

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 18, Section III

Light in the Dream

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
striketrough blue	= Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
highlighted	= key word in this section

We live in a dream. And yet, within this dream, there is light. This section speaks about our *response to the light*, our *relationships as light*, and our *responsibility to be light*.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹You who have spent your ~~life~~ [lives] in bringing truth to illusion, reality to fantasy, **have** walked the way of dreams. ²For you have gone from waking to sleeping, and on and on to a yet deeper sleep. ³Each dream has led to other dreams, and every fantasy that **seemed** to bring a light into the darkness but made the darkness deeper. ⁴Your **goal** was darkness, in which no ray of light could enter. ⁵And you sought a blackness so complete that you could hide from truth forever, in complete insanity. ⁶What you forgot was simply that God **cannot** destroy Himself. ⁷The light is in you. ⁸Darkness can **cover** it, but **cannot** put it out.

• Study Question •

1. *How could a ray of light in the darkness make the darkness deeper, as sentence 3 says?*
 - A. *Since the ray of light was brought in by a fantasy, the light was not real light but the light of a false promise.*
 - B. *The ray of light caused us to retreat from the light, and fearfully recede into greater darkness.*
 - C. *The ray of light so contrasted with the darkness that it made the darkness seem deeper; by making us aware just how dark our condition already is.*

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People often say that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, and that is true. But in the eyes of the Course, our “human experience” has been one of “bringing truth to illusion and reality to fantasy”—that is, trying to make the illusion and fantasy of separation true and real. We have spent our lives going from one dream into a deeper dream, for our goal was to hide from truth in total darkness (1:1–4). We thought our earthly goals, especially those involving relationships, would bring some light into our darkened lives, but all they did was make the darkness deeper (1:3). The ego’s hidden agenda was always total, absolute darkness without any ray of light (1:4). Our ego mind, in its completely insane pursuit of ego autonomy, wanted to shut out the truth of our divine identity (1:5). Worse, it wanted to *blot it out*.

But we forgot something, something very important and wonderful: “God *cannot* destroy Himself” (1:6). The ego’s goal is quite literally Self-destruction. And since we are part of God, the ego’s goal simply *cannot* be attained. It is impossible to lose ourselves in darkness where “no ray of light could enter” because, “The light is *in* you” (1:7). We *are* the light. “Darkness can *cover* it, but *cannot* put it out” (1:8). Hallelujah!

Paragraph 2

2. ¹As the **light** comes nearer you **will** rush to darkness, shrinking from the truth, sometimes retreating to the lesser forms of fear, and sometimes to stark terror. ²But you **will** advance, because your goal **is** the advance from fear to truth. [*You know this.*] ³The goal you accepted **is** the goal of knowledge, for which you signified your willingness. ⁴Fear seems to live in darkness, and **when you are afraid** you have stepped back [away from **light**, into darkness]. ⁵Let us then join quickly in an instant of **light**, and it will be enough to remind you that your goal **is** **light**.

• Study Question •

2. *When it says that "the goal you accepted was the goal of knowledge," how did you accept that goal?*
- A. *By deciding to follow the Course.*
 - B. *In your original creation by God you implicitly accepted this goal.*
 - C. *By allowing the Holy Spirit to make your relationship into a holy relationship.*
 - D. *By joining with Jesus in an instant of light.*

Paragraph 2 speaks of us having two conflicting motivations: to advance toward the light and to retreat into darkness.

Most of us have experienced what 2:1 speaks of: responding to the approach of light by a mad rush in the opposite direction! Sometimes this mad retreat may take us to “lesser forms of fear,” and “sometimes to stark terror” (2:1). Stark terror is not all that rare a response to the light, although we tend to suppress any awareness of it. “Lesser

forms of fear” include things such as worry, anxiety, or anything that seems to separate you from God¹. Any self-deprecating thought is a form of fear because it does seem to separate us from God. Fear can even appear in apparently pleasant forms. Any addictive behavior, which seems to be giving us pleasure, is a mask for fear. When the light “threatens” us we often lose ourselves in some mindless distraction. Over time we will come to recognize this kind of behavior for what it is.

Despite the ego’s knee-jerk reaction to the light, we *will* advance toward it. We *have to*, because our true will is “the advance from fear to truth” (2:2). (Remember: The light is *in* us. So we are not really *advancing* toward it so much as allowing ourselves to become aware of its presence.) Jesus reminds us of the knowledge that is built in to us: “*You know this*” (Urtext). In entering into a holy relationship, we have accepted “the goal of knowledge,” and have affirmed our willingness to move in that direction (2:3).

Whenever we experience fear in any form, it should be a red flag: We must have stepped away from the light, because there is no fear in light; fear lives (or seems to live) in darkness (2:4). When that occurs we need to “join quickly” with Jesus “in an instant of light” (that is, a holy instant). That will remind us of our true goal: light (2:5).

This assurance that, despite all of our fearful retreats from the light, we will nevertheless advance toward light, is repeated quite clearly in the Psychotherapy pamphlet. There it is speaking specifically of “retreats from the light” that may arise in the relationship between a therapist and patient, but what it says applies equally well to any relationship:

It may be they will not get much further, for no one learns beyond his own readiness. Yet levels of readiness change, and when therapist or patient has reached the next one, there will be a relationship held out to them that meets the changing need. Perhaps they will come together again and advance in the same relationship, making it holier. Or perhaps each of them will enter into another commitment. Be assured of this; each will progress. Retrogression is temporary. The overall direction is one of progress toward the truth (P-2.I.1:3-9).

¹ "The ego can and does allow you to regard yourself as supercilious, unbelieving, "light-hearted," distant, emotionally shallow, callous, uninvolved and even desperate, but not really afraid. Minimizing fear, but not its undoing, is the ego's constant effort, and is indeed a skill at which it is very ingenious" (T-11.V.9:1-2).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Truth has rushed to meet you since **you** called upon it. ²If you knew Who walks beside you on ~~the~~ *[this]* way[, *which*] ~~that~~ **you** have chosen, fear would be impossible. ³You do **not** know because the journey into darkness has been long and cruel, and you have gone deep into it. ⁴A little flicker of your eyelids, closed so long, has not yet been sufficient to give you confidence in yourself, so long despised. ⁵You go **toward** love still hating it, and **terribly** afraid of its judgment upon you. ⁶And you do **not** realize that you are **not** afraid of love, but only **of what you have made of it**. ⁷You are advancing to love's **meaning**, and away from **all** illusions in which you have surrounded it. ⁸When you retreat to the illusion **your fear increases**, for there is little doubt that what you think it means *is* fearful. ⁹Yet what is that to us who travel surely and very swiftly **away** from fear?

• Study Question •

3. *This paragraph mentions you calling upon truth, choosing a certain way, and experiencing a flicker of your eyelids. These all refer to a single event. What is this event it is talking about?*
- A. *The event is some kind of awakening, but it will be different for each person.*
 - B. *The event is the same for each Course student: it is your finding of the Course.*
 - C. *The event is your accepting Jesus into your mind as your personal guide.*
 - D. *The event is your joining with another person in a holy relationship.*

You are advancing toward love, yet still afraid of what you think it is, and still occasionally retreating into darkness. Note repetition of the word “rush” in 2:1 and 3:1: When light approaches, we may rush to darkness, but truth has been rushing to meet us every since we called upon it (3:1). As a result, we do advance. Our retreat cannot withstand the onslaught of truth.

Next, we find one of my very favorite lines in the Course: “If you knew Who walks beside you on *this* way, which *you* have chosen, fear would be impossible” (3:2). Donna Carey has turned this into a wonderful song that I love. It is not clear exactly who the “Who” is. One good guess would be Jesus or the Holy Spirit, but I like to think that it might also refer to our partners in relationship, and who *they* truly are. How could I fear if I truly knew beyond a shadow of doubt, for instance, that my wife is

“...holy beyond all the thoughts of holiness of which I now conceive. [Her] shimmering and perfect purity is far more brilliant than is any light that I have ever looked upon. [Her] love is limitless, with an intensity that holds all things

within it, in the calm of quiet certainty. [Her] strength comes not from burning impulses which move the world, but from the boundless Love of God Himself" (Lesson 252, with minor edits).

The published version of 3:2 loses the emphases of the Urtext, "*this way, which you have chosen.*" What way? Perhaps it refers to our journey home, the goal of light, the advance from fear to truth. It might also refer to our "way of dreams," going "from waking to sleeping, and on and on to a yet deeper sleep" (Paragraph 1). That certainly is a way that *we* have chosen, and the emphasis on "you" might point to a choice that I made as opposed to the will of God. How comforting to think that Jesus walks beside me in this dark place!

But as I consider, I realize that in 3:1, the word "you" is also emphasized, and there it clearly refers to our call for truth. The proximity of those two emphasized words makes it likely that they both refer to the same decision of our minds: the call for truth, the choice to embark on our journey of return to the light.

So the way I decode 3:2 is this: If I were aware of the incredible holiness, purity, love, and strength of the One Who walks with me (be it Jesus or my wife, or both), how could I possibly be afraid at the approach of light? It would be *impossible*. To me this is an enormously reassuring thought. I believe that Jesus walked without fear because he *did* know Who walked with him.

Unfortunately, I "do *not* know" Who walks beside me (3:3), because I've descended too deeply into hell. Jesus compares our degree of awakening to "a little flicker of the eyelids, closed so long" (3:4). Imagine a child lying in bed, having slept through the night. As you watch you see her eyelids flicker a bit. Perhaps there is a little sigh, a sign that she is about to awake. You know, though, that she isn't awake yet. This is only the beginning.

That's about where we are in the spiritual journey. We are just getting started. Jesus tells us in Chapter 28, "...you have barely started to allow your first, uncertain steps to be directed up the ladder separation led you down" (T-28.III.1:2). We have despised ourselves for so long we still find it difficult to have confidence in ourselves (3:4).

There is a part of me that chafes at lines like this that tell me I have a long way to go. I want to say, "I've been at this for years, and I think I'm doing pretty well!" And I'm sure Jesus would agree! And yet, do I sometimes find it difficult to have confidence in myself? Absolutely! That tells me that Jesus' assessment of my spiritual development is pretty accurate.

Yes, I'll continue to go toward love while at the same time "hating it, and *terribly* afraid of its judgment upon you" (3:5). Picture the Prodigal Son traveling back to his father, rehearsing his lines:

"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." (Luke 15:18–19 KJV)

Like the prodigal, we know deep within that we have to go home, that we *want* to go home, but we're dragging our feet because we have not entirely expunged the image of a punishing, angry god from our minds. We're returning to love, and yet “*terribly* afraid” that when we encounter It, we'll get smacked in the face. It won't happen. Like the father in the story, Love is standing at the gate, gazing off down the road, waiting to catch sight of us so it can run to us and embrace us and welcome us home with a party.

We may think we are afraid of Love, or of God, but the only thing we are afraid of is the *false* image we've made of It (3:6). We've surrounded Love with illusions of wrath, but we are making progress on our journey away from those illusions to the real *meaning* of Love (3:7). When we retreat to our illusions—as we inevitably will do from time to time—the fear grows because the illusions seem more real, more terrifying, as indeed they would be if they were real things (3:8). But if we have determined to leave fear behind, we will correspondingly leave those illusions behind as well, so the trip need not terrify us (3:9).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹You who hold ~~your brother's~~ [each other's] hand also hold mine, for when you joined each other you were not alone. ²Do you believe that I would leave you in the darkness that you agreed to leave with me? ³In your relationship is this world's light. ⁴And fear **must** disappear before you now. ⁵Be tempted not to snatch away the gift of faith you offered to your brother. ⁶You will succeed only in frightening yourself [yourselves]. ⁷The gift is given forever, for God Himself received it. ⁸You **cannot** take it back. ⁹You have accepted God. ¹⁰The holiness of your relationship is established in Heaven. ¹¹You do not understand what you accepted, but remember that your understanding is not necessary. ¹²All that was necessary was merely the *wish* to understand. ¹³That wish was the desire to be holy. ¹⁴The Will of God is granted you. ¹⁵For you desire the only thing you ever had, or ever were.

• Study Question •

4. *Paragraph 4 also speaks of a particular event using many different phrases. It speaks of you agreeing to leave the darkness with Jesus, the gift of faith you offered your brother, accepting God, the wish to understand, and the desire to be holy. What do all of these refer to?*
- A. *They refer to different things, not the same thing.*
 - B. *It is unclear what they refer to.*
 - C. *They refer to joining with a brother in a holy relationship.*
 - D. *They refer to accepting your function as a miracle worker.*

Here is a line that supports my contention that “Who walks with you” includes our relationship partners *and* Jesus: to hold each other's hand is to hold *his*, because Jesus

was with us when we joined together (4:1). He is our guide out of darkness and, now that we've agreed to go with him, he isn't going to leave us behind (4:2).

A holy relationship contains the light of the world (4:3). This is not something that Jesus is going to abandon. It is central to his program. What is the message he is trying to convey to the world? Isn't it that everyone is wholly lovable and wholly loving? How can you teach *love* except in the context of a relationship? It's absolutely essential that fear be erased from our minds if his plan is to move forward (4:4). Therefore, we must not succumb to the temptation to lose faith in one another (4:5); it will only feed our fears (4:6).

When we enter a holy relationship we give one another the gift of faith. It is an instant in which we affirm to one another, "I believe in you! I believe we can do this together!" In that instant that you gave the gift it was given *forever*, because you not only gave it to one another, you gave it together to God (4:7). You handed your relationship over to Him. And, "You *cannot* take it back" (4:8).

You let God in (4:9)—oops! You were officially entered into the register of holy relationships in Heaven (4:10). When we join minds and hearts together in a holy purpose, we do not understand all that happens, nor do we need to (4:11). I'm sure that when Helen and Bill agreed together to find "a better way to carry on relationships," they never dreamed they would write a 1380-page spiritual classic! They did not understand what the "better way" was. Of course, it was the Course. They didn't need to understand; all they needed was the *wish* to understand (4:12), because—and this is a very important concept—"That wish was the desire to be holy" (4:13). Their true Self had peeked out from within their minds, with a desire to be holy, and it was expressed in a wish to understand how to relate.

There is Something within every one of us that desires to be holy. We probably are not aware of it consciously. The word "holy" may even turn you off. It shouldn't. As Robert Perry points out, traditional "holiness" emphasizes separating oneself from everything impure², which tends to fall into the error of "holier-than-thou." That *is* a turn-off. But holiness in the Course focuses instead, not on separating from the impure, but on recognizing our oneness with all things. When we have a truly loving impulse, when compassion arises in us, when we find ourselves wishing or longing for more peaceful, loving relationships, it is our native holiness pushing up through the depths of our minds, seeking to bloom and grow. And *that* is what we have accepted in a holy relationship.

² Robert Perry's glossary of Course terms defines *holy* and *holiness* like this: "A quality of divine innocence or purity, untainted by the slightest sin, guilt or impurity. A quality that comes from God to those things that are like Him. Holiness is the natural condition of God's creations and is shared. It is characterized not by separation from the impure (as in some traditional notions), but by oneness with all things. It can never be tainted or lost, only obscured. Salvation comes through overlooking all unholiness and seeing again the native holiness in others and in oneself (see vision).

Our wish has been granted; it is the Will of God (4:14). What we desire and long for is “the only thing you ever had, or ever were” (4:15). As Workbook lesson 318 has us declare, “I was created as the thing I seek. I am the goal the world is searching for” (W-pII.318.1:5-6).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Each instant that we spend together will teach you that this goal is possible, and will strengthen your desire to reach it. ²And in your desire lies its accomplishment. ³Your desire is now in complete accord with all the power of the Holy Spirit's Will. ⁴No little, faltering footsteps that you may take can separate your desire from His Will and from His strength. ⁵I hold your hand as surely as you agreed to take your brother's [each other's]. ⁶You will not separate, for I stand with you and walk with you in your advance to truth. ⁷And where we go we carry God with us.

• Study Question •

5. “...each instant that we spend together” What does that mean?
- A. *Joining with Jesus in an instant of light (paragraph 2:5).*
 - B. *It means entering with Jesus into a holy instant.*
 - C. *It means something like this: “The more total minutes you envision yourself being me the better.”*
 - D. *A and C*
 - E. *A and B*

Whenever you see the word “instant” in the Course, it's a good bet that it is a reference to the *holy instant*. In sentence 5:1 it is referring to moments spent, either as an individual or together with one or more others, in a sense of conscious union with God (and one another).

When we have experiences of such conscious oneness, it makes the goal (the “desire to be holy” in 4:13, which is a desire for ultimate oneness) seem more attainable, and strengthens our desire to reach it. In fact, the desire *is* the accomplishment (5:2). The desire is an indication of the native holiness that is inherent, already existing, within us all. Furthermore, our desire aligns us with “all the power of the Holy Spirit's Will” (5:3), which guarantees that we *will* attain the goal. Once awakened, our desire will cement us to the strength and Will of the Holy Spirit, and no faltering on our part can separate us from it (5:4). Jesus, too, is holding our hands. That is as real as our taking each other's hands (5:5).

With the Holy Spirit and Jesus standing with us, there is no risk that the partners in holy relationship will ever separate. They will advance towards truth together with one another, with the Holy Spirit, and with Jesus—and, Jesus adds, “where we go we carry

God with us" (5:6–7). We have the entire Trinity of Jesus, Holy Spirit, and God underwriting our spiritual journey!

We need these reassurances because, as we've been warned, we *will* experience bouts of faithlessness. We will lose heart. We will doubt each other, and we will doubt ourselves. That is precisely why we need holy instants to remind us that the goal is possible. I remember one of my early Christian teachers, who was a fundamentalist Christian with a mystical bent, telling his students that the key to spiritual success was "time alone with Jesus." He didn't call those times "holy instants," but I'm sure he was talking about the same thing.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹In your relationship you have joined with me in bringing Heaven to the Son of God, who hid in darkness. ²You have been willing to bring the darkness to **light**, and this willingness has given strength to everyone who would remain in darkness. ³Those who would see *will* see. ⁴And they will join with me in carrying their **light** into the darkness, when the darkness in them is offered to the **light**, and is removed forever. ⁵My need for you, joined with me in the holy **light** of your relationship, is **your** need for salvation. ⁶Would I not give you what you gave to me? ⁷For when you joined your brother [each other], you answered me.

• Study Question •

6. *Sentence 5 says, "My need for you, joined with me in the holy light of your relationship, is your need for salvation." What single thing does Jesus need us for and do we need in order to find salvation?*
- A. *To bring the light we have gained back to the rest of the Sonship.*
 - B. *To enter a holy instant.*
 - C. *To enter a holy relationship.*

You'll recall that I started this commentary by pointing out the centrality of *light* in it. Having spoken of the way we fear the light and flee from it, and then showing how God's light is in our relationships, Jesus now goes on to underscore our function in the world, in the context of our relationships, to *be* the light. This will run through the final three paragraphs of the section.

When we embark on a holy relationship, we have (perhaps without knowing it) joined with Jesus "in bringing Heaven to the Son of God, who hid in darkness" (6:1). Any move anyone makes toward oneness and unity is an act of alliance with Jesus, whether or not we've even *heard* of Jesus. Any choice I make to bring the darkness to light, allowing the light to dispel the darkness, gives strength to everyone who still remains in darkness, enabling them to make the same choice (6:2). If they are open, they *will* see the light (6:3). And, like you and me, as they expose their darkness to the light, allowing it to be removed forever, they too will join with Jesus "in carrying their light into the

darkness” (6:4). This is the pattern, the way the truth spreads. It’s like a holy infection, one person after another, or one *relationship* after another, “catching” the light and passing it on to others.

Jesus needs us to join with him, spreading the light through our holy relationship. And we need salvation. We need to be freed from fear and doubt and darkness. The two needs are the same! We both need the same thing (6:5). When we give our relationship to him, we are meeting his need, but that very giving is given back to us as our enlightenment (6:6). Our joyous union in love with one another, which *is* our salvation, was our answer to Jesus’ call for holy messengers to spread the light (6:7).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹You who are now ~~the bringer~~ [bringers] of salvation have the function of bringing light to darkness. ²The darkness in you **has** been brought to light. ³Carry it back to darkness, from the holy instant to which you brought it. ⁴We are made whole in our desire to make whole. ⁵Let not time worry you, for all the fear that you and your brother experience is really past. ⁶Time has been readjusted to help us do, together, what your separate pasts would hinder. ⁷You have gone past fear, for no two minds can join in the desire for love without love’s joining **them**.

• Study Question •

7. *Paragraph 7 says that we need to bring the light to the darkness. Yet the entire Course says that it is the other way around, that we must bring the darkness to the light. How can we explain this discrepancy?*
- A. *The rules change once we enter a holy relationship.*
 - B. *This was a special message meant only for Helen and Bill.*
 - C. *It is a different sense of "bring." Rather than bringing light to the framework of darkness, it refers to bringing light into the darkness of the world.*
 - D. *We are meant to bring the light into the darkness only at night, when it is dark, and most of the Course is meant to be applied in the daytime, particularly before sunset.*

Jesus is speaking to people who are in a holy relationship. He says we have become “bringers of salvation,” “bringing light to darkness” (7:1). It is our acceptance of that function that is *our* salvation. We have become transformed from self-centered beings to world-centric beings. This is what Spiral Dynamics refers to as the shift to “second tier” consciousness. In us, the darkness *has* been brought to light (7:2). Now we must bring the light back to the darkness. We start with uncovering the dark places in our minds and exposing them to the light, which dissolves them. Now, we take this same light and carry it back to others whose minds are still cluttered with dark thoughts of anger and fear, so

that they, too, can bring *their* darkness to the light (7:3). Of course we all still have pockets of darkness in our own minds, and we still need to bring them out into the light; it's not as though we have suddenly become superior beings of some kind.

"We are made whole in our desire to make whole" (7:4). There it is again! As I said above, "It is our acceptance of that function (to make whole) that is *our* salvation (we are made whole)." "I will be healed as I let him teach me to heal" (T-2.V.18:6). "To give is how to recognize you have received" (W-pI.159.1:7).

"There is one major difference in the role of Heaven's messengers, which sets them off from those the world appoints. The messages that they deliver are intended first for them. And it is only as they can accept them for themselves that they become able to bring them further, and to give them everywhere that they were meant to be... The messengers of God perform their part by their acceptance of His messages as for themselves, and show they understand the messages by giving them away" (W-pI.154.6:1-3, 7:1-2).

Worry always involves some fear about the future: "What will happen if...? Will I ever...?" We are likely to experience fears like that about our relationships, and about one another: "Will I ever learn to really listen to her?" "What will I do if she...?" "How can we possibly bring light to the world through *this* relationship?" Jesus tells us not to worry about it, because "time has been readjusted to help us," and "all the fear that you... experience is really past" (7:5-6). We have already "gone past fear" (7:7). I'm not even going to attempt to *explain* this, because I honestly do not understand how it can be so that all the fear I experience is really past, nor can I imagine how time can be "readjusted"! The Course says some very peculiar and mind-boggling things about time³. Early in the Text it tells us that:

Miracles are both beginnings and endings, and so they alter the temporal order. They are always affirmations of rebirth, which seem to go back but really go forward. They undo the past in the present, and thus release the future (T-1.I.13:1-3).

That sounds like readjusting time, but undoing the past does not add to my understanding of what this means or how it happens. Here is another passage, this one from the Introduction to the Final Lessons in the Workbook, that seems to explain somewhat how the goal that seems future is really present:

In the dream of time it seems to be far off. And yet, in truth, it is already here; already serving us as gracious guidance in the way to go. Let us together follow in the way that truth points out to us. And let us be the leaders of our many brothers who are seeking for the way, but find it not (W-pII.360.2:3-6).

The nearest I can get to an understanding is to realize that, from Jesus' perspective, the trip is already over. We are already whole and complete and always have been, and

³ If you'd like a comprehensive picture of the Course's view of time, see Ken Wapnick's book, *A Vast Illusion: Time According to 'A Course in Miracles*.

the reality of that is within us and within our relationship. It sits there as an activating energy transforming my present experience into its likeness, dissolving the many appearances of separateness and replacing them all with the perfect union that always, already exists, and enabling us to light the way for others as well.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Not one light in Heaven but goes with you. ²Not one Ray that shines forever in the Mind of God but shines on you. ³Heaven is joined with you in your advance to Heaven. ⁴When such great lights have joined with you to give the little spark of your desire the power of God Himself, can you remain in darkness? ⁵You and your brother are coming home together, after a long and meaningless journey that you undertook apart, and that led nowhere. ⁶You have found your brother [each other], and you will light each other's way. ⁷And from this light will the Great Rays extend back into darkness and forward unto God, to shine away the past and so make room for His eternal Presence, in which everything is radiant in the light.

• Study Question •

8. *Please list all of the things in this paragraph that are helping to get us home:*

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As we contemplate the high calling of being the light of the world, it helps to realize that every light in Heaven is going with us, and that every “Ray that shines forever in the Mind of God but shines on you” (8:1–2). Just a reminder again that “Ray” here is clearly a symbol for the aspects of the light, the multi-faceted creations of God. These shine forever in God’s Mind, thoughts that never leave their Source. Each of us, I think, is one such Ray. Maybe we think we don’t have sufficient light to be lights in the world, but every bit of living, radiant light in the entire universe is focused on us. They have all “joined with you in your advance to Heaven,” and “joined with you to give the little spark of your desire the power of God Himself” (8:3–4)! This was the Apostle Paul’s understanding when he wrote, “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil. 4:13, NRSV), or the understanding of Jesus when he said, “With God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:26, ESV). Our seemingly puny desire has been imbued with the power of God Himself! This is the kind of thought that makes a good affirmation during meditation: “My little desire for holiness has been joined to all the power of God Himself! I claim that power now!”

Lest we forget, all this is about, not just you or me, but us as parts of a relationship: “You and your brother are coming home together” (8:5). We’re done with the meaningless, separate journey that led nowhere. We have “found each other, and you will light each other’s way” (8:6). The light we shine for one another becomes a source from which the Great Rays “extend back into darkness and forward unto God”. A few weeks

ago one of our group members pointed out some lines she loved in one of the Workbook lessons that fits very well here. They speak of someone who has awakened from his dreams of fear:

He can remove the ponderous and useless armor made to chain his mind to fear and misery. 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.134.12:4-5).

As we awaken, we leave a trail for those who follow us. The light shines back from us to guide those who follow, and ahead to God to show us the path. I am so thankful for those who have left stars behind for me to follow!

The Song of Prayer has us proclaim to one another that we cannot go without them:

"Now can you say to everyone who comes to join in prayer with you:

I cannot go without you, for you are a part of me.

And so he is in truth. Now can you pray only for what you truly share with him. For you have understood he never left, and you, who seemed alone, are one with him.

The ladder ends with this, for learning is no longer needed. Now you stand before the gate of Heaven, and your brother stands beside you there. The lawns are deep and still, for here the place appointed for the time when you should come has waited long for you. Here will time end forever. At this gate eternity itself will join with you. Prayer has become what it was meant to be, for you have recognized the Christ in you" (S-1.V.3:8-4:6).

That, truly, is the end of the journey, and time ends forever as we recognize the Christ in us.

• **Study Question** •

9. *Please summarize the main themes of this section in a paragraph, or at least those themes which struck you personally.*

•

Answer Key

1. A
2. C
3. D
4. C
5. E
6. A
7. C

8. all the lights in Heaven

All the rays in God's Mind

Heaven

such great lights

power of God Himself

your brother, who will light your way

Great Rays

9. My summary: Your goal was darkness. Thus you advance now toward the light with ambivalence and fear. Yet because you joined with your brother, all the strength of Heaven has come to support you.