

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 15, Section IV

Practicing the Holy Instant

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
 - ~~strike through blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Overview of the Section

In Section II.5:4, we were advised to “practice the mechanics of the holy instant.” In this section, Jesus addresses some of the barriers to our practicing, and then begins to give some specific instructions for doing so.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹This course is not beyond **immediate** learning, unless you [**prefer to**] believe that **what God will takes time**. ²And this means **only** that you would rather **delay** the recognition that His Will **is** so. ³The holy instant is ~~this instant and every instant~~ [**this one and every one**]. ⁴The one you **want** it to be it **is**. ⁵The one you would **not** have it be is lost to you. ⁶**You** must decide **when** it is. ⁷Delay it not. ⁸For beyond the past and future, ~~where~~ [**in which**] you will **not** find it, it stands in shimmering readiness for your acceptance. ⁹Yet you cannot bring it into glad awareness while you do not want it, for it holds the whole **release** from littleness.

• Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 1. The holy instant is whichever instant we want it to be. In the same way, we can learn the Course the instant we want to. If we have not learned the Course, what must be true, according to this paragraph?*
 - A. *We must not really want to learn it.*
 - B. *We must think God's Will takes time.*
 - C. *We must want to delay recognizing that God's Will is already done.*
 - D. *We must not listen to enough Course tapes.*
 - E. *A, B and C*



Jesus here begins to address some of the difficulties encountered in attempting to describe the holy instant, and to instruct us in how to enter and experience holy instants. One major conceptual obstacle we must overcome is the idea that “what God wills takes time” (1:1). Even the word “instant,” to us, implies time. Maybe a very short time, “just an instant,” but time nevertheless. What Jesus is trying to describe is something that takes no time at all! To us, anything that takes no time simply does not exist. To the mind of Christ, *only* what takes no time (but is eternal) is real. Therefore, this course can be learned *immediately* (1:1).

Remember what was said back in Section II:

"What holds remembrance of God cannot be bound by time. No more are you. For unless God is bound, you cannot be. An instant offered to the Holy Spirit is offered to God on your behalf, and in that instant you will awaken gently in Him. In the blessed instant you will let go all your past learning, and the Holy Spirit will quickly offer you the whole lesson of peace. What can take time, when all the obstacles to learning it have been removed? Truth is so far beyond time that all of it happens at once" (T-15.II.1:3-9).

Eric Butterworth, the Unity teacher, used to say that all of God is available in every instant at every point in space. Butterworth quotes Thomas Troward (one of the foundational teachers of New Thought, particularly of Religious Science), who said, “Wherever Spirit is at all, the whole of Spirit must be.”¹ God is “always everywhere present,” to quote a Unity pamphlet from 1933.

Since the learning to which the Course is leading us is an awareness and direct *knowing* of God’s Presence, which transcends time, the learning can take no time. It can be immediate because everything necessary for it is always already present. “God’s Will is so” (1:2) *now*. “All the obstacles to learning it have been removed” (T-15.II.1:8). To believe that this learning *takes time* can mean only one thing: “You would rather *delay* the recognition” of it (1:2). That’s hard to accept. We don’t want to recognize that we are deliberately putting off the experience we say we are seeking so desperately.

“The holy instant is *this* one and *every* one” (1:3). Nothing could be clearer. “Now is the time of salvation” (T-13.VI.8:1). Every instant can be a holy instant *if we truly want it to be* (1:4). And if an instant goes by without the conscious sense of the immediate Presence of God and the awareness of our total Oneness with that Presence, that instant (as a holy one) is lost to us because we didn’t want to have it. *We* decide when to have a holy instant (1:6). The holy instant stands beyond time, “in shimmering readiness for your acceptance” (1:8). It is never past, and never future; it is always *now*. It is ready right now for your acceptance, ready for you to bring it into your awareness (1:8–9). That cannot happen while you don’t want it to happen (1:9). As long as you are holding on to

1 “The whole of spirit must be present at every point in space at the same moment. Spirit is thus omnipresent in its entirety, and it is accordingly logically correct that at every moment of time all spirit is concentrated at any point in space that we may choose to fix our thought upon.” *The Edinburg Lectures on Mental Science*, p. 19, Thomas Troward.

your “littleness,” that is, to your separate ego, you can’t experience the holy instant. Why? Because the holy instant is synonymous with the transcendence of your ego: “it holds the whole *release* from littleness” (1:9).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Your practice **must** therefore rest upon your willingness to let all littleness go. ²The instant in which magnitude dawns upon you is but as far away as your **desire** for it. ³As long as you desire it not and cherish littleness instead, by so much is it far from you. ⁴By so much as you want it will you bring it nearer. ⁵Think not that you can find salvation in your own way and **have** it. ⁶Give over **every** plan you have made for your salvation in exchange for God’s. ⁷**His** will content you, **and** [for there *is*] nothing else [that] can bring you peace. ⁸For peace is of God, and no one beside Him.

• Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 2. We must let go all our plans to find salvation (deliverance, happiness) in littleness. Let's say you think that getting a raise at work will make you happy. Based on this paragraph, how is this a refusal of the holy instant?*
- A. *The holy instant requires poverty.*
 - B. *The holy instant is magnitude. By desiring littleness instead of magnitude you are refusing the holy instant.*
 - C. *It is an expression of trying to find salvation in your own way, not God's.*
 - D. *It is not a refusal of the holy instant. This was a trick question.*
 - E. *B and C*

Since the key to experiencing the holy instant is our desire for it and willingness to let go of all littleness or ego, that’s where we need to focus our practicing: on willingness (2:1). If the experience of a holy instant seems far off, it means that our desire for it is weak, and our attachment to our ego is too strong (2:2–4). It reminds me of the poem, or hymn, by Frederick William Faber, titled, “Desire for God.” In it, he says that a fervent desire is the greatest quality we can have. He says, “None honors God like the thirst of desire”: “Who can come near to God with a heart not on fire?”; and “God’s last grace, and best, is to die all on fire.” And interestingly, Troward, who was a legal judge, full of logic, and far from a fiery poet, agrees. He points out that desire is the key, and that we should not be discouraged by repeated failures to achieve our spiritual goals. He says:

Our repeated failure to fully act as we would wish must not discourage us. It is the sincere intention that is the essential thing, and this will in time release us from the bondage of habits which at present seem almost insuperable

Desire will in due time externalize itself as concrete fact.

So, focus on the willingness, on the desire. Fan the flame! Lay aside “every plan that *you* have made for your salvation” (2:6). As the Workbook lesson says, “Only God’s plan for salvation will work” (W-pI.71).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Be humble before Him, and yet great *in* Him. ²And value **no** plan of the ego **before** the plan of God. ³For you leave empty your place in His plan, which you **must** fill if you would join with me, by your decision to join in any plan **but** His. ⁴I call you to fulfill your holy part in the plan that He has given to the world for its release from littleness. ⁵God would have His host abide in perfect freedom. ⁶Every allegiance to a plan of salvation [**that is**] **apart** from Him diminishes the value of His Will for you in your own ~~mind~~ [**minds**]. ⁷And yet it is your mind that **is** the host to Him.

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 3* again stresses the importance of not valuing our plans to find happiness through things of this world, but rather accepting our part in the plan to awaken everyone to his or her magnitude. What, then, are the effects of choosing to seek happiness through "normal" means, according specifically to this paragraph (there may be more than one answer)?
- A. *You leave your place in God's plan empty.*
 - B. *You diminish the value of His Will for you in your mind.*
 - C. *You do not abide in perfect freedom.*
 - D. *You reject the fact that you are host to Him.*
 - E. *You do not accept the holy instant.*

Humble, and yet great; that describes the attitude we are called to express. Humble before God, recognizing that we are God’s extensions, and He is not ours. He created us; we did not create Him (T-7.I.1:4). And yet, as God’s expressions in the world we *are* great, and should lay aside all illusions of littleness. We are not little! We are great in God. If we want greatness we must refuse to adopt any plan of the ego’s devising, and accept God’s plan, which is far greater than anything we could concoct (3:3). As the Workbook advises us to declare, “Salvation of the world depends on me” (W-pI.186). Jesus is calling us, and calling *you*, to fulfill our holy part in His plan to release the world from littleness (3:4). Our own plans make God’s plan for us seem less important (3:6). Ironically, the humility required to let go of all our own striving after God is the very thing that allows us to realize the magnitude and magnificence of the part God has allotted for each of us to play in His plan.

My mind is the *host to God!* What could be greater than that! What greater honor can there be? What greater affirmation of my worth?

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Would you learn how perfect and immaculate is the holy altar on which your Father has placed **Himself**? ²This you **will** recognize in the holy instant, in which you willingly and gladly give over **every** plan but His. ³For there lies peace, **perfectly** clear because you have been willing to meet its conditions. ⁴You can claim the holy instant **any** time and **anywhere** you want it. ⁵In your practice, try to give over **every** plan you have accepted for finding magnitude in littleness. ⁶*It is not there.* ⁷Use the holy instant **only** to recognize that you alone **cannot** know where it [**magnitude**] is, and can only **deceive** yourself.

• Study Question •

4. *Paragraph 4 lists a specific practice instruction for entering the holy instant. Recall that in the second section the author said that he would give us very specific instructions for practicing the holy instant. What, in your own words please, is the instruction given in this paragraph?*

The “altar on which your Father has placed *Himself*” is your mind: “... it is your mind that *is* the host to Him” (3:7), as the previous sentence said. It has to be perfect and pure, if God lives there. Jesus wants us to recognize just “how perfect and immaculate” our minds are (4:1)! He is asking you if you would like to learn the flawless purity of your mind. And that *is* something we must *learn*, because we certainly don’t conceive of our minds as “perfect and immaculate,” do we? Take a moment just to recognize for yourself that this *is* something you’d like to learn. Don’t worry about how; that will come momentarily. Tell yourself, “I want to learn the perfection and purity of my mind.”

How can that take place? “This you *will* recognize in the holy instant” (4:2) So one of the effects of the holy instant is that you recognize the perfect purity of your own mind. You know you are pure, and you know that you know. The past with all its load of guilt is seen truly, and, “The one wholly true thought one can hold about the past is that it is not here” (W-pI.8.2:1). This is why we can affirm, “My mind holds only what I think with God” (W-pI.rIV.In.2:2).

What triggers a holy instant? This section has already discussed it, and this paragraph focuses on this one primary trigger: “You willingly and gladly give over *every* plan but His” (4:2), that is, every plan for your salvation but God’s, as was said back in 2:6 and 3.3. “There lies peace, perfectly clear because you have been willing to meet its conditions” (4:3).

You might want to review Workbook Lesson 71 at this point, and use it in your practicing.

The Text goes on to say that we can claim the holy instant any time and any place we want it (4:4). (Note, not “a” holy instant but “the” holy instant. This is the eternal holy instant, a “picture of timelessness, set in a frame of time” (T-17.IV.11:5). It is what has always been and always is and always will be.) As was already said in Paragraph 1, it is

this instant and every instant, and claiming it is entirely up to us and to our desire and willingness to have it.

How do we claim it? How can we “practice the mechanics of the holy instant” (T-15.II.5:4)? Here are the specific instructions Jesus gives:

In your practice, try to give over every plan you have accepted for finding magnitude in littleness. (4:5)

This is why I suggested working with Lesson 71, which offers us a practice related to giving over all our plans to save ourselves—to find “magnitude in littleness” (4:5), as it says here. I want to think about that concept for a moment: finding magnitude in littleness. What does that mean? To me, it means that I accept separateness as my reality, and try to work from there. I try to make the best of a poor situation. I work at being a success at some endeavor, perhaps building a career, developing some specialized expertise, or attempting to achieve happiness through my spouse and my children. I try to find “magnitude” in some aspect of this “little” world, instead of accepting the greatness that is my inheritance (and that of everyone) in God.

Magnitude is not there in littleness (4:6). As the Text tells us in Chapter 31:

Real choice is no illusion. But the world has none to offer. All its roads but lead to disappointment, nothingness and death. . . The roads this world can offer seem to be quite large in number, but the time must come when everyone begins to see how like they are to one another. Men have died on seeing this, because they saw no way except the pathways offered by the world. And learning they led nowhere, lost their hope. And yet this was the time they could have learned their greatest lesson. All must reach this point, and go beyond it (T-31.IV.2:1–3, 3:3-7).

That’s what we are being called to practice: reaching that point and going beyond it. Giving up on every road to happiness and peace *except God’s plan*. “Only God’s plan for salvation will work” (Lesson 71).

You know the really good thing about that? God’s plan has already been accomplished. Ours, all those other roads, are nothing more than potentials that are, in fact, unattainable. Buy in to any of those plans and you’ve bought in to anxiety and uncertainty. Buy into God’s plan and you can *rest*. “I rest in God” (Lesson 109). That’s what we do in the holy instant (4:7). We rest in God. That’s the practice: Laying aside all the plans for finding magnitude in our littleness, and just resting.

Let these periods of rest and respite reassure your mind that all its frantic fantasies were but the dreams of fever that has passed away. Let it be still and thankfully accept its healing (W-pI.109.5:5-6).

That’s not a sharp stick in the eye, is it? Resting in God? That’s how you can begin to practice the mechanics of the holy instant. Just be still. Just rest.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹I stand within the holy instant, as clear as you would have me. ²And the

extent to which you learn to [be willing to] **accept me** is the measure of the time in which the holy instant will be yours. ³I call to you to make the holy instant yours **at once**, for the release from littleness in the mind of the host of God depends on willingness, and **not** on time.

• **Study Question** •

5. *Paragraph 5. Jesus says he stands within the holy instant and calls us to accept it at once. What does his presence in the holy instant imply, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *The amount we are willing to accept him determines how soon we will experience the holy instant.*
- B. *The amount that we experience the holy instant determines how much we will accept Jesus.*
- C. *We cannot experience the holy instant until we believe in his death on the cross.*

What's interesting here is that Jesus, who says, "I stand within the holy instant" (5:1), says that when we experience the holy instant depends on how willing we are to accept, not the holy instant, but *him*. Jesus. Imagine a little room that contains a great treasure, but also, in that room, is a person about whom you have a lot of judgment and opinions. You know that, to enter the treasure room, you have to go in and accept that person and give him, or her, a big hug. So you find a lot of resistance to entering the room, not because of the *things* it contains, but because of *who* it contains. And that room is the holy instant.

Do you have a problem with Jesus? There is a parallel here to that infamous Bible passage, in which Jesus says, "No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6, NRSV). Do you feel your gut clench when you read that? I know some of you do. In the Manual for Teachers, speaking of Jesus, it says this:

Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world. Forgive him your illusions, and behold how dear a brother he would be to you. For he will set your mind at rest at last and carry it with you unto your God (C-5.5:7-9).

But Jesus is for you the bearer of Christ's single message of the Love of God. You need no other. It is possible to read his words and benefit from them without accepting him into your life. Yet he would help you yet a little more if you will share your pains and joys with him, and leave them both to find the peace of God (C-5.6:4-7).

I believe that, in this context in Chapter 15, Jesus standing within the holy instant represents any and every other person with whom we have forgiveness issues. If we accept Jesus as the Christ we must also accept everyone as the Christ. We can't truly accept *him* without the awareness that his reality was, and still is, the Christ, and that, "As

he is, so are we in the world” (I John 4:17, NRSV). To accept Jesus is to accept our brother as sinless. And the extent to which we are willing to do so “is the measure of the time in which the holy instant will be yours” (5:2).

Jesus then calls us to make this choice *at once* (5:3). Don't put it off! It does not depend on time. It does not *take* any time. That keeps getting drummed into us. The only critical factor is our willingness. But it isn't just willingness to experience the blessing of the holy instant; it's willingness to accept the person who's standing in the middle of it! And that person is the person next to you. That guy is your brother, your sister, or maybe yourself! Are you willing for *that*?

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The reason this course is simple is that **truth** is simple. ²Complexity is of the ego, and is nothing more than the ego's attempt to obscure the obvious. ³You could live forever in the holy instant, **beginning now** and reaching to eternity, but for a very simple reason. ⁴Do not obscure the simplicity of this reason, for if you do, it will be **only** because you prefer **not** to recognize it and **not** to let it go. ⁵The simple reason, simply stated [~~as what it is:~~], ~~is this:~~ The holy instant is a time in which you receive **and give** perfect communication. ⁶This means, however, that it is a time in which your mind is **open**, both to receive **and give**. ⁷It is the recognition that all minds **are** in communication. ⁸It therefore seeks to **change** nothing, but merely to **accept** everything.

• Study Question •

6. *Paragraph 6 says that the Course is simple, truth is simple and that the reason we are not now experiencing one long permanent holy instant is also simple. In your own simple words, what is the simple reason you are not in the holy instant right now?*

I often refer to the opening two sentences, which claim that “this course is simple” and that “complexity is of the ego” (6:1–2). Most people, when they first begin reading the Course, get the impression that it is very complicated, very profound, and very difficult to fully understand. On the other hand, many people who continue to study—and to practice—the Course, come to the conclusion that, in reality, it is very simple. God is good, God is all there is, and only what God creates is real. Period. Or as the Introduction to the Text states, “Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists. Herein lies the peace of God.” It really is quite simple, because “*truth* is simple” (6:1).

What makes the Course seem complex is that it attempts to expose the ego, and the ego *is* complex, because “complexity...is nothing more than the ego's attempt to obscure the obvious” (6:2). “The obvious” is, clearly, the *truth*, which is, in reality, quite simple. The ego makes it seem as if there are a myriad of problems to overcome, while the

Course proclaims, “One problem, one solution” (W-pI.80.1:5). “The problem of separation...is really the only problem” (W-pI.79.1:4).

If we recognized the truth, and fully accepted it, we could “live forever in the holy instant, *beginning now* and reaching to eternity” (6:3). But there is a simple reason we don’t. Jesus urges us not to “obscure the simplicity of this reason” (6:4), which is what our egos immediately try to do, out of a desire “*not* to recognize it and *not* to let it go” (6:4). He states the reason in the remainder of this paragraph, but he does not, yet, explain *why* this should be a problem that prevents our experience of the holy instant.

That simple reason, he says, is that the holy instant is “a time in which you receive *and give* perfect communication” (6:5), which means your mind is “*open*, both to receive *and give*” (6:6). In this open-minded state, we recognize “that all minds *are* in communication” (6:7). Our mind, therefore, accepts everything and seeks to change nothing (6:7). At first glance this sounds like an idyllic state of mind. So, why is this cited as the reason we prefer *not* to experience it? The answer is next.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹How can you do this when you would prefer to have **private** thoughts **and keep them**? ²The **only** way you **could** do that would be to **deny** the perfect communication that makes the holy instant **what it is**. ³~~You believe you can~~ [You believe that it is possible to] harbor thoughts you would **not** share, and that salvation lies in keeping thoughts **to yourself alone**. ⁴For in private thoughts, **known only to yourself**, you think you find a way to keep what you would **have** alone, and share what *you* would share. ⁵And then you wonder why it is that you are not in full communication with those around you, and with God Who surrounds **all** of you together.

• Study Question •

7. *Paragraph 7 expands on the simple reason why you are not experiencing the holy instant, on your block to perfect communication. What, according to this paragraph, is this block?*
- A. *Private thoughts.*
 - B. *Attack thoughts.*
 - C. *Naughty thoughts.*
 - D. *Thoughts known only to yourself.*
 - E. *Littleness thoughts.*
 - F. *A and D*

The holy instant is a time in which I experience perfect, totally open communication. But, the Course asks, how can I possibly do that when I prefer having “*private thoughts*”? To have private thoughts and to keep them private I have to “deny,” or refuse perfect and open communication (7:1–2). It is just that open and free communication that “makes the holy instant *what it is*” (7:2). Nothing can be hidden, and in the holy instant, there is nothing you *want* to hide.

But, because we still believe that it is possible to hold on to thoughts we do not want to share, and in fact believe that our safety and happiness *depends on* “keeping thoughts *to yourself alone*” (7:3), we block ourselves out of the holy instant. We think this offers us a way to keep things to ourselves and to share only what we want to share (7:4). No wonder we aren't in full communication with other people and with God (7:5)!

The Course has a lot to say about “private thoughts.” Here are some of its key teachings on the subject; I've highlighted the mentions of private thoughts:

Here [in the holy instant] there is no concealment, and no **private thoughts**. The willingness to communicate attracts communication to it, and overcomes loneliness completely (T-15.VII.14:4-5).

If you and your brother are joined, how could it be that you have **private thoughts**? And how could thoughts that enter into what but seems like yours alone have no effect at all on what *is* yours? If minds are joined, this is impossible.

No one can think but for himself, as God thinks not without His Son. Only were both in bodies could this be. Nor could one mind think only for itself unless the body *were* the mind (T-21.VI.2:8-3:3).

This teaches us that the logical conclusion of minds that are joined is that “private” thoughts are impossible. Even though it *seems* to us that our mind is ours alone, in fact it is not, and therefore, thoughts that we *think* are private *do* have effects on the universal mind of which we are a part. If the brain were the mind, then one mind could think only for itself. But the body, and hence the brain, is not the mind. As the Workbook lessons says, “I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts” (W-pI.19.title).

The attraction of guilt is only fear. Here is the one emotion that you made, whatever it may seem to be. This is the emotion of secrecy, of **private thoughts** and of the body. (T-22.I.4:6-8).

The emotion that motivates the idea of private thoughts is fear. Isn't that the case? We are afraid of what others would think if they knew our thoughts.

Today we are again emphasizing the fact that minds are joined. This is rarely a wholly welcome idea at first, since it seems to carry with it an enormous sense of responsibility, and may even be regarded as an “invasion of privacy.” Yet it is a fact that there are no **private thoughts** (W-pI.19.2:1-3).

I have no **private thoughts**. Yet it is only **private thoughts** of which I am aware. What can these thoughts mean? They do not exist, and so they mean nothing. Yet my mind is part of creation and part of its Creator. Would I not rather join the thinking of the universe than to obscure all that is really mine with my pitiful and meaningless “**private**” thoughts (W-pI.rI.52.5:2-7).

The “invasion of privacy” aspect is ameliorated by that last teaching: private thoughts “do not exist, and so they mean nothing.” Quite often, the Course asserts that when we

think what we believe are private thoughts, we are not really thinking; our minds are blank (W-pI.8.3:2-3; W-pI.10.3:2-4).

It seems a strange concept: that I have no private thoughts. "If minds are joined, this is impossible" (T-21.VI.2:10). That's certainly *logical*, isn't it? Although it may be hard to internalize. The only way thoughts could be private would be if my mind were somehow separate from your mind. If we think of ourselves as bodies, with the mind located in the brain, then of course my thoughts *are* mine alone. But if the body isn't the mind, if the mind is something greater than the body, and all minds are one with the Mind of God, then private thoughts are not possible. (T-21.VI.3:3). Here are more quotes showing that the mind is not physical:

The mind can be made free when it no longer sees itself as in a body, firmly tied to it and sheltered by its presence (W-pI.199.1:4).

Minds are joined; bodies are not. Only by assigning to the mind the properties of the body does separation seem to be possible. And it is mind that seems to be fragmented and private and alone (T-18.VI.3:1-3).

The body is a limit imposed on the universal communication that is an eternal property of mind. But the communication is internal. Mind reaches to itself. It is *not* made up of different parts, which reach each other. It does not go out. Within itself it has no limits, and there is nothing outside it. It encompasses everything. It encompasses you entirely; you within it and it within you. There is nothing else, anywhere or ever.

The body is outside you, and but seems to surround you, shutting you off from others and keeping you apart from them, and them from you. It is not there. (T-18.VI.8:3-9:2).

So, according to the Course, there is "nothing else [but mind], anywhere or ever." The body, ultimately, is only an illusion held in mind.

...only the mind is real, because only the mind can be shared. The body is separate, and therefore cannot be part of you. To be of one mind is meaningful, but to be one body is meaningless. By the laws of mind, then, the body is meaningless (T-6.V.3:2-5).

In fact, the Course teaches not only that the mind is *not* in the body, it says that the world, and hence the body, *is in the mind!*

"Yet this world is only in the mind of its maker, along with his real salvation. Do not believe it is outside of yourself, for only by recognizing where it is will you gain control over it" (T-12.III.9:8-9).

This is the basis for all healing: "Yet must all healing come about because the mind is recognized as not within the body, and its innocence is quite apart from it, and where all healing is" (T-28.II.2:8).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Every thought you would keep hidden shuts communication off, **because you would have it so.** ²It is impossible to **recognize** perfect communication while **breaking** communication holds value to you. ³Ask yourself honestly, “Would I **want** to have perfect communication, and am I **wholly** willing to let **everything** that **interferes with it** go forever?” ⁴If the answer is no, then the Holy Spirit’s readiness to **give** it to you is not enough to make it yours, for you are **not** ready to share it **with** Him. ⁵And it cannot come into a mind that has decided to **oppose** it. ⁶For the holy instant is given and received with **equal** willingness, being the acceptance of the **single** Will that governs **all** thought.

• Study Question •

8. *Paragraph 8 tells us to ask ourselves honestly if we want perfect communication and are wholly willing to let go all our private thoughts. If we can honestly answer "yes" to that, what will happen?*
- A. *The holy instant will come soon.*
 - B. *We will be in the holy instant right now.*
 - C. *We would be in the holy instant, were it not for our other blocks.*
 - D. *We will experience the holy instant in God's time, not our own.*

Thoughts we want to keep private are thoughts we don’t want to communicate, which means we are shutting off communication (8:1). As long as breaking communication seems to be valuable to us, we cannot recognize the perfect communication that characterizes a holy instant (8:2).

Ask yourself the question posed in 8:3. Are you “*wholly* willing to let *everything*...go forever” if it interferes with perfect communication? Do you want it that much? If not, nothing the Holy Spirit can do can give you that perfect communication (8:4). Your opposition to communication blocks the holy instant (8:5). Your free will is required, joined with His, to make the holy instant happen for you (8:6). In giving up private thoughts you are recognizing “the single Will that governs *all* thought” (8:6), that is, you recognize your oneness with God, your true Identity with God. If you are One with God, then your will and God’s Will are the same. You desire complete communication with all of God’s creations as much as God does.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹The necessary condition for the holy instant does **not** require that you have no thoughts that are not pure. ²But it **does** require that you have none that you would **keep**. ³Innocence is not of your making. ⁴It is **given** you the instant you would **have** it. ⁵~~Atonement would not be if there were no need for it.~~ **[But it would not be Atonement, if there were no need for Atonement.]** ⁶You will not be

able to **accept** perfect communication as long as you would **hide** it from yourself. ⁷For what you would hide *is* hidden ~~from you~~. ⁸In your practice, then, try only to be vigilant **against deception**, and seek not to **protect** the thoughts you would keep to yourself. ⁹Let the Holy Spirit's purity shine them away, and bring **all** your awareness to the **readiness** for purity He offers you. ¹⁰Thus will He make you ready to acknowledge that you **are** host to God, and hostage to no one and to nothing.

• **Study Question** •

9. *Paragraph 9. You need not be free of all impure thoughts--or you would not need the Atonement. You need only be willing to give them up. We are then given another specific practice instruction for practicing the holy instant. What is it?*
- A. *Practice purifying your thoughts, in preparation for the purity of the holy instant.*
- B. *Practice trying to be vigilant for thoughts you would keep to yourself and let the Holy Spirit's purity shine them away.*
- C. *Practice acknowledging that you are host to God and hostage to nothing.*
- D. *Practice giving over all plans to find private thoughts in littleness.*

At first, the message of Paragraph 8 might leave you in despair of ever experiencing a holy instant. You may ask, "How can I ever become willing to let go forever of every desire for private thoughts?" But here, Jesus anticipates your concern. What wonderful, reassuring words these are:

The necessary condition for the holy instant does not require that you have no thoughts that are not pure (9:1).

But you are not off the hook completely, because, "It *does* require that you have none that you would *keep*" (9:2). In other words, we are not expected to somehow stop thinking "thoughts that are not pure," which to me means ego thoughts, thoughts that produce guilt, unloving thoughts, attack thoughts. We *will* have such thoughts. *Having* them isn't a problem; wanting to *keep* them *is*.

But neither are we being asked to "share" such thoughts with everyone. These are the thoughts we must give to the Holy Spirit for cleansing. We need to say to the Holy Spirit, "Take this from me and look upon it, judging it for me" (T-19.IV.11:8). The Workbook gives us this practice:

"Let Him evaluate each thought that comes to mind, remove the elements of dreams, and give them back again as clean ideas that do not contradict the Will of God.

Give Him your thoughts, and He will give them back as miracles which joyously proclaim the wholeness and the happiness God wills His Son, as proof of His eternal Love" (W-pI.pI.151.13:4-14:1).

We can't make ourselves innocent, but we *can* receive innocence from the Holy Spirit (9:3–4). The Atonement exists because we have a need for It (9:5). Its very existence is proof that having impure thoughts need not exclude us from the holy instant, because Atonement *anticipates* something to be washed away. God does not expect us to be perfect; rather, God *provides* our perfection.

What is asked of us, then, is to refrain from trying to hide our impure thoughts (9:6–8). "*Do not be afraid of the ego.*" (T-7.VIII.5:1). Instead of hiding impure thoughts, "Let the Holy Spirit's purity shine them away" (9:9). Open your mind to the gift He is bringing, the "*readiness for purity*" that He extends to you. If you feel that you are not yet "ready to acknowledge that you *are* host to God, and hostage to no one and to nothing" (9:9)—especially not hostage to the ego!—allow the Holy Spirit to "make you ready"! Stop trying to protect your impure thoughts. Offer it to Him, and "He will give it back" as a miracle, as a clean idea that does not contradict the Will of God.

This is something we can practice in meditation. We can look within our minds for "private thoughts," thoughts we'd prefer to keep to ourselves, that we'd rather not share with our brothers and sisters. When we find such a thought, we simply give it to the Holy Spirit and let Him evaluate it, and return it purified. We can thus open ourselves to be made ready for purity. We can open ourselves to the holy instant.

• **Study Question** •

10. *There are two specific instructions for practicing the holy instant in this section, one in paragraph 4 and one in paragraph 9. Please list each of these two and then after each one list why doing that particular practice brings you into the holy instant.*

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Answer Key

1. 1. E
 2. E
 3. A, B, C and D
 4. Trying to give over every plan that you have accepted for finding magnitude in littleness.
 5. A
 6. Because you do not want to receive and give perfect communication, perfect joining, and because you do not want to accept everything as it is, which is perfectly joined.
 7. F
 8. B
 9. B
 10. *Try to give over every plan of yours for finding magnitude in littleness.* This brings the holy instant because:
 - the holy instant is magnitude
 - littleness is your plan for salvation, not God's.
 - the holy instant is the release from littleness.
 - allegiance to another plan than God's diminishes the value of His Will for you in your mind.
 - littleness shuts out God's magnitude in you, and the holy instant is an experience of that magnitude.
- Try to be vigilant for thoughts you would keep to yourself and let the Holy Spirit's purity shine them away.* This brings the holy instant because:
- the holy instant is an experience of perfect communication and private thoughts are blocks to communication.
 - the holy instant requires that you have no impure thoughts, no interferences to communication, that you would keep.