

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 18, Section VII

I Need Do Nothing

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Special Messages

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Special Messages

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strikethrough sans serif text~~ = Not in Special Messages, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

This is a very unusual section. It actually was not part of the Urtext! It was taken down by Helen during the dictation of Chapter 22, and inserted here, where it seems to fit quite well, as it begins by speaking of the same theme as the previous section, “Beyond the Body.” It was part of what are called “Special Messages,” passages dictated to Helen in response to particular situations in her life. This section originally applied to Helen’s concerns about a pending strike of elevator operators, which would have potentially left her stranded in her 16th floor apartment (to use the staircase was, in her mind, instant cardiac arrest). It covers an amazing number of subjects in its eight short paragraphs.

Besides its practical application, it contrasts the Course’s spiritual path with Eastern meditative religion and Western religion’s legalistic fight against “sin.” It ends with what may be the clearest, and yet most misunderstood, description of the simple approach of the Course. Although it was intended specifically for Helen in the first place, it applies equally well to us all.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹You still have too much faith in the body as a source of strength. ²What plans do you make that do **not** involve its comfort or protection or enjoyment in some way? ³This makes the body an end and not a means in your interpretation, and this **always** means **you still find sin attractive**. ⁴No one accepts Atonement for himself who still accepts sin as his goal. ⁵You have thus not met your *one* responsibility. ⁶Atonement is not welcomed by those who **prefer** pain and destruction.

• **Study Question** •

1. *The following four things are mentioned in this paragraph in a logical progression. Arrange them (by letter) in their logical order, with the basic motivator first and the eventual manifestation last.*
 - A. *We fail to meet our one responsibility of accepting Atonement for ourselves.*
 - B. *We find sin attractive.*
 - C. *We make plans that all involve the comfort, protection or enjoyment of the body.*
 - D. *The body is seen as an end and not a means in our interpretation.*
2. *Try to think about why these steps are interconnected. For instance, what is the result of the ego's attraction to sin, and why does it have the result it has? (For reflection only, no written answer is expected.)*

Stop to ask yourself, “Do I place too much faith in my body as a source of strength?” (1:1) Most of our activities, and the plans we make for them, “involve [the body’s] comfort or protection or enjoyment in some way” (1:2). Whatever it is we are doing, we do it *for the sake of* our bodies, which makes them the end, rather than the means to some other end (1:3).¹ And making the body into the end means we are identifying with the body; it means we are behaving as if we *were* the body.

When the Course goes on to say (1:3), “this *always* means *you still find sin attractive*,” it may seem, at first, to be a leap in logic. But recall what the Course means by “sin”; it does *not* mean the traditional idea of moral depravity or evil deeds. Rather, to the Course, if sin could actually exist,

"To sin would be to violate reality, and to succeed. Sin is the proclamation that attack is real and guilt is justified" (T-19.II.2:2-3).

But of course it is impossible to violate reality, attack is *not* real, and guilt is *never* justified. However, when we identify with the body by making it the end of our plans and actions, we do so because, buried in our ego delusion, we *still want* our imagined violation of God’s reality to be real, we still desire to feel guilt because it proves that our egos really exist!

To accept the Atonement means precisely the opposite (1:4). It means we have recognized that we have never violated God’s reality, we still remain as God created us, and therefore we are not guilty, and our egos are nothing but illusions of ourselves. So if we are still putting faith in our bodies, making them the end of our efforts, “You have thus not met your *one* responsibility” (1:5, see T-2.V.5:1). If we are still listening to our egos, *preferring* pain and destruction. Atonement is actually *unwelcome* (1:6).

Although we are already one with God, always have been, and always will be, to whatever degree we are invested in being an ego and being a body, we will be unable to accept and recognize that oneness.

¹ See the Text, Chapter 8, Section VIII, for an in-depth discussion of “The Body as Means or End.”

Think, for a moment, of the circumstances in Helen's life that led to this message. She was terrified of an impending elevator operator strike (remember that, in those days, many elevators were still controlled by human operators rather than by push buttons; the strike meant no elevator to get up to and down from her 16th floor apartment), and actually feared climbing the steps might cause a heart attack. It was very much a concern about her body. She and her husband actually rented a room in a nearby hotel and moved out for a week, only to find that the strike was called off! To Jesus, this was a clear indication that she wasn't getting the message he was giving!

Have there been times in your life when you have done (or thought) something similar? Are there ways in which you are overly concerned about your body's comfort, protection, or enjoyment?

The point of this paragraph is that such a focus on the body reveals a much more deep-seated problem in our minds.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹**[You have made much progress, and are really trying to make still more, but]** There is one thing that you have never done; ~~you have not~~ **[not for one instant have you]** utterly forgotten the body. ²It has perhaps faded at times from your sight, but it has not yet *completely disappeared*. ³You are not asked to let this happen for more than an instant, yet it is in this instant that the miracle of Atonement happens. ⁴Afterwards you will see the body again, but never quite the same. ⁵And every instant that you spend *without* awareness of it gives you a different view of it when you return.

• Study Question •

3. *The repetition of the word "instant" shows this is a discussion of an aspect of the holy instant. In the holy instant, there is often a "sudden unawareness of the body" (T-18.VI.13:6), which would have a marked effect on our habit of making the body our central focus. What effect is said to result from our allowing the body to "completely disappear" from our awareness?*
- A. *We start lecturing on out-of-body experiences.*
 - B. *We cease to exist as bodies, or "blink out."*
 - C. *We never see the body in quite the same way (but we do see it).*

Having just said that Helen has failed to meet her *one* responsibility, Jesus soothes the sting a bit (in material omitted from the FIP version) by recognizing that she has made a lot of progress and is "really trying to make still more" (2:1), *but...* there is one thing she has never done. (It is possible that, in editing the second time, Helen felt those words seemed a bit self-serving and may have come more from herself than from Jesus.) Like

the rest of this section, these words very likely apply to every one of us, and *to you* who read this.

The “one thing” is a little surprising, since it seems to be something you cannot simply *decide* to do. “Not for one instant have you utterly forgotten the body” (2:1). Have you ever “utterly forgotten” your body? To me, this seems something like the famous, “Do not think about a pink elephant” dictum. If you *try* not to think about a pink elephant, you are thinking about a pink elephant and trying not to do it! How do you *utterly forget* the body? Certainly not by *trying* to forget it.

And he isn't talking merely about not *thinking* about the body for a short time. “Utterly forgotten” apparently means that the body has “*completely disappeared*” (2:2). It's fairly clear that he is speaking about the holy instant. He pointed out previously that the preeminent characteristic of a holy instant is a “sudden unawareness of the body” (T-18.VI.13:6); that seems to be what he is referring to here. The body has completely disappeared, has been utterly forgotten, and you are *unaware* of it. Have you ever had that experience?

If we are seeking a holy instant, which could be thought of as another name for a mystical experience of total Oneness, one clear prerequisite is *allowing* ourselves to forget our bodies entirely, if just for an instant (2:3). We typically expend so much time and energy on caring for our bodies: making sure we have our favorite food; getting all the right vitamins; buying the best mattress to be sure we get all of our sleep; keeping it warm or keeping it cool—we focus so much on that that we literally don't have time to have a mystical experience!

Once we have a “beyond the body” experience, although we “return” to ordinary experience of the body, we will never see it in quite the same way (2:4). It just seems less important, somehow; less substantial. Once we have experienced the vastness of our true Self, and our oneness with God, everyone, and everything, it becomes increasingly unbelievable to think that we are limited to our insignificant bodies. And that evolution of perception of the body will continue, increasing “every instant that you spend *without* awareness of it” (2:5). We still see it, but it's not the same.

I believe the culmination of this process is what the Course speaks about in Chapter 31: “...the body grows decreasingly persistent in your sight, and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good. ” (T-31.VII.3:3). When we have been profoundly transformed by repeated experiences of the holy instant, we will no longer mistake our body, or anyone's body, as anything more than a shared dream.²

² "They watch the dream figures come and go, shift and change, suffer and die. Yet they are not deceived by what they see. They recognize that to behold a dream figure as sick and separate is no more real than to regard it as healthy and beautiful. Unity alone is not a thing of dreams. And it is this God's teachers acknowledge as behind the dream, beyond all seeming and yet surely theirs" (M-12.6:7-11).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹At no *single* instant does the body exist at all. ²It is always remembered or anticipated, but *never* experienced just *now*. ³Only its past and future make it seem real. ⁴Time controls it entirely, ~~for sin is never wholly in the present~~ **[For sin is never present]**. ⁵In any *single* instant the attraction of guilt would be experienced as pain and nothing else, and would be avoided. ⁶*It has no attraction now*. ⁷Its whole attraction is imaginary, and therefore *must* be thought of in **[from]** the past or in the future.

• Study Question •

4. *Why is our experience of the body so closely tied to past or future, but never to now? (More than one may be correct.)*
- A. *The body is the result of our belief in and attraction to sin, and “sin is never wholly in the present.”*
 - B. *Only the body’s past and future make it seem real.*
 - C. *In any single instant, sin and guilt have no attraction, and therefore the body does not seem real.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

The body is our time machine, a vehicle our minds have made in order to experience movement through time and space. The Course insists that time and space are merely mental constructs with no intrinsic reality. Clearly, with bodies, we move through time and space. We are born, grow up, travel about, do things, and die in our bodies, all of which seems to demonstrate the solid reality of time and space. If time and space do not really exist, neither does the body. It “exists” only in linear time. Like time and space, the body is no more than a mental construct. Our experiences of the body through time have gradually built up a strong, composite mental image of what the body is (just as in Workbook Lesson 7 our past experiences of a cup are said to build up our mental image of a cup—see W.pI.7:3:1–7). Our imagined future experiences add to this illusory mental construct. It isn’t the momentary bodily sensations that make the body seem real and block the holy instant; it is the whole mental package we use to integrate and interpret those sensations. When our awareness moves out of linear time, it moves beyond the body because we disengage our minds from that entire interpretive structure based on past and future. Apart from time the body has no meaning. “Only its past and future make it seem real” (3:3).

When we experience a moment out of time the body simply ceases to exist in our awareness. It “disappears”—not literally, it doesn’t become invisible or cease to exist; rather, it disappears from our awareness. We are *unaware of it*. Time and the body, we can say then, are part of the same illusion. If that is so, then in order to let go of the body, we must be willing to let go of past and future; likewise, in order to experience eternity

beyond time, we must be willing to let go of the bodily identity. The body and time stand together and fall together (3:4).

Beside the body's connection to time, there is also a connection between the body, sin, and guilt. Everything related to sin and guilt is related to the body. The body is the instrument we use to attack one another, through words and actions, and when we attack another person in some way for our own personal ends, whether overt or covert, we experience guilt because we label our actions as sin—things deserving of punishment or retribution. The body, then, symbolizes the separate self.

However, the Course asserts here that we never experience guilt in the present moment. It is always linked to a past action and to anticipation of future punishment (3:4). Because we have mentally labelled some past words or actions as “sin,” we find the feeling of guilt to be attractive. It seems to be a good thing; if we were *not* feeling guilt, we would be terrible, sociopathic people. But when we are conscious only of the present, the only way we might experience guilt would be as pain, and therefore, we would *avoid it entirely* (3:5). It would be utterly without any attraction to us (3:6). Our apparent attraction to guilt is based on past and future, neither of which exists *now*; we only *imagine* it to be attractive (3:7).

This whole scenario of sin, guilt, vengeance, punishment, loss, battle, and victory, past and future, is what the ego finds attractive. It keeps the ego “alive.” And to play out the drama we need bodies. If we are willing to forego the drama, the body will no longer be necessary. To get beyond the ego to the holy instant, we *must* let go of past and future (4:1).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹It is impossible to accept the holy instant *without reservation* unless, *just for an instant*, you are willing to see no past or future. ²You cannot *prepare* for it without placing it in the *future*. ³Release is given you the *instant* you desire it. ⁴Many have spent a lifetime in preparation, and have indeed achieved their instants of success. ⁵This course does not attempt to teach more than they learned in time, but it does aim at *saving* time. ⁶You may be **[You are]** attempting to follow a very long road to the goal you have accepted. ⁷It is extremely difficult to reach Atonement by fighting against sin. ⁸Enormous effort is expended in the attempt to make holy what is hated and despised. ⁹Nor is a lifetime of contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at *detachment* from the body necessary. ¹⁰All such attempts will ultimately succeed because of their purpose. ¹¹Yet the means are tedious and very time consuming, for all of them *look to the future* for release from a state of present unworthiness and inadequacy.

• Study Question •

5. *Eastern religion (meditation) and Western religion (fighting against sin) are both contrasted with the Course's way, which saves us time.*

- (a) *What is said to be the weakness of the Western approach?*
- (b) *What is the drawback of the Eastern approach?*
- (c) *Will these other approaches succeed? Why, or why not?*
- (d) *What is the common factor which makes these approaches take so much time?*

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One aspect of holding on to the future is that we think we must *prepare ourselves* for the holy instant. That amounts to putting off the holy instant to the future (4:2)! If you insist that you need to prepare before you can experience it, you are saying that the holy instant cannot be *now*, it must be future. But the *only* time the holy instant can be experienced is *now*, “the *instant* you desire it” (4:3).

That mistake, postponing the holy instant to the future, is the fundamental mistake of Eastern religious approaches that focus on spiritual “preparation” and “contemplation and long periods of meditation aimed at *detachment* from the body” (4:4, 4:9). This is not to say that those methods don’t work: they “have indeed achieved their instants of success” (4:4). Indeed, the Course’s goal is identical to theirs (4:5); the main difference is that the Course’s way can save you a lot of time, time that is *not* required. We tend to think that the path to enlightenment is a long one; it need not be (4:6).

But if Eastern religions suffer from postponing enlightenment or the holy instant, so do many Western spiritual approaches, particularly those that emphasize “fighting against sin” (4:7). For instance, the Apostle Paul (or his disciples, as some think) writes:

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12 ESV).

Or, focusing on the internal battle:

Let us therefore cleanse ourselves from all that can defile flesh or spirit and, in the fear of God, let us complete our consecration. (2 Corinthians 7:1 REB)

If you have ever been involved in a Catholic or fundamentalist church, you know that much effort is called for to avoid the things you “should not do”; in other words, “fighting against sin,” trying to control your appetites, desires, and baser emotions, or simply following the dictates peculiar to your branch of Christendom: dietary rules, avoiding certain books or movies, and so on. If you have ever been a part of this kind of system, you can attest to the veracity of the Course’s assertion: “It is extremely difficult to reach Atonement by fighting against sin” (4:7). Not *impossible*, but extremely difficult. In such a system, you are trying to make your body holy, despite the fact that it is “hated and despised,” a task that takes “enormous effort” (4:8). You may balk at the idea that the body is hated and despised, but if you take this kind of teaching seriously, it’s right there in the Bible:

“...but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.” (Romans 7:23 NRSV)

And Saint Francis used to refer to his body as “Brother Ass.”

Yes, we *do* need to let go of bodily identification, but that does not come through either attempting to shut it out in contemplation or by trying to beat down its carnal impulses. Those means *will* ultimately succeed (4:10), but they “are tedious and very time consuming” (4:11). What makes that true is the *presupposition* that is behind *both* approaches: the belief that we are presently unworthy of the holy instant, and ill-equipped to experience it (4:11). They presume a lack of readiness and look to the future for release. The target is always “some day,” and never “now.”

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Your way will be different, *not* in purpose but in means. ²*A holy relationship is a means of saving time.* ³One instant spent together with your brother [**One instant spent together**] restores the universe to *both* of you. ⁴You *are* prepared. ⁵Now you need but to remember *you need do nothing.* ⁶It would be *far* more profitable now merely to concentrate on this than to consider what you *should* do. ⁷When peace comes at last to those who wrestle with temptation and fight against the giving in to sin; when the light comes at last into the mind given to contemplation; or when the goal is finally achieved by anyone, it *always* comes with just *one* happy realization; “*I need do nothing.*”

• Study Question •

6. *Our way (i.e. the way of the Course) has the same purpose as these other approaches, but a different means.*
- (a) *Based on 5:2–3 and 6:3–4, what is the special means used by the Course to save time?*
- (b) *In any situation, instead of focusing on what to do, what should we concentrate on?*

“Your way,” that is, the Course’s way for us, “will be different.” The aim, the target, is the same; what’s different is the means of “getting there” (5:1). What is that “way”? The next sentence, I think, makes it quite explicit: “*A holy relationship is a means of saving time*” (5:2). In other words, the way that is quite different is that the means for you and me, as Course students, to experience the holy instant is *a holy relationship!* Not meditation and prayer, nor strict spiritual discipline, but interaction with another human being. *This* is the secret method offered by *A Course in Miracles*.

When you spend just one instant truly *together* with another human being, free from the sense of separation we habitually live with and accept as normal, the *universe* has been restored to us (5:3). That is a mutual holy instant, in which the twoness disappears into oneness.

No preparation is necessary: “You are prepared” (5:4). Don’t even *think* about what you have to do to have a holy instant; in fact, the only thing you need to remember is that “you need do nothing” (5:5–6). Just concentrate on *that*: There is nothing you need to do.

In fact, although we’ve been told that both the Eastern and Western approaches do work eventually, Jesus says that *whatever* the approach, the final finding of the goal is *always* accompanied with the realization that “I need do nothing” (5:7). This is the constant emphasis of the Course. It teaches us that we are created in God’s image, whole and complete, and that as we were created, we remain eternally. “I am as God created me.” This is why we need do nothing.

Thaddeus Golas, author of *The Lazy Man’s Guide to Enlightenment*, puts it like this:

There is nothing you need to do first in order to be enlightened.

All potential experiences are within you already. You can open up to them at any time, faster than instantaneously, just by being there.

A blogger, Akosua Dardaine Edwards, puts it this way on her website:

Our only problem is thinking we have a problem. The thought that "I don't have it yet" is the problem. We need to be enlightened from thinking we need to be enlightened. All that has to change is that thought, and the thought changes nothing, does nothing, because we are always already enlightened, always already happy, always already perfect. God created us that way and we can't change it; all we can do is forget it and pretend we are something else.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Here is the ultimate release which everyone will one day find in his own way, at his own time. ²You [**We**] do not need this time. ³Time has been *saved* for you because you and your brother [**because you**] are together. ⁴This is the special means this course is using to save you time. ⁵You are not making use of the course if you insist on using means which have served others well, neglecting what was made for *you*. ⁶Save time for me by only this one preparation, and practice doing *nothing else*. ⁷“I need do nothing” is a statement of allegiance, a truly undivided loyalty. ⁸Believe it for just one instant, and you will accomplish more than is given to a century of contemplation, or of struggle against temptation.

• Study Question •

7. *In making use of the Course, what is the best spiritual practice recommended, the best preparation for release?*
- A. *Striving very hard to overcome our egos.*
 - B. *Extended periods of quiet meditation.*
 - C. *Realizing “I need do nothing” in our relationships.*
 - D. *Combining the Course with the best of other spiritual traditions.*

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The good news is that “*everyone* will one day find” this release into oneness (6:1, my emphasis). It will take some of us much longer than others; perhaps, if reincarnation is a reality, many lifetimes. But *everyone* will, one day, realize that they are already perfect, whole, and complete, beings wholly lovable and wholly loving. There is no question that, as Rob Bell titled his controversial best-selling book, *Love Wins*. No one has to “convert” to *A Course in Miracles* and follow its path to enlightenment. And it does not, ultimately, matter how long it may take, although in time we experience delay as tragic. As Jesus says early in the Text:

All the Sons of God are waiting for your return, just as *you* are waiting for *theirs*. Delay does not matter in eternity, but it *is* tragic in time. You have elected to be in time rather than in eternity, and have therefore changed your belief in your status. But election is both free and alterable. You do *not* belong in time. Your place is *only* in eternity, where God Himself placed you forever. (T-5.VI.1:2-7).

We, however, do not need to spend a tragic time trying to become what we already are, because *we* are (or can be) engaged in holy relationships: “you are together.” “This is the special means this course is using to save you time” (6:4). There it is again, very clearly: Being joined with another in holy relationship is “the special means” of the Course. This is what saves us time on the spiritual path. You can make it on your own if you want to try it that way, although eventually you have to give up the solo performance: “The lonely journey fails because it has excluded what it would find” (T-14.X.10:7).

If you are trying to do *A Course in Miracles* by yourself, *alone*, don’t bother. It won’t work. Oh, you’ll get there eventually, like everyone, after bashing your head against the brick wall a thousand times until you realize it isn’t going to work, this being alone thing. If you are trying to combine the Course with either Eastern or Western religious practices that put off enlightenment to the future—fighting against sin or excessive solitary spiritual exercises—“you are not making use of the course” (6:5).

When Jesus appeals to us here to “practice doing *nothing else*” but “only this one preparation” (6:6), what is he referring to? I believe he is referring to what he said in 5:5–6:

Now you need but to remember *you need do nothing*. It would be *far* more profitable now merely to concentrate on this than to consider what you *should* do. In other words, he is asking us to practice doing nothing, to concentrate on the fact that we do not *need* to do anything. This means that we focus primarily on the way we *think* about our situation. It means that we make it our top priority to *realize our oneness*, to open ourselves to the deep, inner knowing that we are whole, complete, perfect, innocent, loving and lovable, and even *holy*, right here and right now, without *anything* having to change.

The answer to your problem, *whatever it is*, lies not in doing, but in remembering that you need do nothing. That single statement “is a statement of allegiance, a truly

undivided loyalty” (6:7). The “one preparation” we are asked to practice is to constantly remind ourselves, especially within the context of our relationships: “I need do nothing.” There may be some doing to be done, but the first need is to refocus our minds, to accept the Atonement for ourselves, to enter again into the grace and peace of God, where no needs exist. This is a “practice.” It takes constant effort to remember because we so easily get sucked into thinking, “OMG! What am I going to *do* now?” Instead, we must remind ourselves that, “I need do nothing,” and then “practice doing *nothing else*” (6:6). This is the reason it is called “loyalty” and “allegiance.” We are aligning ourselves with God’s plan, and abandoning all self-effort.

God’s plan for salvation works simply because, by following His direction, you seek for salvation where it is. But if you are to succeed, as God promises you will, you must be willing to seek there only. Otherwise, your purpose is divided and you will attempt to follow two plans for salvation that are diametrically opposed in all ways (W-pI.71.5:1–3).

This is really the whole gospel! “Believe it for just one instant, and you will accomplish more than is given to a century of contemplation, or of struggle against temptation” (6:8). As Alan Watts wrote in his book, “This is it.” *This*, right now, just as I am, is enlightenment. I’m already home. I am at home in heaven; asleep, yes, but that is where I truly am; I am only *dreaming* of exile in some other place (T-10.I.2). And that is so whether or not I am experiencing it, whether or not I remember it. But when I *do* remember it, what a difference it makes!

Paragraph 7

7. ¹To *do* anything involves the body. ²And if you recognize you *need* do nothing, you *have* withdrawn the body’s value from your mind. ³Here is the quick and open door through which you slip past centuries of effort, and *escape* from time. ⁴This is the way in which sin loses *all* attraction *right now*. ⁵For here is time denied, and past and future gone. ⁶Who needs do nothing has no need for time. ⁷To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. ⁸Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides. ⁹He will remain when you forget, and the body’s activities return to occupy your conscious mind.

• Study Question •

8. Using 7:7–8, try to state in your own words what “doing nothing” means.

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Doing always involves the body (7:1). Therefore, the way to withdraw the value we have placed on the body is to recognize that *doing* is unnecessary (7:2). This also eliminates the need for *time*, and the illusion that we need gobs and gobs of time (“centuries of effort”) in order to find enlightenment, or inner peace (7:3).

In reading 7:4, let's remember that, in the Course, the word "sin" does not mean what it typically does.

To sin would be to violate reality, and to succeed. Sin is the proclamation that attack is real and guilt is justified (T-19.II.2:2-3).

Sin in the Course means successfully violating reality. It means, in personal terms, making the ego real, making separation real. That's why the Course declares, "There is no sin" (T-26.VII.10:5, and several other places). The first paragraph spoke about how resting our faith in the body—in physical action and material means of protection and enjoyment—is a symptom of our attraction to sin, of making sin our goal. That means that, in relying on our bodies to handle the situation—bodies that are the symbol of separation³—we are attempting to make separation, and our ego, real.

Since *doing* and *the body* are so tightly linked, when we recognize that, "I need do nothing," we are effectively detaching ourselves from our bodies and their goals, which means that "sin loses *all* attraction *right now*" (7:4). That is, we lose the desire to be separate, and we lose it *immediately, in this very instant*. And since the only problem is separation, *all our problems* have been already solved in that instant. This is the message contained in Workbook lessons 79 and 80, "Let me recognize the problem so it can be solved," and, "Let me recognize my problems have been solved."

Salvation thus depends on recognizing this one problem, and understanding that it has been solved. One problem, one solution. Salvation is accomplished (W-pI.80.1:4-6).

To remember that I need do nothing is the same thing as recognizing that I have only one problem (separation), and that it has already been solved.

Do you see why the Course says that this is "the quick and open door" to salvation? Why believing it for just one instant will save you centuries of effort? The time-saving aspect is so clear and logical: If I don't have to *do* anything, I don't need any time in which to *do* something. Doing nothing takes no time at all! (7:5-6)

"So," you may be wondering, "how do I do this? Uh, that is, how do I *do nothing*?" Isn't doing *nothing* doing *something*?" So Jesus explains a bit:

To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention (7:7).

"Rest" and "make a place within you." That's a good description of meditation, isn't it? Resting implies stopping our busy activity, perhaps sitting down and getting quiet, letting go of all thoughts of what we *think* we need to do.

Making a place within you is surely a mental activity. We are making an inner resting place, or really, *remembering and finding* that resting place within us that is always there:

³ "The body is the symbol of the ego, as the ego is the symbol of the separation" (T-15.IX.2:3). "This separating off is symbolized, in your perception, by a body which is clearly separate and a thing apart. Yet what this symbol represents is but your wish to *be* apart and separate" (T-26.VII.8:9-10).

There is a place in you where this whole world has been forgotten; where no memory of sin and of illusion lingers still. There is a place in you which time has left, and echoes of eternity are heard. There is a resting place so still no sound except a hymn to Heaven rises up to gladden God the Father and the Son (T-29.V.I:1-3).

The more we practice “going” to this place of rest, the easier it is to “find” it. Before long, it begins to stay with us through the day. We need to realize that, when we come to this place, the Holy Spirit comes with us—and He *stays* (“abides,” 7:8). We may rise up from our quiet time of meditation and, within minutes, we may forget that we need to do nothing. We may forget that quiet place. But the Holy Spirit remains, nevertheless. It doesn’t matter how you think about the Holy Spirit:

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Yet there will always be this place of rest to which you can return. ²And you will be more aware of this quiet center of the storm than all its raging activity. ³This quiet center, *in which you do nothing*, will remain with you, giving you rest in the midst of every busy doing on which you are sent. ⁴For *from* this center will you be directed how to use the body sinlessly. ⁵It is this center, from which the body is *absent*, that will keep it so in your awareness of it.

• Study Question •

9. *Our bodily activities do return to occupy our conscious minds (7:9) when we “return” from the holy instant. Indeed, the Holy Spirit will send us on “busy doing (8:3). But after the holy instant our doing will be different. Which of the following statements describe that difference? (More than one.)*
- A. *The place of quiet remains in us while we are doing things.*
 - B. *We are more aware of the quiet than of the body.*
 - C. *We will be at rest even while active.*
 - D. *The Holy Spirit in the quiet center will direct our bodily activities.*
 - E. *We will do different things that we would have done before the holy instant.*

Our minds once again fill with the body’s activities, but the inner place of rest that we have cultivated by regular meditation remains within us, with its Holy Inhabitant waiting for us (7:9, 8:1). Regular meditation is the way to “make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention” (7:7). In quiet meditation, you practice doing nothing. This is why I feel that a daily meditation practice is absolutely essential to all students of *A Course in Miracles*. Lessons 41 and 44 in the Workbook introduce Course-style meditation.

The Course accords such meditation a place of great importance. Meditation in the Course consists of sitting with eyes closed and making "no effort to think of anything" (W-pI.41.6:4), but attempting to enter deeply into our own mind, to sink down and inward while trying to keep the mind "clear of any thoughts that might divert your attention" (W-pI.41.6:6). Traditional breath meditation ("Insight Meditation" or Vipassana) is much the same, although in the Course's version, awareness of the body diminishes or vanishes. The purpose, as stated in this lesson, is to become aware of the light within ourselves. Or, in more traditional terms, to experience a sense of God's presence with us. In meditation, we are attempting to reach God.⁴

Once we have established this inner "place of rest," we can return to it any time we wish to (8:1). You may be surrounded by a storm of "raging activity," and yet at that very moment be *more aware* of this "quiet center" than of the storm (8:2). You will be like the person Kipling describes in his poem, "If," who can keep his head when all about him are losing theirs, and blaming him for it.

What is, for me, supremely important to notice is that even though you are resting in this quiet center, the Holy Spirit will still be sending you on many "busy doings" (8:3). Learning to "do nothing" does not mean that you do not actually do anything in the world! It means that you are in a state of inner rest and repose, trusting absolutely in the direction of Spirit within, devoid of any *need* to do anything, but totally responsive to Spirit's direction of your actions (8:3). Your body will move and act "sinlessly" (8:4), that is, without ego involvement, without making the mistake of placing your faith *in the particular actions you are taking*, but rather in the deep inner knowing that, whatever your outward circumstance, you rest in God.

Maintaining that spiritual center is the key. The quiet center within you, where there is no awareness of the body, is what enables you to live *in* the body without identifying it as yourself (8:5). Instead of reacting to everything by taking it all personally, be it attack or praise, you now respond to life around you as a conduit of the divine, recognizing your oneness with God and all the world around you.

Answer Key

1. B, D, C, A
2. No written answer is expected.
3. C
4. D
5. **(a)** It is extremely difficult. **(b)** It is not necessary. **(c)** Yes, because of their purpose. **(d)** They look to the future for release from present inadequacy.

⁴ Robert Perry has written several very good articles about meditation and the Course. Here are links to two of them: [Meditation in ACIM](http://www.circleofa.org/library/articles/meditation-in-a-course-in-miracles) <http://www.circleofa.org/library/articles/meditation-in-a-course-in-miracles>
[Open Mind Meditation](http://www.circleofa.org/library/articles/open-mind-meditation-the-practice-of-the-final-step): <http://www.circleofa.org/library/articles/open-mind-meditation-the-practice-of-the-final-step>

6. **(a)** The practice of the mutual holy instant in the context of a holy relationship. **(b)** The fact that “I need do nothing.”
7. C
8. “Doing nothing” means pausing for a holy instant in which we rest, and allow our minds to become free of the demands of the activity of our bodies, so that the Holy Spirit can come to us in that quiet place.
9. A,B,C, and D