

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 19, Section IV(D).i.10–21

“The Obstacles to Peace”

D. The Fourth Obstacle: The Fear of God

i. The Lifting of the Veil

Legend:

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

Italic sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~striketthrough sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

We’ve reached the final twelve paragraphs of this very long section, so a review of the four obstacles seems called for.

FIRST OBSTACLE	SECOND OBSTACLE	THIRD OBSTACLE	FOURTH OBSTACLE
The desire to get rid of it.	The belief that the body is valuable for what it offers	The attraction to death	The fear of God
Hides obstacles 2, 3 & 4	Hides obstacles 3 & 4	Hides obstacle 4	Hides the love of God
Stands on attraction of guilt	Generates obstacle 1	Generates obstacles 2 & 1	Generates obstacles 3, 2, & 1

Remember that these obstacles, for most people, are all entirely unconscious at first. We progress past them like peeling the layers of an onion as the love of God beyond them all keeps attracting us. They are obstacles to the *extension of peace* from within a holy

relationship to every aspect of the lives in the relationship, and to everyone outside the relationship.

What we have seen in the first nine paragraphs of this final section is: What lies at the root of *all* of these obstacles is the ego's fear of God. We have seen how the call of Love attracts us and moves us past all these obstacles. It will proceed, in what follows, to explain why, and how, we need one another in order to make this final step successfully.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Nor is it *possible* to look on this too soon. ²This is the place to which everyone must come when he is ready. ³Once he has found his brother he *is* ready. ⁴Yet merely to *reach* the [a] place is not enough. ⁵A journey ~~without a purpose~~ [without purpose] is still meaningless, and even when it is over it seems to make no sense. ⁶How can you *know* that it is over unless you realize its purpose *is* accomplished? ⁷Here, with the journey's end before you, you *see* its purpose. ⁸And it is here you choose whether to look upon it or wander on, only to return and make the choice again.

• Study Question •

1. *What is the journey's purpose that this paragraph keeps referring to?*
 - A. *It is not clear what exactly the purpose is, but this is a reference to the idea that we initially embarked on the journey through space and time not just as a mistake, but for a higher reason.*
 - B. *The purpose of the journey, referred to here, means the ego's purpose that caused our journey in the first place.*
 - C. *The purpose of the journey is the goal of the journey, meaning the end of the journey: joining with the Love beyond the veil.*

•

Any sentence that starts with the word “nor” is clearly referring to something, something *negative* that has just been said. Look back at the preceding paragraph, I can see three statements that could be the referents to this “nor.”

No one can look upon the fear of God unterrified, unless he has accepted the Atonement and learned illusions are not real. No one can stand before this obstacle alone, for he could not have reached this far unless his brother walked beside him. And no one would dare to look on it without complete forgiveness of his brother in his heart. (T-19.IV(D).i.9:1–3)

This is quite logically followed by: “Nor is it *possible* to look on this too soon.” You cannot look at the fear of God without terror unless you have learned to tell reality from illusion, unless you are not alone, and unless you have completely forgiven your brother—and you can't look on it “too soon,” that is, before these pre-conditions have all been met. You can't jump the gun. In a nutshell: You can't see the fear of God without terror until you are *ready*, and if you can look upon it *calmly*, you *are* ready. I've already

remarked on the paradoxical idea of looking at fear *without fear*, but want to say a bit more. To me, this implies that we have learned to detach ourselves from our own thoughts and feelings. The fear of God arises, but we can observe this calmly, objectively, knowing that, “I am not this thought; I am not this fear.” We have learned to recognize what is truth and what is illusion, and we know that the fear arises from an *illusion* of God, while in truth, God is pure Love, arousing attraction in us rather than fear.

The Course indicates that approaching and confronting this veil of the fear of God is not something required of only a few, or even most: “Everyone must come when he is ready” (10:2). We may think that it does not apply to us, *but it does*. The fear of God is the deepest defense of the ego, the thing that is in all of us, buried deep beneath layers of defenses. Eventually, you will be ready to face it.

What is the *primary* thing that makes ready to approach this veil of fear? The answer is in Sentence 3: “Once he has found his brother he *is* ready” (10:3). “The ark of peace is entered *two by two* [my emphasis], yet the beginning of another world goes with them. Each holy relationship must enter here, to learn its special function in the Holy Spirit’s plan, now that it *shares* His purpose” (T-20.IV.6:5-6). It takes a relationship to confront the fear of God because we must open to God *through one another* before we can open to God directly.

So, finding a partner, with all that implies (the three conditions in Paragraph 9), makes us ready, but even that isn’t enough (10:4). We have to recognize the futility of the journey we have been on, or have *imagined* we were on, and chose to abandon it. It has been “a journey without purpose” (10:5), and though we may have seemingly reached the end of the journey, it “is still meaningless” and “makes no sense.” Why? Because “you but make a journey that is done” (W-pI.169.8:3). It has been “a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed” (T-8.VI.9:7). In reality we have never left Heaven, never left God, and never for an instant been separated from God. But we will not truly *know* that until we face this final veil and pass beyond it. In that moment, we will realize we have “arrived” at “where you are always, and what you are forever” (T-8.VI.9:6).

We must choose, either to look without terror at this veil of fear, or to “wander on” (10:8). What happens if we fail to look? We wander on, “only to return and make the choice again” (10:8). This is another place in the Course that seems to imply reincarnation of some sort, whether it be in this world or another world or universe. We return to this choice point again and again until we finally yield to the love beyond the veil, and pass it, never to return again. In all likelihood, we’ve all been at this point many times, only to resume our wandering.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹To look upon the fear of God *does* need some preparation. ²Only the sane can look on stark insanity and raving madness with pity and compassion, but *not* with fear. ³For only if they *share* in it does it seem fearful, and you *do* share in it until you look upon ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** with perfect faith and love and tenderness. ⁴Before complete forgiveness you still stand unforgiving. ⁵You are afraid of God *because*

you fear ~~your brother~~ **[each other]**. ⁶Those you do not forgive *you fear*.
⁷And no one reaches love with *fear* beside him.

• **Study Question** •

2. *You are still standing before the final obstacle, the fear of God. If, say, you were to look upon this fear and lapse into total terror, what would be the cause of that, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *It would mean that you saw it for what it was; since it is fear, looking upon it will provoke fear.*
 - B. *It would mean that you still feared God.*
 - C. *It would mean that you still feared your brother.*
 - D. *A and B*
 - E. *B and C*

But as we have seen, you can't skip steps; in fact, it is impossible to jump the gun; preparation is necessary (11:1). Your mind must have reclaimed its sanity before you "can look on stark insanity and raving madness with pity and compassion, but *not* with fear" (11:2). As becomes clear in a moment, this is talking about how you perceive the insanity and madness in your brother or sister. This is why it takes a relationship. You look from a *sane* mind, without terror, on the stark *insanity* in your brother or sister, and you look with pity and compassion, but not with fear. But if your mind *shares* the insanity—if you are caught up in the fear of God yourself—then, when you see it in another, it arouses fear in you. You cannot perceive the call for love; you see attack and are afraid. Once you are able to "look upon each other with perfect faith and love and tenderness" (11:3), your mind has become sane, and you no longer fear God.

See how your relationship with God mirrors your relationship with each other! "You are afraid of God *because* you fear each other" (11:5). The Course says this in a myriad of ways, for instance: "God knows His Son as wholly blameless as Himself, and He is approached through the appreciation of His Son" (T-11.IV.7:2). And why are you afraid of your brother? Because you have not forgiven him (11:6). So, until you forgive your brother you will fear him. As long as you fear your brother, you will fear God. And as long as you fear God, you won't pass by the final veil and find God's Love waiting for you (11:7).

Paragraph 12

12. ¹This brother who stands beside you still seems to be a stranger. ²You do *not* know him, and your *interpretation* of him is *very* fearful. ³And you attack him still, to keep what seems to be *yourself* unharmed. ⁴Yet in his hands *is* your salvation. ⁵You see his madness, which you hate because you *share [in]* it. ⁶And all the pity and forgiveness that would *heal* it gives way to fear. ⁷**Brother, [Brothers,]** you *need* forgiveness of ~~your brother~~ **[each other]**, for you will share in madness or in Heaven *together*. ⁸And you and he will raise your eyes in *faith* together, or not at

all.

• **Study Question** •

3. *Suppose you read about a gunman who enters an elementary school and shoots a dozen young children. You find that you hate him for this insanity of his. According to this paragraph, why do you hate his insanity?*
- A. *Because you are trying to protect your (apparent) self.*
 - B. *Because he seems to be a stranger.*
 - C. *Because you want to help him but cannot do so.*
 - D. *Because you share his insanity.*
 - E. *He is not insane, and that is why you hate him.*
 - F. *A and D*
 - G. *C and D*

It comes down to the person beside you and how you relate to them. We do not really *know* one another, because, if we did, we would be filled with unconditional, unlimited love. There is an insurmountable gap between us, and other people, even those we call “close,” still seem like strangers (12:1). But, “If you knew Who walks beside you on the way that you have chosen, fear would be impossible” (T-18.III.3:2). If we really *knew* that the truth of his or her being is the Christ, “wholly lovable and wholly loving,” how could we fear? “...in Christ’s vision is his loveliness reflected in a form so holy and so beautiful that you could scarce refrain from kneeling at his feet” (W-pI.161.9:3). Rather than seeing this truth, our “*interpretation* of him is *very* fearful” (12:2).

Who sees a brother as a body sees him as fear’s symbol. And he will attack, because what he beholds is his own fear external to himself, poised to attack, and howling to unite with him again. Mistake not the intensity of rage projected fear must spawn. It shrieks in wrath, and claws the air in frantic hope it can reach to its maker and devour him.

This do the body’s eyes behold in one whom Heaven cherishes, the angels love and God created perfect (W-pI.161.8:1-9:1).

Therefore, we pre-emptively attack one another, in a desperate attempt to protect “what seems to be *yourself* [i.e., the ego and the body] unharmed” (12:3). And thus goes the world! We walk around with our barriers up, tip-toeing through what we perceive as the minefield of life, not realizing that the “dangerous people” we believe we see are our saviors in disguise (12:4). The reason we hate what we see in one another is because *we share the same madness* (12:5). Back in Chapter 9, the Course puts it this way: “If you point out the errors of your brother’s ego you must be seeing through yours, because the Holy Spirit does not perceive his errors” (T-9.III.3:1). When we perceive another as an ego, instead of offering “pity and forgiveness” which would *heal* their madness, we give way to fear (12:6).

Forgiving *each other* is crucial for us; we *need* it (12:7). Notice the important difference between the Urtext version of Sentence 7 and the published FIP version:

“Forgiveness of *each other*” is quite different from “forgiveness of your brother”; in fact, it isn’t quite clear what “forgiveness of your brother” means! Does it mean you need to forgive your brother, or that you need your brother’s forgiveness *of you*? But “forgiveness of each other” clearly means *both*. The remainder of the sentence then makes a lot more sense: “for you will share in madness and in Heaven *together*.” This is talking about a *shared* consciousness. The following sentence nails this down beyond doubt: “And you and he will raise your eyes in *faith* together, or not at all” (12:8).

Paragraph 13

13. ¹Beside **[each of]** you is one who offers you the chalice of Atonement, for the Holy Spirit is in him. ²Would you hold his sins *against* him, or accept his gift to *you*? ³Is this giver of salvation your friend or enemy? ⁴Choose which he is, remembering that you will *receive* of him according to your choice. ⁵He has *in him* the power to forgive *your sin* **[sins]**, as you for *him*. ⁶Neither can give it to himself alone. ⁷And yet your savior stands beside each one. ⁸Let him be what he *is*, and seek not to make of love an enemy.

• Study Question •

4. *This paragraph says clearly that your brother cannot forgive himself his sins; only you can. And that you cannot forgive yourself your sins; only he can. This seems to go against the idea that my salvation comes from me. What do we make of this apparent contradiction?*
- A. *This is the Course taking poetic license. It doesn't really mean it.*
 - B. *It means that by forgiving your brother you see him as your savior. And this act of seeing him as your savior is what saves you. It doesn't really require him to do anything different than he is now.*
 - C. *It means what it says. Your holy relationship partner can give forgiveness to you in a way that you cannot give it to yourself.*

Who is this “one who offers you the chalice of Atonement, for the Holy Spirit is in him” (13:1)? You might suppose it is speaking about Jesus, or Christ. And, in a sense, it *is* talking about Christ, but, in my opinion, it is referring specifically to the *person* who is beside you; in other words, the person with whom you are in relationship. The next two or three sentences talk about holding this person’s sins against them, and choosing to see them as friend rather than enemy. Sentence 6 asserts that “neither” can give salvation to himself or herself, and yet (sentence 7) each one has their savior standing beside them. It’s quite clear that the “savior” it is speaking of, the one offering you the chalice of Atonement, is the other person in the relationship, the one *you* are being called to forgive!

We are asked to forgive one another, to choose to see them as a friend and not an enemy, in recognition of the fact that how we choose to see them is how *we* will be seen,

as we forgive, we will be forgiven (13:4–5). In so doing we are allowing the other person to *be* what they already *are*: a savior (13:8).

Paragraph 14

14. ¹Behold your Friend, the Christ Who stands beside you. ²How holy and how beautiful He is! ³You *thought* He sinned because you cast the veil of sin upon Him to *hide* His loveliness. ⁴Yet still He holds forgiveness out to you, to *share* His holiness. ⁵This “enemy,” this “stranger” still offers you salvation as His Friend. ⁶The “enemies” of Christ, the worshippers of sin, know not Whom they attack.

• Study Question •

5. *Paragraph 14* talks about the Christ standing beside you. However, we were told a few paragraphs ago that the Christ stood, not beside us, but on the other side of the veil. How can He be standing beside us, then?
- A. The Holy Spirit is beside us, and since Christ is with Him, Christ is beside us also.
 - B. The brother standing beside us is really the Christ, and when we see that we will receive His forgiveness.
 - C. At this point we have lifted the veil and so now the Christ is here with us, rather than on the other side of the veil.

•

This is the central message of the Course, the way of “salvation” it proposes: We forgive another who forgives us in turn. We look past the ego and the body, past the “sins” we have laid on him or her, and see the Christ in them, see their true nature as a perfect, loving and lovable child of God. This gives the other person the freedom to do the same for us in return. No one can give forgiveness to himself alone (13:6). It takes two.

This paragraph describes what I will see when I fully forgive a brother or sister. I will see my Friend, seeing him or her as the Christ they are (14:1). I won’t see Jesus Christ standing next to me. I will see Peggy Christ, or Tim Christ, or Ben Christ, or Marlys Christ. I will be in awe of the holiness and beauty that I see in them (14:2). Their loveliness is now revealed to me because my forgiveness has lifted the “veil of sin” from them that hid the loveliness and allowed me to *think* that I saw sin where there was none (14:3). Now, I perceive this person as my savior, one who can offer me forgiveness (14:4). I saw this person as a stranger or even an enemy; now, I see them as my Friend, offering me salvation (14:5).

When we attack a brother or sister, when we judge them as unworthy of love or deserving of punishment or misfortune, we do not realize Who we are attacking (14:6)!

I believe these paragraphs are speaking of *mutual forgiveness*, a relationship in which one person fully forgives the other, who consciously receives the gift of freedom from

guilt, which awakens the Christ in them so that they, in return, forgive the one who forgave them.

This is a description of the way things happen when the forgiveness is mutual and simultaneous. Clearly, in many instances, one person gives the gift of forgiveness to another who does *not* immediately receive it, and return the gift. The Course recognizes this, for instance in Chapter 6 and 7 of the Manual for Teachers, which speaks about healing rather than forgiveness, but the principle applies.

Whenever a teacher of God has tried to be a channel for healing he has succeeded. Should he be tempted to doubt this, he should not repeat his previous effort (M-7.2:1-2).

Healing will always stand aside when it would be seen as threat. The instant it is welcome it is there. Where healing has been given it will be received. And what is time before the gifts of God? We have referred many times in the text to the storehouse of treasures laid up equally for the giver and the receiver of God's gifts. Not one is lost, for they can but increase. No teacher of God should feel disappointed if he has offered healing and it does not appear to have been received. It is not up to him to judge when his gift should be accepted. Let him be certain it has been received, and trust that it will be accepted when it is recognized as a blessing and not a curse (M-6.2:1-9).

Perhaps the key thought there is, “what is time before the gifts of God?” In other words, time is irrelevant. If the acceptance and return of forgiveness is immediate, wonderful. If it takes years and years, equally wonderful. The gift has been given; it *will* be received and returned. The “healing” *has* succeeded, regardless of the seeming persistence of “symptoms”.¹

Paragraph 15

15. ¹This is your brother, crucified by sin and waiting for release from pain. ²Would you not *offer* him forgiveness, when only he can offer it to you? ³For *his* redemption he will give you yours, as surely as God created every living thing and loves it. ⁴And he will give it truly, for it will be both offered and *received*. ⁵There is no grace of Heaven that you cannot *offer to your brother [each other]*, and receive from your most holy Friend. ⁶Let him withhold it not, for by receiving it you offer it to *him*. ⁷**And [For]** he *will* receive of you what *you* received of him. ⁸Redemption has been given you to give ~~your brother~~ **[each other]**, and thus receive it. ⁹Whom you forgive *is* free, and what you give *you share*. ¹⁰Forgive the sins your brother *thinks* he has committed, and ~~all the guilt you think you see in him~~ **[all the guilt you see in him]**.

¹ “One of the most difficult temptations to recognize is that to doubt a healing because of the appearance of continuing symptoms is a mistake in the form of lack of trust” (M-7.4:1).

• **Study Question** •

6. *What is the relationship between giving forgiveness to your brother and receiving it from him?*
- A. *By giving forgiveness to your brother, you become worthy of his forgiveness.*
 - B. *When you give forgiveness to your brother, he will forgive you; not because you have now earned it, but because he will be healed enough to forgive you, and will want to return your gift in gratitude.*
 - C. *When you give forgiveness to your brother, you will see him returning it to you in your mind's eye, whether or not he actually does so.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

The choice that confronts us all, every day, is whether or not to forgive one another and release one another from the pain of guilt. Knowing that the only way we can experience forgiveness is by offering it to others, why would we choose otherwise (15:1–2)? The most likely reason is that we doubt that the other person will return the forgiveness. We are afraid forgiving will make us vulnerable to attack. But if we believe that about someone, have we *really* forgiven them? The return of forgiveness offered is as certain that “God created every living thing and loves it” (15:3). If it is truly offered it will be truly received; that is a *law* (15:4).

And this law is reciprocal: If you gratefully *receive* forgiveness from another person, you *have* offered forgiveness back to them (15:5–6). Whatever grace we give one another we receive; whatever grace we receive we have also given (15:7–8). “What you give *you share*” (15:9). When another person feels guilty it is because they *think* they have “sinned” in some way, but we have the power to forgive them and release them from guilt. Likewise, we must also forgive all the guilt that *we think* we see in them. Whether the guilt is self-induced or laid on them by me, my only job is to forgive it. To wash it away and see guilt gone entirely (15:10).²

² LESSON 351

My sinless brother is my guide to peace. My sinful brother is my guide to pain. And which I choose to see I will behold.

1. *1 Who is my brother but Your holy Son? 2 And if I see him sinful I proclaim myself a sinner, not a Son of God; alone and friendless in a fearful world. 3 Yet this perception is a choice I make, and can relinquish. 4 I can also see my brother sinless, as Your holy Son. 5 And with this choice I see my sinlessness, my everlasting Comforter and Friend beside me, and my way secure and clear. 6 Choose, then, for me, my Father, through Your Voice. 7 For He alone gives judgment in Your Name.*

© 2016 by Allen A. Watson, Portland, OR

<http://allen-watson.com/> • allen@allen-watson.com • 503-916-9411

Paragraph 16

16. ¹Here is the holy place of *resurrection*, to which we come again; to which we will return until *redemption* is accomplished *and received*.
²Think who your brother *is*, before you would condemn him. ³And offer thanks to God that he is holy, and has been given the gift of holiness for *you*. ⁴Join him in gladness, and remove all trace of guilt from his disturbed and tortured mind. ⁵Help him to lift the heavy burden of sin you laid upon him and he *accepted* as his own, and toss it lightly and with happy laughter *away* from him. ⁶Press it not like thorns against his brow, nor nail him to it, unredeemed and hopeless.

• Study Question •

7. *This paragraph urges us to help relieve our brother's sense of sinfulness and guilt. Where does his sense of sinfulness and guilt come from? In other words, why do people in our lives feel sinful and guilty (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *Because we accused them of being sinful.*
 - B. *Mostly because of their parents.*
 - C. *Mostly because of traditional religion.*
 - D. *Because they accepted our message of blame.*

•

Notice the Good Friday/Easter imagery here: the place of resurrection, the heavy burden of sin (which Jesus supposedly carried), the crown of thorns and nails. This part of the Text was taken down by Helen just prior to Easter, 1963 (17:4). Chapter 20 begins with the words, “This is Palm Sunday,” and the Easter theme carries on for the next two sections.

This place we are in, before the veil, is “the holy place of *resurrection*” (16:1), because we can leave behind the fear of death and enter eternal life. We have “come again” to this place, so evidently we have been here before. As we saw in Paragraph 10, we have probably been here before, but have chosen *not* to look past the veil, but to wander on. Now, we get to choose again. If we make the wrong choice, we will return to this point again and again “until *redemption* is accomplished *and received*.”

This is one characteristic of the Course that distinguishes it from many other spiritual teachings, especially that of traditional Christianity with its belief in an eternal hell: There is no end to second chances, and eventually, *everyone will receive redemption*.

“...the outcome is as certain as God” (T-2.III.3:10).

“The conscious choice of Heaven is as sure as is the ending of the fear of hell, when it is raised from its protective shield of unawareness, and is brought to light” (W-pI.138.10:1).

“There is no chance that Heaven will not be yours, for God is sure, and what He wills is sure as He is” (T-13.XI.8:9).

“Nothing can prevent what God would have accomplished from accomplishment. Whatever your reactions to the Holy Spirit’s Voice may be, whatever voice you choose to listen to, whatever strange thoughts may occur to you, God’s Will *is* done. You will find the peace in which He has established you, because He does not change His Mind” (T-13.XI.5:3-5).

“Have faith in only this one thing, and it will be sufficient: God wills you be in Heaven, and nothing can keep you from it, or it from you. Your wildest misperceptions, your weird imaginings, your blackest nightmares all mean nothing. They will not prevail against the peace God wills for you. The Holy Spirit will restore your sanity because insanity is not the Will of God” (T-13.XI.7:1-4).

“Salvation is as sure as God” (T-13.XI.9:3).

In this place of resurrection, Jesus asks us to stop before we condemn a brother or sister, and think who he or she really *is* (16:2), which is, of course, the holy Son of God Himself (see Lesson 191). This is very likely the lesson we have failed to learn in previous visits to this place; we have chosen once again to judge someone, we have held onto a grievance. Instead, we should offer thanks that they are holy, and have received the gift of holiness that they can give to *us* (16:3).

When we come to realize that everyone is “disturbed and tortured” by guilt, and that we have the means—no, we *are* the means—to remove their guilt and lift their heavy burden of sin, a burden *we* have imposed and *they* have accepted...when we begin to see people that way and see ourselves that way, we will have discovered our function, our *raison d’être*. We can take that burden from them and “toss it lightly and with happy laughter *away* from” them (16:4–5).

I want that “happy laughter,” don’t you? Do we really want to press that burden of guilt upon one another like a crown of thorns, or nail one another to it like nailing Jesus to the cross, leaving one another “unredeemed and hopeless” (16:6)? That’s what we do when we judge one another. That’s what we have done that has kept us coming back to this place again and again. That’s what we must *stop* doing if we are ever to finish this journey!

Have you ever used, or thought, the phrase, “Wow! I really *nailed* him!” Have you ever realized what that refers to, what it means? We might as well say, “I just *crucified* him!”

Paragraph 17

17. ~~1Give faith to your brother~~ **[Give each other faith]**, for faith and hope and mercy *are* yours to give. ²Into the hands that give, the gift is given. ³Look on your brother, and see in him the gift of God you would *receive*. ⁴It is almost Easter, the time of resurrection. ⁵Let us give redemption to each other and *share* in it, that we may rise as one in resurrection, **[and]** not *separate* in death. ⁶Behold the gift of freedom that

I gave the Holy Spirit for **[both of]** you. ⁷And be you and your brother free together, as you offer *to* the Holy Spirit this *same* gift. ⁸And giving it, receive it *of* Him in *return* for what you gave. ⁹He leadeth you and me together, that we might meet here in this holy place, and make the *same* decision.

• **Study Question** •

8. Sentence 6 says, "Behold the gift of freedom that I gave the Holy Spirit for you." What is this gift of freedom?
- A. A personal reference to Helen's relationship with Jesus; we may never know the details.
 - B. It must be roughly synonymous with the peace that entered the holy relationship.
 - C. It appears to be the gift of redemption that Jesus gave us in his resurrection.
 - D. It is unclear.

•

What a way to celebrate Easter! These next four paragraphs sound the call to forgiveness over and over, saying that giving redemption to one another is the way to "rise as one in resurrection" (17:5). It takes faith to do this, but we *can* give faith to our brothers or sisters; we can give hope and mercy, too (17:1). We must have faith in them to "see in [them] the gift of God you would *receive*" (17:3).

The thought in 17:2 is repeated in many ways, starting in the paragraph 15:

"Let him withhold it not, for by receiving it you offer it to him. And he will receive of you what you received of him" (T-19.IV.15:6-7).

"Into the hands that give, the gift is given" (T-19.IV.17:2).

"And giving it, receive it of Him in return for what you gave" (T-19.IV.17:8).

"Think carefully how you would look upon the giver of this gift, for as you look on him so will the gift itself appear to be. As he is seen as either the giver of guilt or of salvation, so will his offering be seen and so received" (T-19.IV.20:1-2).

"Everyone gives as he receives, but he must choose what it will *be* that he receives. And he will recognize his choice by what he gives, and what is given him" (T-19.IV.20:5-6).

It's an idea that has been around for millenia, of course. In the Gospels, Jesus said it as clearly as he does here in the Course: "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38, NIV). Jesus uses it as the basis of more than one Workbook lesson (108, 126, 154, 158, 159, 197, 316). In Lesson 108, after the title, "To give and to receive are one in truth," Jesus tells us, "Vision depends upon today's idea." Later in the lesson, he declares:

To learn that giving and receiving are the same has special usefulness, because it can be tried so easily and seen as true. And when this special case has proved it always works, in every circumstance where it is tried, the thought behind it can be generalized to other areas of doubt and double vision.

In practicing this lesson, I have confirmed what he says. For instance, as I offer peace to one person after another, I *experience* peace.

But in the discussion here of the fourth obstacle, he is speaking about a specific application of the idea: giving and receiving *forgiveness*. All the material above that speaks of giving and receiving should be applied specifically to forgiveness. This is the gift, given us by the Holy Spirit, that brings freedom (17:6). We are meant to be offering this freedom to one another, and to offer our forgiveness of one another to the Holy Spirit in return (17:7). As we do, it returns again to us. (17:8). And Jesus is with us (“you and me together”) before the veil, making the choice for life instead of death, for resurrection instead of crucifixion (17:9).³

Paragraph 18

18. ¹Free your brother here, as I freed you. ²Give him the selfsame gift, nor look upon him with condemnation of *any* kind. ³See him as guiltless as I look on you, and *overlook* the sins he *thinks* he sees within himself. ⁴Offer ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** freedom and complete release from sin, here in the garden of seeming agony and death. ⁵So will we prepare *together* the way unto the resurrection of God’s Son, and let him rise again to glad remembrance of his Father, Who knows no sin, no death, but *only* life eternal.

• Study Question •

9. *Your friend, with whom you thought you were joined in a common purpose, stabs you in the back. Based on this paragraph, what do you do?*
- A. *You realize that you got sucked into a bad thing and find someone else.*
 - B. *You see this person as one of the rabble who fell upon Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (see sentence 4).*
 - C. *You give our brother the exact same gift of forgiveness Jesus has given you.*

•

Just as Jesus has freed you from guilt, you are to free your brother (18:1). Jesus even told his disciples, “As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.” (John 20:21 ESV) He is replicating himself in us all. He asks us to look on one another without “condemnation of *any* kind” (18:2), which are strong words. We are one another’s

³ The words, “He leadeth you and me” are probably drawn from Helen’s memory of an old gospel hymn, “He leadeth me, O blessed thought!” She may have heard it when her childhood governess took her to a black Baptist church.

saviors. Each of us thinks we see “sins” in ourselves; each of us feels less than 100% worthy, ashamed of ourselves in some way or another. But another person can look at us and *overlook* our imagined guilt (18:3), which enables us to look likewise at *their* imagined sins and relieve their guilt.

In the shadow of the fear of death, facing the fear of God, it seems as if we stand in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed in anguish. But this is the place where, with souls stripped naked, we can “offer each other freedom and complete release from sin” (18:4). It is a mutual, cooperative effort that prepares the way for us to rise again into the remembrance of the Father. Here, in God’s Presence, we are seen to have “no sin, no death, but *only* life eternal” (18:5).

The experience of mutual, shared forgiveness is perhaps the most freeing, exhilarating, let’s-set-off-fireworks feeling anyone can ever know.

Paragraph 19

19. ¹Together we will disappear into the Presence *beyond* the veil, not to be lost but *found*; not to be seen but **[to be] known**. ²And knowing, nothing in the plan God has established for salvation will be left undone. ³This is the journey’s purpose, *without* which *is* the journey meaningless. ⁴Here is the peace of God, given to you eternally by Him. ⁵Here is the rest and quiet that you seek, the *reason* for the journey from its beginning. ⁶Heaven is the gift you ~~owe your brother~~ **[each other]**, the debt of gratitude you offer to the Son of God in thanks for what he is, and what his Father created him to be.

• Study Question •

10. *This paragraph again brings up the concept of the journey's purpose. What, based on this paragraph, is the journey's purpose?*

•

When you see a phrase such as “disappear into the Presence *beyond* the veil” (19:1), there is probably a voice in your head saying something like this: “Disappear? That’s what I thought! That’s what I was afraid of!” However, this is a very different kind of disappearance from what we fear. Instead of being lost, we will be *found*. What disappears is the separateness. What disappears is the false identity. What disappears is the frightened, closed-off self. What is found is the radiant being we have always been, but have forgotten. The caterpillar disappears and the butterfly emerges in glorious splendor.

We will no longer be merely *seen*, which implies perception, duality, separateness of observer and observed. We will be *known*, the direct apprehension that can exist only in oneness. We will be known because there will be no remaining barriers between us, that is, between you and your relationship partners, between you and *anyone*, between you and God. It is not merely *seeing oneness*, in a moment of mystical insight. “Unitive

Seeing means seeing *from Oneness*” (Cynthia Bourgeault, “Mystical Experience or Unitive Seeing?”⁴). That is knowing, and that is being known.⁵

This is it! The end of the journey, with God’s intention fully accomplished, nothing left undone (19:2). This unitive awareness, this melting of separate awarenesses into the one Presence, is what gives the journey meaning (19:3). It makes sense to me that the gateway into this knowing is through what, at first, seemed to be “someone else.”

“Having made this choice you will understand why you once believed that, when you met someone else, you thought he *was* someone else. And every holy encounter in which you enter fully will teach you this is not so” (T-8.III.6:7-8).

This union brings us the peace of God, the rest and quiet we’ve been seeking, and it is “the *reason* for the journey from its beginning” (19:4–5). Each of us can bring this to others in our lives, and we owe it to them to do so, in gratitude for what they are, as God created them to be (19:6). This is why the Workbook can say, “Forgiveness offers everything I want” (W-pI.122).

Paragraph 20

20. ¹Think carefully how you would look upon the giver of this gift, for as you look on *him* so will the gift *itself* appear to be. ²As *he* is seen as either the giver of guilt or of salvation, so will his *offering* be seen and so *received*. ³The crucified give pain because they *are* in pain. ⁴But the redeemed give joy because they have been *healed* of pain. ⁵Everyone gives as he receives, but *he* must choose what it will *be* that he receives. ⁶And he will *recognize* his choice by what he gives, and what is given *him*. ⁷Nor is it given anything in hell or Heaven to *interfere* with his decision.

• Study Question •

11. *When you see another as the giver of salvation, what will be the result?*
- A. *Even if your brother doesn't change, you will see him giving you salvation, you will interpret his gift to you differently than before.*
 - B. *He may give you pain, because he still sees himself crucified.*
 - C. *You may receive salvation or something less, depending on which brother we are talking about.*
 - D. *Through this perception you will heal your brother, who, being healed, will now give you joy.*
 - E. *B and C*
 - F. *A and D*

•

⁴ <http://www.spiritualpaths.net/mystical-experience-or-unitive-seeing-by-cynthia-bourgeault/>

⁵ See Lesson 336.

What gift will your brother or sister give to you? Guilt or salvation? Don't make the mistake of thinking, "That depends on what they want to give me." No; "as you look on *him* will the gift *itself* appear to be" (20:1). If you choose to see him or her as a savior, he or she will *be* that to you. If you choose to see him or her as a sinner, that is what he or she will appear to be to you. The choice is up to you (20:2). The way that you choose to see someone is the way that you *will* see them.

My sinless brother is my guide to peace. My sinful brother is my guide to pain.
And which I choose to see I will behold (W-pII.351).

You have the choice: Crucify your brother or sister, or heal their pain. They, in return, will give you either pain or joy (20:3–4). *You must choose* what you will receive from others, and when you do, that is what you will give (20:5). If the "gift exchange" is one of joy, you know what you chose. If it is pain, you know as well that you chose *that*. There is absolutely nothing "in hell or Heaven" that can interfere with what you choose (20:6–7). Your choice is sovereign.

It is impossible the Son of God be merely driven by events outside of him. It is impossible that happenings that come to him were not his choice. His power of decision is the determiner of every situation in which he seems to find himself by chance or accident. No accident nor chance is possible within the universe as God created it, outside of which is nothing. Suffer, and you decided sin was your goal. Be happy, and you gave the power of decision to Him Who must decide for God for you (T-21.II.3:1-6).

No one can suffer loss unless it be his own decision. No one suffers pain except his choice elects this state for him. No one can grieve nor fear nor think him sick unless these are the outcomes that he wants. And no one dies without his own consent. Nothing occurs but represents your wish, and nothing is omitted that you choose. Here is your world, complete in all details. Here is its whole reality for you. And it is only here salvation is (W-pI.152.1:1-8).

Paragraph 21

21. ¹You came this far because the journey *was* your choice. ²And no one undertakes to do what he believes is meaningless. ³What you had faith in still is faithful, and watches over you in faith so gentle yet so strong that it would lift you far beyond the veil, and place the Son of God safely within the sure protection of his Father. ⁴Here is the *only* purpose that gives this world, and the long journey *through* this world, whatever meaning lies in them. ⁵Beyond this, they *are* meaningless. ⁶You ~~and your brother~~ stand together, still without conviction they *have* a purpose. ⁷Yet it is *given* you to see this purpose in your holy Friend, and *recognize* it as your own.

• **Study Question** •

12. *Even though you came this far because the journey was your own choice, you are still not sure the journey has a purpose. Sentence 4 says, "Here is the only purpose...." Sentence 5 says, "Beyond this [purpose]...." What is this purpose of the journey?*
- A. *To learn how meaningful the world is.*
 - B. *Being lifted beyond the veil into God.*
 - C. *To realize how important your brother is to your journey.*
 - D. *To acquire a new kind of individuality.*

The good news is, if you are reading this and seriously considering its message, it shows that “the journey *was* your choice” (21:1). You *are* on the right path, and you would not be doing it if you believed the spiritual journey was meaningless (21:2). You would never begin a holy relationship if you did not desire to complete this journey. You put your faith in another, and in the Christ within you both. That inner Presence remains consistent in its purpose and direction: to “lift you far beyond the veil, and place [your true Self,] the Son of God safely within the sure protection of his Father” (21:3).

That spiritual goal is “the *only* purpose that gives this world, and the long journey *through* this world, whatever meaning lies in them” (12:4). It takes some of us a long time to realize this fact. Perhaps we think we are here to raise a family, or to create works of art, or to write, or to build a successful business, or to solve the problem of world hunger. Whatever we think gives meaning to our lives, if it isn’t the spiritual journey, we are wrong. That journey may take many different forms. It may well be in raising a family that we find the perfect environment for spiritual growth. It may be in a business, or in humanitarian service. It may be almost *anything*, but the over-riding purpose is *always* the spiritual journey. Without this, everything else is meaningless.

Very likely many of us still fit in the category of Sentence 6: those who lack conviction that this world, and our journey through it, have any meaning at all! The great hint, the key to discovering the meaning of life (Yes; that phrase really fits here!), is right in front of you. It is “in your holy Friend” (21:7), the person you are here to forgive, and the Holy Spirit is giving you the opportunity to find your purpose here, in this act of forgiveness. Forgiveness is what we all are here to learn.

Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world.

It is your forgiveness that will bring the world of darkness to the light. It is your forgiveness that lets you recognize the light in which you see. Forgiveness is the demonstration that you are the light of the world. Through your forgiveness does the truth about yourself return to your memory. Therefore, in your forgiveness lies your salvation (W-pI.62.1:1-5).

• **Study Question** •

13. *Please write a one-paragraph summary of the themes of this section, or those themes that struck you most strongly.*

Answer Key

1. **Paragraph 10.** C
2. **Paragraph 11.** E
3. **Paragraph 12.** F
4. **Paragraph 13.** C
5. **Paragraph 14.** B
6. **Paragraph 15.** B
7. **Paragraph 16.** A and D
8. **Paragraph 17.** C
9. **Paragraph 18.** C
10. **Paragraph 19.** Disappearing into the Presence beyond the veil; finding the peace of God; the rest and quiet you seek; Heaven.
11. **Paragraph 20.** F
12. **Paragraph 21.** B
13. My summary: You are attracted to death because you fear God's Life. You and your brother stand before this final obstacle--the fear of God--afraid to look up. This brother seems to be an enemy. Yet he is the Christ, your savior, crucified by guilt. Set him free with your forgiveness, and he will give this gift to you. And then together you and he will look upon the veil and go beyond it to God.