: "If you could trade in your fears for the truth just by asking for it, wouldn't you want to do it?" The answer is obviously, "Yes." The point Jesus is making is that this is an exact description of our situation. Our fears concerning ourselves are based on our self-condemnation. If we could just learn the glorious truth about ourselves, our fears would be gone! But how can we learn that truth?

All we need to do is ask. Anytime we encounter another person we have an opportunity for salvation (T-8.III.4:6). If we simply let go of our self-generated perceptions of the person, perceptions that give rise to fear, and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the loving truth, we will both give and receive salvation. We will see the Christ in the other person, and that, in turn, will show us the truth about ourselves.

In denying the reality of sin in everyone around you, you will be denying its reality in *you*. When you ask for the truth about your brothers, you will be seeing your own perfect sinlessness reflected in your brothers (W-pI.161.11:8). By seeing the Answer in them, you will see it in yourself (15:3). And as you do this in one relationship after another, you

will be removing, one by one, the blocks within yourself to the awareness of your own perfect love. When this process is complete, you will be in the real world (15:4). This process of returning to our true Self is what the Course was sent to teach us (W-pI.rV.in.5:4).

Everything that the Course says implies that once a person attains the real world, no one remains in that state for long. For instance:

"No one can hear Him speak of this and long remain willing to linger here" (T-15.IX.5:2).

"At first you see a world that has accepted this as true, projected from a now corrected mind. And with this holy sight, perception gives a silent blessing and then disappears, its goal accomplished and its mission done.

The Final Judgment on the world contains no condemnation. For it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless. Without a cause, and now without a function in Christ's sight, it merely slips away to nothingness. There it was born, and there it ends as well. And all the figures in the dream in which the world began go with it. Bodies now are useless, and will therefore fade away, because the Son of God is limitless" (W-pI.pII.10.1:3-2:6).

(See also T-11.VIII.1:4–6, and M-26.3:8). Once the real world is perceived, there are no lessons left to learn and therefore no reason left for being in the classroom of the world, so God takes the last step, gathering us into His loving arms forever (15:5). I doubt that means that we will just “blink out,” as some have supposed. The religions that include reincarnation in their beliefs usually teach that upon reaching enlightenment, a person may remain in the body for a while to help others to be enlightened, but when he or she leaves the body, this time it is final. I believe the Course supports a similar view. There is no need to return in another incarnation, except perhaps in brief appearances when that is helpful (M-26.2:1–4). The Manual clearly says that *very few* have actually achieved this bodiless state, however (M-26.3:9). In the Song of Prayer pamphlet, the Course has a wonderful interpretation giving a similar understanding; I'll include it as an footnote².

² "Yet there is a kind of seeming death that has a different source. It does not come because of hurtful thoughts and raging anger at the universe. It merely signifies the end has come for usefulness of body functioning. And so it is discarded as a choice, as one lays by a garment now outworn.

. This is what death should be; a quiet choice, made joyfully and with a sense of peace, because the body has been kindly used to help the Son of God along the way he goes to God. We thank the body, then, for all the service it has given us. But we are thankful, too, the need is done to walk the world of limits, and to reach the Christ in hidden forms and clearly seen at most in lovely flashes. Now we can behold Him without blinders, in the light that we have learned to look upon again.

. We call it death, but it is liberty. It does not come in forms that seem to be thrust down in pain upon unwilling flesh, but as a gentle welcome to release. If there has been true healing, this can be the form in which death comes when it is time to rest a while from labor gladly done and gladly ended. Now we go in peace to freer air and gentler climate, where it is not hard to see the gifts we gave were saved for us. For Christ is clearer now; His vision more sustained in us; His Voice, the Word of God, more certainly our own.

Our energy, then, should not be spent in futile longing for leaving our bodies behind or on ending the cycle of reincarnation, if reincarnation is part of our belief system. The last step is in God's hands. Our job is in *preparing* ourselves, and *that* we do by practicing forgiveness, dropping our fear-based perceptions of one another and asking the Holy Spirit to show us the loving reality of everyone we meet. A passage in T-30.V.3 well describes the proper attitude of a mind intent on forgiveness; you might like to read it in this context:

Not yet is Heaven quite remembered, for the purpose of forgiveness still remains. Yet everyone is certain he will go beyond forgiveness, and he but remains until it is made perfect in himself. He has no wish for anything but this. And fear has dropped away, because he is united in his purpose with himself. There is a hope of happiness in him so sure and constant he can barely stay and wait a little longer, with his feet still touching earth. Yet is he glad to wait till every hand is joined, and every heart made ready to arise and go with him. For thus is he made ready for the step in which is all forgiveness left behind.

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The Text up until this point has set the tone for all that follows. The major elements of the teaching are in place.

Chapter 12 is going to continue this line of thought, taking it up exactly where Chapter 11 leaves off. It is going to talk about what it is the Holy Spirit teaches us when we *ask*. The first section will discuss exactly how the Holy Spirit perceives people in this world, and how He wants to help us to see them in the same way.

Chapter 13 will extend that, going on to talk about the world that we will see when we look with the vision of Christ, a world without guilt. Chapter 14 will add more information about the teaching methods of the Holy Spirit, and Chapter 15 will begin to apply all this to key teachings about the holy instant and special relationships. The teaching on special relationships that begins in Chapter 15 will continue through Chapter 18.

. This gentle passage to a higher prayer, a kind forgiveness of the ways of earth, can only be received with thankfulness. Yet first true healing must have come to bless the mind with loving pardon for the sins it dreamed about and laid upon the world. Now are its dreams dispelled in quiet rest" (S-3.II.1:8-4:3).

Answer Key

1. Some ways in which, over the years, I have thought the Holy Spirit might deprive me:

Believing I have to become a doormat, let others have their way.

Believing I must always give up my rights to the demands of others.

Believing He wants me to give up pleasures.

Believing He will always lead me to the hardest path. (For example, when I fell in love, and thought the Holy Spirit would lead me to give up that relationship if I asked about it.)

2. c. When you see anyone, look for the truth within them and you will find it.

3. No written answer is expected.

4. In the real world:

There is no sickness.

There is no separation.

There is no division.

Only loving thoughts are recognized.

The Help of God goes with us everywhere.

Nothing is beyond our healing power.

What we ask for we will receive.

All problems disappear.

We will see our own beauty reflected in everyone.

All of this indicates fairly clearly that the real world is not the same as the physical world we know. It is a phrase that speaks of a mental space rather than a physical space. Yet it speaks of healing, so healing must be needed for some things. It is a mental vision (not utilizing the physical senses) of a spiritual reality.

5. No written answer is expected.

6. We must let the Holy Spirit remove our perception of offense, and perceive others only through His loving guidance (12:4). We must accept His healing power and allow Him to bring it to others through us.

7. The willingness to let go of his or her own interpretations in favor of reality (13:2) by asking for help in interpreting things.

8. We should recognize that there is really nothing to be afraid of (14:3,7), ask the Holy Spirit to show us the reality of the person (14:3,9), and accept what He shows us as the truth. This is how we let go of our own interpretations in favor of reality (13:2, 14:10).