

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 20, Section III

The Vision of Holiness

Sin as an Adjustment

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

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

Overview of the Section

What a section this is, short as it may be! It tells us the three main means that the Holy Spirit uses to save us. It makes *incredible* promises about the power of our relationships. It clarifies that a holy relationship is still a special relationship. And it gives us a powerful practice to use when it feels as if our relationship is falling apart.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The belief in sin is an *adjustment*¹. ²And an adjustment is a *change*; a shift in perception, or a belief that what was so before has been made *different*. ³Every adjustment is therefore a *distortion*, and calls upon defenses to uphold it *against* reality. ⁴Knowledge requires *no* adjustments and, in fact, is lost if any shift or change is undertaken. ⁵For this reduces it at once to mere perception; a way of *looking* in which *certainty* is lost and *doubt* has entered. ⁶To this *impaired* condition are adjustments necessary, ~~because it is not true~~ [***Because /they are not true***]. ⁷Who need adjust to truth, which calls on only what he *is*, to understand?

¹ Two definitions of *adjustment* culled from the Internet:

- 1). **Adjustment** may be defined as a process of altering behavior to reach a harmonious relationship with the environment. When people say they are in an “adjustment period” they typically mean they are going through a process of change and are searching for some level of balance or acceptance with the environment, others, or themselves.
- 2). **Adjustment** is defined as a process wherein one builds variations in the behaviour to achieve harmony with oneself, others or the environment with an aim to maintain the state of equilibrium between the individual and the environment. **Adjustment** has been analyzed as an achievement as well as a process in **psychology**.

• **Study Question** •

1. *Why does Jesus say that “...every adjustment is therefore a distortion” (1:3, see 1:1-2).*
 - A. *Because the belief in sin sees the holy Son of God as sinful.*
 - B. *Because it is impossible that something created by God, or any part of reality, can become something different.*
 - C. *Because any perception of reality that differs from reality must be a distorted perception.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

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“The belief in sin is an adjustment”...“a belief that what was so before has been made different” (1:1–2). We frequently speak of someone as being “well-adjusted” to his job, his role as a parent, and so on. People alter their behavior and sometimes their thinking in order to “fit in” or “get along” with their environment, with other people, and sometimes with themselves. For instance, we often adjust our plans and behavior based on a change in weather. Most of us have experienced living with other people, in a family, or college, or a marriage, and are quite familiar with the kind of adjustments that are nearly always necessary. An instance of adjustment to oneself might be setting alarms for yourself because you recognize that you tend to lose track of time.

In the psychology of the world, being well-adjusted is a positive thing. The Course, however, sees adjustments wholly as an ego function (“Adjustments of *any* kind are of the ego” (2:1)). This section explains why, but I think we need to realize that this does not make adjustments *bad* or certainly not *sinful*. They are a normal part of living in this world. What the Course is calling attention to here is the core reason *why* adjustment seems to be normal and necessary in this world.

First of all, adjustments are seen to be necessary because *something has changed*. My income has dropped. I’ve gotten married. Something that “was so before has been made *different*” (1:2). Therefore, Jesus says, they are *distortions* (1:3). The logic here make a huge assumption, presuming a basic dictum of the Course: Reality does not change; “reality is changeless”². Since adjustment assumes something has changed and has been made different, and since reality does *not* change, any adjustment must be a distortion. To defend the necessity of their existence, adjustments have to “call upon defenses to uphold it *against* reality” (1:3). It’s a sort of “my mind is made up, don’t confuse me with facts” kind of thing.

Think for a moment about the sort of adjustments two people make when they decide to live together. Most, if not all, of them are based on the presumption of separate interests. The introvert needs lots of time alone; the extrovert needs lots of personal interaction and conversation. But if we, in truth, are not separate, how can there be

² "Appearances deceive, but can be changed. Reality is changeless. It does not deceive at all, and if you fail to see beyond appearances you *are* deceived. For everything you see will change, and yet you thought it real before, and now you think it real again. Reality is thus reduced to form, and capable of change. Reality is changeless. It is this that makes it real, and keeps it separate from all appearances. It must transcend all form to be itself. It cannot change" (T-30.VIII.1:1-9).

separate interests? So we end up stressing our differences instead of our sameness. Robert Perry has suggested that a powerful forgiveness practice is to call to mind a person with whom we have a forgiveness issue, and then, thinking of this person, repeat to ourselves:

Same nature
Same worth
Same desires
Same mistakes
Same problem
Same pain
Same interests
Same goal
SAME SELF

Rather than adjusting to differences, we need to embrace our sameness.

Jesus says that if we really *know* one another, no adjustments are ever needed. “In fact,” he affirms, knowledge “is lost if any shift or change is undertaken” (1:4). Adjustments presume differences. The knowledge of sameness is lost, and we have begun to operate on “mere perception; a way of *looking* in which *certainty* is lost and *doubt* has entered” (1:5). When we are looking through the distorted lens of “mere perception,” which is an “impaired condition,” then adjustments *are* necessary—because what we are seeing *is not true* (1:6)! Our belief in sin requires *us* to adjust to it; it calls on something other than the truth in us—that is, what we truly are—and therefore requires us to respond with something invented, something we are not.

Think for a moment of all the adjustments you have made to your perceived imperfection. Try to grasp that you are trying to solve a problem that does not exist in reality.

The same is true with the adjustments you make in regard to other people, and to your environment. You are barking up the wrong tree. These adjustments, as externally helpful as they may seem to be, do not address the real problem, which is not seeing the truth about ourselves and others.

For you or me to know the truth does not require any change, any adjustment. We already are all that we need to be (1:7).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Adjustments of *any* kind are of the ego. ²For it is the ego's fixed belief that all relationships *depend* upon adjustments, to make of them what it would have them be. ³*Direct* relationships, in which there are *no* interferences, are *always* seen as dangerous. ⁴The ego is the self-appointed mediator of *all* relationships, making whatever adjustments it deems necessary and *interposing* them *between* those who would meet, to keep them separate and *prevent* their union. ⁵It is this studied interference that makes it difficult for you to recognize your holy relationship for what it is.

• Study Question •

2. *What is the ego's motivation in basing relationships upon adjustments? (More than one answer is correct.)*
- A. *The ego is seeking to keep us separate and prevent our union.*
 - B. *The ego is trying to make its substitute relationships satisfying for us.*
 - C. *The ego is trying to make our relationships serve its own purposes.*
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It is our egos that perceive the need for adjustments (2:1), and that makes them. We are reacting *as* egos to people we are perceiving *as* egos. Adjustments are the ego's idea of how to make relationships work (2:2).

The alternative to ego-to-ego relationships are *direct relationships*.” This is the kind of relationship we already have in reality, a relationship in which we have a perfect fit with one another because we each recognize the other's wholeness and perfection. There are no “interferences,” requiring adjustments. To the ego, such relationships are “*always* seen as dangerous” (2:3). It becomes “the self-appointed mediator of *all* relationships” (2:4) because it wants to prevent true union. So it creates a deliberate plan of interferences (“studied interference”) and then offers “adjustments” to deal with the problems that it has created in the first place. It is a mediator whose goal is to keep the participants *apart*, rather than helping them join together.

The ego's interference makes it difficult for us to recognize our holy relationships for what they are (2:5). Our unity already exists. Believing in the illusion of separate egos and identifying with them is what is keeping us from recognizing and enjoying that unity.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The holy do not interfere with truth. ²They are *not* afraid of it, for it is *within* the truth they ~~recognize~~ **[recognized]** their holiness, and ~~rejoice~~ **[rejoiced]** at what they ~~see~~ **[saw]**. ³They ~~look~~ **[looked]** on it directly, *without* attempting to *adjust* themselves to it, or it to them. ⁴And so they ~~see~~ **[saw]** that it was *in* them, *not* deciding first where they would have it be. ⁵Their looking merely ~~asks~~ **[asked]** a question, and it is what they ~~see~~ **[saw]** that ~~answers~~ **[answered]** them. ⁶*You* make the world and *then* adjust to it, *and it to you*. ⁷Nor is there any difference between yourself and it in your perception, *which made them both*.

• Study Question •

3. Try to summarize in one or two sentences how “the holy” interact with the world; do not try to list each detail given, just summarize.

The first five sentences describe how “the holy” have interacted with the truth, especially (as we shall see in the remainder of the section) the truth about our brothers. These sentences anticipate persons who already *are* holy, living from a recognition of their shared holiness. Such persons do not identify with their egos, and therefore “do not interfere with truth. They are *not* afraid of it” (3:1–2) as the ego is. Rather, the truth is their salvation, and they view each other from the perspective of that truth. This is where they have recognized their holiness and rejoiced in it (3:2). “They looked on it directly” (3:3): This is the meaning of a “direct relationship.” There was and is no need to adjust to it. It is the changeless truth, and there are no changes, no adjustments needed.

These are people who have realized that the Christ, the holiness, the true Self, is and always has been in them—in both of them, in everyone (3:4). They asked a question. I presume this means asking a question of God, of the Holy Spirit, or of Reality. Essentially the question must have been, “What am I?” They simply looked, saw the truth, and believed it (3:5).

The last two sentences describe how “you” interact (in contrast with those who are “holy” in their perceptions): We first make the world according to our belief in sin, and then we try to adjust ourselves to what we see. If that does not work well, we try adjusting *the world* to fit what we want! (How’s that workin’ for ya?) In other words, we make up both our picture of ourselves and our perception of the world—and neither one is true.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹A simple question yet remains, and *needs* an answer. ²Do you *like* what you have made?—a world of murder and attack, through which you thread your timid way through constant dangers, alone and frightened, hoping at most that death will wait a little longer before it overtakes you and you disappear. ³*You made this up*. ⁴It is a picture of what you think *you* are; of how you *see* yourself. ⁵A murderer *is* frightened, and those who kill *fear* death. ⁶All these are but the fearful thoughts of those who would adjust themselves to a world *made* fearful by their adjustments. ⁷And they look out in sorrow from what is sad *within*, and see the sadness *there*.

• Study Question •

4. *What is it that the world we made out-pictures, or reflects?*
- A. *Murder and attack.*
 - B. *Our fearful adjustments.*
 - C. *What we think we are.*

If we look honestly at the world we have made, a world of murder and attack, we will find our honest answer to the question, “Do you like what you have made?”, to be, “No” (4:1). How could we like a world in which we seem to be in constant danger? A world in which we are “alone and frightened”? Our highest hope is only to stay ahead of death a little bit longer! (4:2).

Guess what? “*You made this up*” (4:3)! Why would we make up such a world? Because it’s what we think we deserve. It out-pictures “who you think *you* are” (4:4).

We really believe we are separate beings. We really believe that we are not currently in touch with God, and certainly not *one* with God. And there is part of us that knows *this isn’t how God created us*. And so it seems that *we* must have done it; we must have caused the separation. We have murdered the Son of God and taken His place.³ We see ourselves this way and so we make up a world that matches. We fear death because we are (so we believe) murderers (4:5). “All these are but the fearful thoughts of those who would adjust themselves to a world made fearful by their adjustments” (4:6). We are sad within, believing this awful thing about ourselves, and we look out and see what is within us as if it were out there (4:7).

The world you see is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt (T-13.Int.2:2).

Projection makes perception. The world you see is what you gave it, nothing more than that. But though it is no more than that, it is not less. Therefore, to you it is

³ “The darkest of your hidden cornerstones holds your belief in guilt from your awareness. For in that dark and secret place is the realization that you have betrayed God’s Son by condemning him to death. You do not even suspect this murderous but insane idea lies hidden there, for the ego’s destructive urge is so intense that nothing short of the crucifixion of God’s Son can ultimately satisfy it” (T-13.II.3:1-3).

important. It is the witness to your state of mind, the outside picture of an inward condition (T-21.Int.1:1-5).

Paragraph 5

5. ~~1Have you not~~ **[Have you]** wondered what the world is *really* like; how it would look through *happy* eyes? ²The world you see is but a judgment on *yourself*. ³It is not there at all. ⁴Yet judgment lays a sentence on it, *justifies* it and *makes it real*. ⁵Such is the world you see; a judgment on yourself, and made by *you*. ⁶This sickly picture of yourself is carefully preserved by the ego, whose image it *is* and which it loves, and placed *outside* you in the world. ⁷And *to* this world must *you* adjust as long as you believe this picture *is* outside, and has you at its mercy. ⁸This world *is* merciless, and were it outside you, you *should* indeed be fearful. ⁹Yet it was *you* who made it merciless, and now if mercilessness *seems* to look back at you, *it can be corrected*.

• Study Question •

5. Which of the following things, according to this paragraph, are true of this projected world?
- A. The ego loves this picture and tries to preserve it.
 - B. We are forced to adjust ourselves to this picture.
 - C. Because this world is outside of us, it is truly fearful.
 - D. Because we made the merciless world, we can correct it.
 - E. All of the above.

The world we see is not really there; it is only a picture of our judgments on ourselves. We are looking out from a mind buried in guilt and sadness, and seeing a world full of guilt and sadness. Is that what the world is *really* like? What if we were looking out “through *happy* eyes”? What would the world look like then (5:1)?

The world we think we see is nothing “but a judgment on *yourself*” (5:2). The emphasis on the word “yourself” is striking. Have you ever realized that the way you see the world is telling you *how you see yourself*? The way the world appears through the sad eyes of the ego “is not there at all” (5:3)! We think the world is awful because we think *we* are awful. We judge the world as guilty and then look for evidence to justify our judgment; we even *manufacture the evidence* (“judgment...*makes it real*” (5:4)). The world we see is a judgment on us, and is *made* by us (5:5).⁴

⁴ “The world you see depicts exactly what you thought you did. Except that now you think that what you did is being done to you. The guilt for what you thought is being placed outside yourself, and on a guilty world that dreams your dreams and thinks your thoughts instead of you. It brings its vengeance, not your own. It keeps you narrowly confined within a body, which it punishes because of all the sinful things the body does within its dream. You have no power to make the body stop its evil deeds because you did not make it, and cannot control its actions nor its purpose nor its fa” (T-27.VIII.7:2-7).

This world, then, is the image of the ego (5:6). The ego loves it and preserves it carefully, projecting it onto the world. Because we now think this world actually exists outside of us and has us at its mercy, we now believe we must adjust to it (5:7). And that will continue “as long as you believe this picture *is* outside” (5:7). If it really *were* outside of us, we would have good reason to be fearful (5:8)—but it is *not* outside of us.⁵

If the world seems merciless it is because we made it that way. That seems like a terrible truth, but in reality it is our salvation, because if we made it that way, “*it can be corrected*” (5:9). We *can* look on the world through happy eyes.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Who in a holy relationship can long remain unholy? ²The world the holy see is one with them, just as the world the ego looks upon is like itself. ³The world the holy see is beautiful because they see their innocence in it. ⁴They did not *tell* it what it was; they did not make adjustments to fit their orders. ⁵They gently questioned it and whispered, “What are you?” ⁶And He Who watches over all perception answered. ⁷Take not the judgment of the world as answer to the question, “What am I?” ⁸The world *believes* in sin, but the belief that made it as you see it is *not* outside you.

• Study Question •

6. *When we ask the world the question, “What are you?”, two voices can answer; and the answer to that question is the same as the answer to the question, “What am I?” What must we do to hear the true answer?*
- A. *Do not attempt to answer the question ourselves by telling the world what it is.*
 - B. *Do not make adjustments to the world or to ourselves.*
 - C. *Refuse to hear the answer which the world gives.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

Supplemental question: *What do you think is meant by “make adjustments to fit their orders” in 6:5, and also in Paragraph 2?*

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A holy relationship gives us the opportunity to begin to see the world differently, through happy eyes. It allows us to practice shifting our perception with one person before we try to apply it to the whole world. If we can learn to offer the lilies of forgiveness to one other person, we can learn to offer them to the world (6:1). When we have joined with another person and learned with them to perceive one another in innocence and holiness, we will see the world as holy *because we see ourselves that way* (6:2). We will see our innocence in the world, just as the ego sees its guilt there (6:3).

⁵ “[Everyone who identifies with the ego] always perceives this world as outside himself, for this is crucial to his adjustment. He does not realize that he makes this world, for there is no world outside of him” (T-12.III.6:6-7).

Instead of adjusting the world to make it what (in our insanity) we wanted it to be, we simply asked it, “What are you?” (6:4–5) And the Holy Spirit answered, showing us the world as God created it; not as we have made it up (6:6).

Don't let the world you made tell you what you are (6:7). The world believes in sin! That should be clear from the evening news, from politics, from the Dr. Phil show or *Dateline*. What makes the world like this? *You do*. “The belief that made it as you see it is *not* outside you” (6:8), it is in your mind. In our holy relationship the Holy Spirit can begin to show us a different picture of the world, a world that is beautiful, one with us, reflecting our own innocence.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Seek not to make the Son of God *adjust* to his insanity. ²There is a stranger in him, who wandered carelessly into the home of truth and who will wander off. ³He came *without* a purpose, but he will not remain before the shining light the Holy Spirit offered, and you accepted. ⁴For there the *stranger* is made homeless and *you* are welcome. ⁵Ask not this transient stranger, “~~What~~ [who] am I?” ⁶He is the only thing in all the universe that does not know. ⁷Yet it is he you ask, and it is to *his* answer that you would adjust. ⁸This one wild thought, fierce in its arrogance, and yet so tiny and so meaningless it slips unnoticed through the universe of truth, becomes your guide. ⁹To it you turn to ask the *meaning* of the universe. ¹⁰And of the one blind thing in all the seeing universe of truth you ask, “How shall I look upon the Son of God?”

• Study Question •

7. *What seems to be the central thought of this paragraph?*
- A. *The “one wild thought” is a stranger, and we are the one who is at home.*
 - B. *Do not listen to the belief in sin, and do not attempt to adjust ourselves or our brothers to belief in sin's reality.*
 - C. *The belief in sin is powerless and has not affected the truth.*

This paragraph is referring, indirectly, to the “tiny, mad idea” in which separation began (see 7:8). That “one wild thought” is our belief in sin, our belief that we have changed God's creation and made ourselves unholy. We have accepted that as gospel (the gospel of “original sin,” if you will), and have made up a world that reflects that “fact.” Ever since, we've been trying to make ourselves, and everyone around us, adjust to this insanity (7:1). Jesus tells us to cut it out!

This paragraph speaks of the Son of God in the third person, as “he” and “him.” We must remember that all of this refers to *us* and to those with whom we are in relationship. The “stranger” who carelessly wandered into us without a purpose, and who will wander off, is that mad thought, and is the ego (7:2–3). Once we have accepted “the shining light the Holy Spirit offered,” the light that initiated our holy relationship when we accepted it,

the stranger (the ego) cannot remain (7:3). The stranger does not belong in the holy relationship; in that context, the ego is homeless, and *you*—the real you—are at home (7:4).

So let's not ask our egos who we are. It "is the only thing in all the universe that does not know" (7:5–6)! It *is* what we've been asking, though (7:7). The "tiny" and "meaningless" "wild thought" of sin and guilt has been our guide (7:8); we've tried to use it to explain the meaning of the universe (7:9). Think of all the theologies and philosophies based on the concepts of sin and guilt, right and wrong, crime and punishment. And in our personal lives, isn't this how we've evaluated one another and ourselves, using this notion to decide how to look on one another, and on ourselves (7:10)?

Let's stop basing our lives on the mad ramblings of a homeless stranger.⁶

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Does one ask judgment of what is totally *bereft* of judgment? ²And if you *have*, would you *believe* the answer, and *adjust* to it as if it were the truth? ³The world you look on *is* the answer that it gave you, and *you* have given it power to *adjust* the world to *make* its answer true. ⁴You asked this puff of madness for the meaning of your unholy relationship, and adjusted it according to its insane answer. ⁵How happy did it make you? ⁶Did you meet ~~your brother~~ with joy to bless the Son of God, and give him thanks for all the happiness that he held out to you? ⁷Did you *recognize* ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** as the eternal gift of God to you? ⁸Did you see the holiness that shone ~~in both you and your brother~~ **[in both of you]**, to bless the other? ⁹That is the purpose of your *holy* relationship. ¹⁰Ask not the means of its attainment of the one thing that still would have it be unholy. ¹¹Give it *no* power to *adjust* the means and end.

• Study Question •

8. List the qualities of a holy relationship identified in the questions in 8:6-8.

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Why are we listening to our egos, which are totally incompetent to make any judgments about what is true? And why do we listen to the world we've projected based on what the ego tells us (8:1)? And why do we try to alter our behavior and beliefs based on what it tells us (8:2)? Yet we *do*.

The world we see is the result of listening to the mad belief in sin. We've allowed the ego to actually "*adjust the world to make its answer true*" (8:3, added emphasis mine). The state of our unholy relationship is also the result of this belief, and it has not made us happy (8:4–5). Based on what the ego tells us, we do not meet one another "with joy to bless the Son of God, and give him thanks for all the happiness that he held out to" us

⁶ See Workbook Lesson 160: "I am at home. Fear is the stranger here."

(8:6). We do not recognize one another as the eternal gift of God to us! We joke about people who “think they are God’s gift to the world,” but that is EXACTLY what they are (8:7)!

A holy relationship is the result of refusing to “ask” the ego for the meaning of our relationship, and of seeing instead with the vision of Christ. In a holy relationship, this is how we see one another. We see holiness shining in both of us, ready to bless one another (8:8). That is the entire purpose of a holy relationship (8:9). And your ego will never be able to tell you what to do to achieve it; your ego resists that with all the power we give it (8:10). Which is why we need to stop listening to our egos, and stop giving them power to adjust our image of ourselves, of others, and of the world (8:11).

Let me repeat what I said above:

A holy relationship gives us the opportunity to begin to see the world differently, through happy eyes. It allows us to practice shifting our perception with one person before we try to apply it to the whole world. In our holy relationship the Holy Spirit can begin to show us a different picture of the world, a world that is beautiful, one with us, reflecting our own innocence.

The purpose of a holy relationship is to grant us the opportunity to do this with one or two other people. It’s just a beginning, opening the door to seeing the entire world through new eyes. In fact, the experience of seeing one another’s holiness instead of one another’s sins will, of itself, transform our perceptions. It will automatically generalize itself to embrace the entire world. To me, this is the reason the Course so heavily emphasizes the holy relationship.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Prisoners bound with heavy chains for years, starved and emaciated, weak and exhausted, and with eyes so long cast down in darkness they remember not the light, do not leap up in joy the instant they are made free. ²It takes a while for them to understand what freedom *is*. ³You groped but feebly in the dust and found ~~your brother's~~ **[each other's]** hand, uncertain whether to let it go or to take hold on life so long forgotten. ⁴Strengthen your hold and raise your eyes unto your strong companion, in whom the meaning of your freedom lies. ⁵He seemed to be crucified beside you. ⁶And yet his holiness remained untouched and perfect, and with him beside you, you shall this day enter with him to Paradise, and know the peace of God.

• **Study Question** •

9. *What is this paragraph asking us to do?*
- A. *Leap up in joy the instant we are made free.*
 - B. *Find a partner who will quickly recognize the joy of holy relationship.*
 - C. *Accept the uncertainty in ourselves and our brother, take a firm hold on his hand, and trust that we will, together, enter Paradise.*

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The imagery of this paragraph, which describes your budding holy relationship, is quite powerful. It compares us to people who have been harshly imprisoned for many years, “starved and emaciated” (9:1). Here in the USA, in this generation, we don’t have direct experience of such prisoners, as soldiers in World War II did when liberating the death camps. But perhaps you have seen some of the TV documentaries of women who were kidnapped and kept prisoner for many years, and have heard them talking about the difficulty of readjusting to freedom. It takes time, sometimes a lot of time, for them to accept and understand the full implications of freedom. Recently, a movie titled *Room* was nominated for an Academy Award. It told the story of a young boy who was *born* in captivity and lived in the confines of one room for over five years. When his mother began to plan their escape he had great difficulty conceiving of what she was telling him about the world outside; he even called her a liar! “Room” was the world to him. The story of his release and beginning experience of freedom was hugely uplifting and inspiring.

Well, we’re like that. In plain terms, it may take a while for those in a holy relationship to recognize their true freedom (9:2). Our nascent holy relationship began with only a feeble, uncertain effort, questioning whether or not it was worth the effort, skeptical perhaps that there really *is* “a better way” (9:3). Jesus urges us to clasp one another’s hands more firmly, to breathe life into our resolve to embark on this journey to freedom, taking a long, uplifting look at our “strong companion,” who holds the meaning of our freedom within herself or himself (9:4).

Like the thief dying on the cross next to Jesus, we have believed our partner was crucified just like us. We were both dying, victims of our sinfulness, or so we thought. But the truth is, “his holiness remained untouched and perfect” (9:5–6). And as we accept that about *him* or *her*, we hear her or him declare that we will, this very day, enter with them “to Paradise, and know the peace of God” (9:6). In recognizing the innocence in the other, we find our own.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Such [Paradise] is my will ~~for you and your brother~~ **[for both of you]**, and for each of you for one another and for *himself*. ²Here there is only holiness and joining without limit. ³For what is Heaven but union, direct and perfect, and *without* the veil of fear upon it? ⁴Here are we one, looking with perfect gentleness upon each other and on ourselves. ⁵Here all thoughts of *any* separation between us become impossible. ⁶You who were ~~a prisoner~~ **[prisoners]** in separation are now made free in Paradise. ⁷And here would I unite with you, ~~my friend, my brother and my Self~~ **[my friends, my brothers and my Self]**.

• Study Question •

10. In terms of relationships, then, which of the following things are not goals which are listed in this paragraph?
- A. Holiness and joining without limit.
 - B. Direct and perfect union, unhindered by any fear.
 - C. Liking all the same things.
 - D. Looking with perfect gentleness on ourselves and one another.
 - E. The absence of all thoughts of separation between us.
 - F. Union with Jesus.
 - G. Total financial independence.

Such a holy relationship, leading to Paradise and the peace of God, is both God's Will for you and your partner(s) in relationship, and also the will of each person in relationship for himself and for one another (10:1). Being what we all want makes it inevitable.

What kind of Paradise is this? What is the Kingdom of Heaven? It is "joining without limit," "union, direct and perfect" (10:2–3). Direct and perfect union! Direct union implies that this is not like the union of the parts of a puzzle, where each piece is still distinguished from all the others by its boundaries. This is a union in which the boundaries have totally disappeared.

Ken Wilber wrote a book titled *No Boundary*. In it, he wrote:

Unity consciousness is the simple awareness of the real territory of no-boundary....Unity consciousness...is no-boundary awareness.

As simple as that sounds, it is nevertheless extremely difficult to adequately discuss [it. To say that] is to create a distinction between boundaries and no-boundaries!...[We must remember] that no-boundary awareness is a direct, immediate and non-verbal awareness, and not at all a mere philosophical theory.

Wilber agrees with the Course about our resistance to oneness despite our primary will to experience it:

As we move through this world of boundaries and battles, we are motivated basically by one thing: the desire to recapture unity consciousness, to discover once again the territory of no-boundary.

...although the only thing a person fundamentally wants is unity consciousness, the only thing he is ever doing is resisting it. We are always looking for unity consciousness, but in a way that always prevents the discovery: we look for unity consciousness by moving away from the present... Looking for wetness on the next wave of experience, we always miss it on our present wave. To search forever is to miss it forever.

The Course states clearly that Heaven *is* unity consciousness:

"Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness" (T-18.VI.1:5-6).

Not only is Heaven oneness, but "Here there is only holiness." In a personal narrative (a kind of mini-autobiography) by Jonathan Edwards, the quintessential Puritan preacher,⁷ he wrote: "The heaven I desired was a heaven of holiness; to be with God, and to spend my eternity in divine love, and holy communion with Christ."

What might "a heaven of holiness" be like? Is it something that sounds appealing to you? A lot depends on how we understand the word *holiness*. The Course uses the word 341 times, so it might pay us to understand what it means by that word. In his Course glossary, Robert Perry writes that holiness "is characterized not by separation from the impure (as in some traditional notions), but by oneness with all things." Holiness is an attribute of God and is therefore shared by everything that lives. Perhaps it can help to think of "holiness" as synonymous with "wholeness." So, in a sense, holiness and oneness are the same.

Yet where He is, there must be holiness as well as life. No attribute of His remains unshared by everything that lives. What lives is holy as Himself, because what shares His life is part of Holiness (W-pI.156.3:1-3).

Your holiness is the salvation of the world. It lets you teach the world that it is one with you (W-pI.37.3:1-2).

The Course asserts that what was true for Jonathan Edwards is true for you, for me, and even for God. Our deepest will is for a heaven of holiness (or wholeness) and oneness. In oneness, we look "with perfect gentleness upon each other and on ourselves" (10:4). It becomes impossible to think of ourselves as separate (10:5), although today it may seem impossible that we are *not* separate; before Heaven, we are "prisoners in separation" (10:6). Nothing else but separateness seems possible. But the inner drive that is within us all, as both the Course and Wilber point out, is toward union, toward oneness, toward the erasure of every boundary, every thought of separation.

Jesus says that he longs to unite with us in this oneness. He calls us friends, brothers, and "my Self" (10:7). We, together with him, are the Christ.

⁷ Edwards (1703–1758) is most famous for his sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," but he was also deeply mystical with a strong emphasis on direct, personal experience of God.

Christ is God's Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well (W-pI.pII.6.1:1-2).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹Your gift unto ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** has given me the certainty our union will be soon. ²Share, then, this faith [that this union will be soon] with me, ~~and know~~ **[who know]** that it [the faith] is justified. ³There is no fear in perfect love *because* it knows no sin, and it *must* look on others as on itself. ⁴Looking with charity within, what can it fear *without*? ⁵The innocent see safety, and the pure in heart see God within His Son, and look unto the Son to lead them to the Father. ⁶And where else would they go but where they will to be? ⁷~~You and your brother~~ **[Each of you]** now will lead the other to the Father as surely as God created His Son holy, and kept him so. ⁸In your brother is the light of God's eternal promise of *your* immortality. ⁹See *him* as sinless, and there can *be* no fear in you.

• Study Question •

11. What things does Jesus ask of us here, to make the journey more quickly?
- A. To share Jesus' faith in the certainty of our eventual union with him and with one another.
 - B. By seeing our own innocence (not listening to the mad idea of sin), to see that same innocence without, in our brother.
 - C. To see God within ourselves and our brother ("His Son").
 - D. To see our brother as sinless.
 - E. All of the above.

The "gift unto your brother" (11:1) that makes Jesus certain "our union will be soon" must refer to the initial holy instant of joining with a brother in holy relationship. Their wills have been joined in common purpose to go to the Father (11:5-6). They will, in the holy relationship, lead one another there.

He asks us to share with him the faith that "our union will be soon" (11:1-2). He *knows*⁸ such faith is justified, with emphasis on the word "know," giving it a certainty. He does not just think that faith is justified, he *knows* it. When we realize our identity with perfect love, we look "with charity" on ourselves, and *must* see others in the same way, so there is absolutely no cause for fear (11:3-4). Only faith can result. "The pure in heart see God within His Son" (11:5). What a remarkable statement! I have a vivid memory of the first (and only) time I realized that I absolutely *knew* God exists because I saw God in another person. I saw such beauty, such love, purity of being, such...there is no other word!...such holiness, that I knew, as I wrote at the time, "with a sense beyond mind, there's a God in this world." I've been living on the aftermath of that moment for the rest

⁸ The Urtext has the word "know" without an "s", which seems to be a mistake in grammar.

of my life. I know it is true of everyone, not just that one person with whom I originally had the revelatory experience. That becomes the motivator in every relationship.

When you have that sense, where else would you go but where you will to be (11:6)? Two people who join in that sense—as we all do at heart—can *and will* lead each other to the Father, “as surely as God created His Son holy, and kept him so: (11:7).

You, my brother, you my sister, each of you, are my light of God’s eternal promise of my own immortality (11:8). My task, the core of my spiritual work, is to see you that way, to see you as sinless. If I can do that, there can be no fear in me (11:9).

Are you willing to see that much purity in others? See them as containing something so holy that you look to it to light your path to Heaven? If so, your fears will soon be gone, and “the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.”

Answer Key

1. D

2. A, C

3. “The holy” accept the truth without adjusting it or themselves; they fearlessly accept it as it is.

4. C

5. A, B, D, E

6. D

Supplemental: I believe this refers to any way in which we react to the error of belief in sin as if sin were real, which would include anger, condemnation, fear, mistrust, bargaining, compromises, manipulation, making myself or others guilty, and attempts at control.

7. B

8. You meet your brother with joy to bless the Son of God. You give him thanks for all the happiness he holds out to you. You see the holiness shining in both of you, which blesses each of you.

9. C

10. C, G

11. E