

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 21, Reason and Perception

Section II, The Responsibility for Sight

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

~~strike through sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

This section zeros in on the theme begun in T-20.VII.1:7–8: "This course requires almost nothing of you. It is impossible to imagine one that asks so little, or could offer more." It identifies exactly what that "so little" is, and hammers home the fact that any illusion of difficulty or impossibility we have with *giving* that little is just that: illusion. If what it asks of us seems outrageously huge or unfeasible, rather than little and simple, it merely serves to demonstrate the truth of what the section teaches.

The section emphasizes the power of our minds, and of our "wanting," insisting that the world we see is the result of that wanting. It says that our refusal to accept that we made the world we see is an error that is the same as denying that we were created by God, but rather believing that we created ourselves.

This is an extremely challenging section. If you do not experience resistance to its message I would be very surprised. It digs at the very roots of the ego madness and exposes them. Your ego will not like it. Look at the resistance your ego has, and learn from that very resistance the truth of what the Course is saying! If you can accept its message, or even begin to consider that it might just be true, you will experience incredible liberty and joy. You will be reclaiming the *power* of your decisions.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹We have repeated how little is asked of you to learn this course. ²It is the same small willingness you need to have your whole relationship transformed to joy; the *little* gift you offer to the Holy Spirit for which He gives you *everything*; the very little on which salvation rests; the tiny change of mind by which the crucifixion is changed to resurrection. ³And being true, it is so simple that it cannot fail to be *completely* understood. ⁴Rejected yes, but *not* ambiguous. ⁵And if you choose *against* it now it will *not* be because it is obscure, but rather that this *little* cost seemed, in *your* judgment, to be *too much* to pay for peace.

• Study Question •

1. *In this first paragraph, many different phrases are used to describe our part in the process of salvation: “how little is asked,” “the same small willingness,” “the little gift,” “the very little on which salvation rests,” “the tiny change of mind,” and “this little cost.” The consistent use of the words “little,” “small,” and “tiny” make very clear that our part in salvation, while crucial, is extremely small. While the details of just what this “little” is won’t be discussed until the next two paragraphs, some information about it is given in this paragraph. Which of the following (more than one) is stated or implied here about our little part?*
- A. *It consists primarily of a change of mind.*
 - B. *It is something we offer to the Holy Spirit.*
 - C. *It is unmistakably clear and understandable.*
 - D. *It is the same willingness that initiates a holy relationship.*
 - E. *It entails some kind of cost, or price, that must be paid for peace.*
 - F. *All of the above.*

As the study question points out, this paragraph emphasizes the nearly insignificant nature of our part in the process of salvation. Consider the list of seven different diminutive phrases that Jesus uses to describe it: little is asked; small willingness; little gift; very little; tiny change of mind; so simple; little cost. He has previously and repeatedly affirmed the simplicity of the Course and the absurdly small effort that it requires from us¹, but here it becomes almost ridiculous and over the top.

Why do you suppose he so blatantly repeats himself? I think it must be because we find it so easy to overlook what he is saying, and so difficult to accept it. He will address the issue of our resistance later in this section.

We won’t be reminded what the “little cost” is until the next two paragraphs, although we have been told previously (T-21.I.3, for instance). The entire previous section, which spoke of our need to accept the gift of vision, was really all about the “little” being asked of us. But we can learn certain things *about* the “little cost” without knowing exactly what it is. First, if not foremost, is that there *is* a cost involved, albeit only a little one. In truth the cost is negligible and

¹ T-20.VII.1:7–8; T-14.IX.7:4; T-15.II.3:2; T-18.IV.1:7–8

involves giving up absolutely nothing that is real, but to us the cost seems, at first, to be huge—“too much to pay for peace” (1:5).

The “little cost” involves some kind of “willingness” in regard to our relationships (1:2). It is something we offer to the Holy Spirit, “for which He gives you everything” (1:2). As small as it is, it is the the very foundation “on which salvation rests” (1:2), and thus our tiny part is crucial to the process of salvation. It’s also miraculously powerful and can change the crucifixion to resurrection (1:2).

This little gift we are asked to offer is *true* (1:3), which I believe means that it is aligned with the nature of reality; it is something that is in accord with the Cosmic Order of things. Because of its truth, it is profoundly simple, so simple that “it cannot fail to be completely understood” (1:3). Being aligned with reality, the nature of this little gift is reflected everywhere and in everything. “Salvation is the recognition that the truth is true, and nothing else is true” (W-pI.152.3:1). It is hard to miss. It’s very obvious. It is emphatically “*not* ambiguous” (1:4).

Despite its simplicity, its vital importance to our salvation, and its miraculous power to transform what appears to be death into life, we can *and do* reject it (1:4). We do so, not because it is difficult to understand, and not because we do not understand it—we understand it perfectly! We choose against it because “in your judgment, [the cost is] too much to pay for peace” (1:5).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹This is the *only* thing that you need do for vision, happiness, release from pain and the *complete* escape from sin, *all* to be given you. ²Say *only* this, but mean it with *no* reservations, for here the power of salvation lies:

³*I am responsible for what I see.*

⁴*I choose [chose] the feelings I experience, and I decide upon [decided on] the goal I would achieve.*

⁵*And everything that seems to happen to me I ask for [asked for], and receive as I have [had] asked.*

⁶Deceive yourself no longer that you are helpless in the face of what is done to you. ⁷Acknowledge but that *you* have been mistaken, and *all* effects of your mistakes will disappear.

• Study Question •

2. *This paragraph clearly defines the “little” that is asked of us. Using your own words whenever possible, and referring to what was said about our little part in paragraph 1 as well as what is said here, try to summarize in a single sentence what our little part is.*

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So, what is this trivial gift, this “tiny change of mind” that we are asked to contribute? He proceeds to tell us flat out, not an iota of evasion. This is it: “the *only* thing you need do for vision, happiness, release from pain and the *complete* escape from sin”—all of it! The whole

package in exchange for just this one incredibly small gift (2:1). The trivial gift is a declaration we must make, and mean “with *no* reservations” (2:2).

Now, before I go into exactly what this is and what it implies for us, let me ask you to read over Paragraph 2 above, paying attention to the tense of the four verbs it contains. They are all (in the original dictation) in the *past* tense, not the *present* tense (as the Foundation for Inner Peace translation has it). The realization we are asked to affirm and to accept, and to really mean it, has to do with the way our past decisions have affected our present experience.

The first sentence we are asked to say and to mean is, “I *am* responsible for what I see” (2:3). I don’t think anyone can read that and consider affirming it wholeheartedly without experiencing powerful resistance. I am responsible for this insane world? I am responsible for this person’s actions who is mistreating me or mistrusting me? I am responsible for mass shootings? My health problems? Epidemics? Poverty? Starvation? Wars?

What??? How can we possibly affirm that, “I am responsible for what I see”?

Let’s right off the bat drop the idea that this means that I am responsible for all the terrible things that happen in this physical world.² It says I am responsible *for what I see*, not for what happens. It’s about perception, about the meaning I see in what happens. It’s about “the feelings I experience” (2:4), and not the things I believe are *causing* those feelings. It’s saying, “That event or person is not causing my feelings; *I am*, and I am responsible for how I view what seems to be 'out there.’”³

That may be easier to swallow than the idea that I am somehow responsible for every disaster I am aware of, but it is still a hellaciously difficult thing to accept, at least for most people. It means recognizing that nothing outside of me is causing me any pain or distress, but rather, I am doing this to myself (see 5:4). Saying this and meaning it eliminates any possibility of anger and of judgment of anyone else. It takes away the essential tool of the ego: blame, or laying guilt on others.

There are two parts to the formula by which we manufacture our experience of the world. First, we choose to experience certain *feelings*. Second, we decide on a particular *goal we want to achieve* (2:4–5). For instance, we choose to feel angry, and to make another person feel guilty by attacking them or accusing them of some sort of “sin.” We then, by projection, find something in the outer world we can use to have those feelings and produce those results. Consider the words of Lesson 325:

All things I think I see reflect ideas.

This is salvation's keynote: What I see reflects a process in my mind, which starts with my idea of what I want. From there, the mind makes up an image of the thing the mind desires, judges valuable, and therefore seeks to find. These images are then projected outward, looked upon, esteemed as real and guarded as one's own. From insane wishes comes an insane world. From judgment comes a world condemned. And from forgiving thoughts a gentle world comes

² Perhaps in some cosmic sense this is true, in that we all are a part of the universal mind that has manifested this world the way it is, but (in my opinion) that isn’t the point Jesus is trying to make here.

³ “It is because the thoughts you think you think appear as images that you do not recognize them as nothing. You think you think them, and so you think you see them. This is how your “seeing” was made. This is the function you have given your body's eyes. It is not seeing. It is image making. It takes the place of seeing, replacing vision with illusions” (W-p1.15.1:1-7).

forth, with mercy for the holy Son of God, to offer him a kindly home where he can rest a while before he journeys on, and help his brothers walk ahead with him, and find the way to Heaven and to God.

Our Father, Your ideas reflect the truth, and mine apart from Yours but make up dreams. Let me behold what only Yours reflect, for Yours and Yours alone establish truth.

(W-pII.325.2:1-2).

The way most of us think of things—and I include myself—we believe that we are “helpless in the face of what is done” to us (2:6). The *est* training coined a phrase for it: we are “at effect of” the world. My pain and my feelings are the effect of the world around me, and I am incapable of seeing it or experiencing it in any other way, “helpless.” Jesus appeals to us to “deceive yourself no longer that you are helpless” (2:6). That kind of thinking is a *self-deception*.

When my computer’s printer refuses to operate, and I cannot print the material I need for a class, if I feel frustrated, anxious, or angry, *I chose those feelings*. Nothing “did it” to me. If someone I think of as a close friend fails to invite me to his birthday party, and I feel snubbed or betrayed, it was not *he* who caused those feelings. I did. If I see him as undeserving of love, not a nice person, I am responsible, and he is not, for my seeing him that way. In a nutshell, I am responsible for how I see things and for what I feel.

The up side of all this is that if I am willing to acknowledge that I have been mistaken—that is, that the cause of what I see and how I feel is not outside me, but it is my responsibility—“*all effects of your mistakes will disappear*” (2:7). That acknowledgement is the “little” that is asked of us, the “*only thing that you need do*.” The result will be “vision, happiness, release from pain and the *complete* escape from all sin” (2:1).

It really is a small price to pay for all that. And quite simple, actually easy to understand. Don’t you agree? I’m not saying that any of us are going to find it easy right off the bat! Our resistance runs deep. That’s why the Course is over 1200 pages long. That’s why there are daily lessons for (at least) a year. That’s why actually doing the Workbook lessons as instructed is so crucial. It takes time, it takes repeated, consistent effort to change our thinking.

As I write this, I have been working with *A Course in Miracles* for 31 years. I think I have a clearer understanding than ever of how simple the Course really is, but my implementation of the Course is still lacking. I still try to project responsibility for my perceptions and feelings onto things outside of me. As I glance through the Workbook lessons I am astounded at how often, and how clearly, Jesus returns to the themes that are elucidated in this section, about our responsibility for sight⁴. I have not done the daily lessons of the Workbook since 2000, but I am realizing that I *want* to do them again, because I am seeing them with a new clarity. “This is the *only thing that you need do*”! I think I’m finally beginning to learn that lesson.

4 For examples, see lessons 335, 338, and 339.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹It is impossible the Son of God be merely driven by events *outside* of him. ²It is impossible that happenings that come to him were *not* his choice. ³His power of decision is the *determiner* of every situation in which he seems to *find* himself by chance or accident. ⁴No accident nor chance is *possible* within the universe as God created it, *outside* of which is nothing. ⁵Suffer, and *you* decided sin was your goal. ⁶Be happy, and you *gave* the power of decision to Him Who *must* decide for God for you. ⁷This is the little gift you offer to the Holy Spirit, and even this He gives to you to give yourself. ⁸For *by* this gift is given you the power to release your savior, that *he* may give salvation unto *you*.

• Study Question •

3. (a) Below is a list of statements. Based on this paragraph, indicate next to each one whether it is true or false.
- A. I can lose my job because the national economy is declining.
 - B. If I have an auto accident, on some level of mind I wanted it.
 - C. When I seem to meet someone by chance, it was really arranged by the Holy Spirit.
 - D. When I seem to meet someone by chance, it was really arranged by my own power of decision.
 - E. All suffering is a result of a choice I have made.
 - F. Happiness comes from allowing the Holy Spirit to decide for me.
3. (b) In sentences 6 to 8, how is our “little gift” summarized? Compare this to your own answer to question 2.

This paragraph drives home the same points: Outside events do not cause our thoughts and feelings (3:1). We *always* choose everything that happens to us (3:2). Life isn't random. There is no such thing as chance or accident in God's creation, nor can there be; it is our own power of decision that determines the situations we encounter (3:3–4). When we choose sin as a goal, the suffering we experience is a result of that choice (3:5). When we turn over decision-making to the Holy Spirit, our happiness is the result of that choice (3:6).

“This is the little gift you offer to the Holy Spirit” (3:7). What does “this” refer to? Clearly, it refers to the immediately preceding sentence, to, “you *gave* the power of decision to Him Who *must* decide for God for you.” This idea, of using your power of decision to *relinquish* your power of decision, allowing the Holy Spirit to decide for God for you, crops up earlier in the Text⁵ as well. My favorite is this one:

⁶ Sharing His will with me is not really open to choice at all, though it may seem to be.

⁷ The whole separation lies in this fallacy. ⁸ And the only way out of the fallacy is to decide that *you do not have to decide anything*. ⁹ Everything has been given you by *God's* decision. ¹⁰ This is His will, and you cannot undo it. (T-7.X.6:6-10).

“Decide that you do not have to decide anything.” Let the Holy Spirit decide for you. Now, we know that the Holy Spirit is not only the voice for God, It is *your* voice, your true voice. So what we are talking about is surrendering to the love that we are, opening to our shared Identity with the person we’ve been seeing as “other.” The gift we give is given to ourselves, and by it we can release our “savior.” (3:8) We can see that “other” as sinless, and he returns the favor by seeing us the same way.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Begrudge not then this little offering. ²*Withhold* it, and you keep the world as now you see it. ³*Give it away*, and everything *you* see goes with it. ⁴Never was so much given for so little. ⁵In the holy instant is this exchange effected and *maintained*. ⁶Here is the world you do *not* want brought to the one you *do*. ⁷And here the one you do is *given* you *because* you want it. ⁸Yet for this, the *power* of your wanting must first be *recognized*. ⁹You must accept its *strength*, and *not* its weakness. ¹⁰You must perceive that what is strong enough to *make* a world can let it go, and *can* accept correction if it is willing to see that it was wrong.

• Study Question •

4. Notice here how there seem to be two parts being described—our part (accepting our responsibility for the world as we see it now, and being willing to accept correction for our perception), and the Holy Spirit’s part (replacing or exchanging our world (which we “do not want”) for the real world (“the one you do”). What term is here used to identify this process?
- A. Forgiveness
 - B. The holy instant
 - C. The power of our wanting

The paragraph begins with, “Begrudge not then this little offering” (4:1), which is clearly intended to counteract our instinctive, negative response to what he has asked of us: To decide that we will refer all our decisions to the Holy Spirit. We think, “Hang on a minute! *All* my decisions? I want to retain at least *a little* control. I want to keep *a few things* to myself.” So, what reason does Jesus give that we should not begrudge offering such a “little” gift, which seems *huge* to us? The pivotal word is the very simple “then.”

It points us back to the previous paragraph, where he points out that the gift we are offering is something that is actually given *to* us by the Holy Spirit, “to give yourself.” It is a gift to ourselves because, when we employ it to release our brothers and sisters from their guilt, they turn around and give salvation to *us*. So the gift we give ends up being given to ourselves.

Lesson 126 affirms, “All that I give is given to myself.” The reason we should not begrudge the gift is expanded on in that lesson, in this paragraph:

Not having given Him the gift He asks of you, you cannot recognize His gifts, and think He has not given them to you. Yet would He ask you for a gift unless it was for you? Could He be satisfied with empty gestures, and evaluate such petty gifts as worthy of His Son? Salvation is a better gift than this. And true forgiveness, as the means by

which it is attained, must heal the mind that gives, for giving is receiving. What remains as unreceived has not been given, but what has been given must have been received (W-pI.126.7:1-6).

Another thing to notice in that paragraph is that it identifies “true forgiveness” as the “means by which it [salvation, or the goal, the end] is attained.” It makes clear the fact that the little gift being asked of us, giving all decision over to the Holy Spirit, will eventuate in true forgiveness of everyone in our lives. We’ve already seen that the gift involves giving up judgment (the ego’s means) and accepting the vision of the Holy Spirit. What we may not have yet realized is that this is identical to true forgiveness; it is the way true forgiveness occurs: We let go of our judgments and grievances and learn to view our brothers and sisters as the holy children of God they are and have always been.

If we want more of the same old same old world we see now, just withhold the gift (4:2). Give decision-making away to the Holy Spirit, and the way we see the world will radically transform (4:3) as we receive the gift of holy vision. This is the bargain of all time—no, the bargain of eternity (4:4)!

Decide for God, and everything is given you at no cost at all. Decide against Him, and you choose nothing, at the expense of the awareness of everything (M-13.8:2-3).

This is what happens in the holy instant (4:5). It is a total exchange of worlds; the world we *don’t* want becomes the world we *do* want (4:6), and our wanting it is why it is given to us (4:7). That is the power of our decision! But for that exchange to take place we have to become aware of the tremendous “*power of your wanting*” (4:8). We have to realize that it is our wanting that made the world we see; we have to take responsibility for that, recognizing the strength of our own minds (4:9). The mind is the source of all our problems, but also the source of our healing. By affirming the strength of our desire, of our minds, of our decision, the strength that *made* a world, we realize that anything that powerful can choose to *unmake* what it made, to “let it go” and “accept correction” once it sees its mistake (4:10).

Are you willing to give that gift to yourself?

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The world you see is but the idle witness that you were *right*. ²This witness is insane. ³You trained it in its testimony, and as it gave it *back* to you, you listened and convinced yourself that what it saw was true. ⁴*You did this to yourself*. ⁵See only this, and you will also see how circular the reasoning on which your “seeing” rests. ⁶This was *not* given you. ⁷This was your *gift* to you *and to your brother*. ⁸Be willing, then, to have it taken *from* him and be replaced with truth. ⁹And as you look upon the change in *him*, it will be given you to see it in *yourself*.

• **Study Question** •

5. *The world and what it tells us is a false witness. It is as if we coached the witness in a trial, making up a story for them to tell, and then turned around and believed the story they told us. How is this way of seeing the world our gift to our brother?*
- A. *Our brother has to experience the world we made up.*
 - B. *We give our brother the same false way of seeing.*
 - C. *Our picture of our brother, which we give to him, is based on this same false way of seeing.*

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The ego mind made the world to prove that we are right: Separation is real and oneness is a lie. The world we see appears to prove that is so. It witnesses to separation (5:1). But it is an insane witness, devoid of any independent thinking (5:2). *We* trained it. We coached the witness and told it what to say! Then, in a crazy feat of mental gymnastics, we *listened* to what the world is saying--this witness spouting only what we told it to--and we believed that it was telling the truth (5:3)!

"*You did this to yourself*" (5:4).

"Perception is a result and not a cause" (T-21.Int.1:8).

The world we see is our gift to ourselves (5:7). It is not something that comes at us from some outside source (5:6). Seeing that we did it to ourselves is the *one thing* we absolutely must see to realize "how circular the reasoning on which your 'seeing' rests" (5:5).

If we grasp the truth that our seeing comes from our own minds and is projected onto others, our "gift" to them, we should be willing to have this projected perception "taken *from* [them] and...replaced with truth" (5:8). That's simply another way of describing the change in perception, looking with the vision of Christ rather than the judgment of the ego. When we realize that we are generating this negative perception of our sister or brother, we need to be willing to have that perception replaced. "Above all else, I want to see things differently" (W-pI.28)

When we do that we will see the other person quite a bit differently. We will see them as holy, as sinless, and quite innocent. When we see another person in that way it opens the door for us to see *ourselves* the same way (5:9). This is the central lesson. it is repeated over and over throughout the book. *To be forgiven and free, free and forgive your brother.*

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Perhaps you do not see the need for you to give this little offering. ²Look closer, then, at what it *is*. ³And, very simply, see in it the whole exchange of separation for salvation. ⁴All that the ego is, is an idea that it is possible that things could *happen* to the Son of God *without* his will; and thus without the Will of his Creator, Whose Will cannot *be* separate from his own. ⁵This is the Son of God's *replacement* for his will, a mad revolt against what must forever be. ⁶This is the statement that he *has* the power to make God *powerless* and so to take it [power] ~~for himself~~ [from himself]⁶, and leave himself without what God has willed *for* him [power]. ⁷This is the mad idea [that power can be taken from God and us] you have enshrined upon your altars, *and which you worship*. ⁸And anything that threatens this seems to *attack* your faith, for here is it invested. ⁹Think not that you are faithless, for your belief and trust in *this* is strong indeed.

• Study Question •

6. *This paragraph emphasizes our need to give this little gift by showing us a deeper picture of what our false perception really is. Which phrases below (more than one) describe what is behind this false perception of our brothers?*
- A. *It is the very essence of separation, the mad idea.*
 - B. *It is the idea that things can happen against our will and God's.*
 - C. *It is faithlessness.*
 - D. *It implies we can make God powerless.*
 - E. *All of the above.*

As I just said, in my opinion, “to give this little offering” (6:1) is the central lesson of the Course: to ask the Holy Spirit to replace our false perception with His vision. But, graciously, Jesus realizes that despite all he has said so far, we still may not “see the need” to do this (6:1). So he sets out with us to examine this “little gift” more closely (6:2). There is more to it than meets the eye. If we look at it more closely, we will “see in it the whole exchange of separation for salvation” (6:3). This isn’t just a small part of our spiritual path; this is *the whole thing*. It’s the central lesson. (I like it when Jesus agrees with me!) Let’s see how he demonstrates that.

He begins by looking at the problem salvation is meant to solve: the ego. The ego is nothing more than the belief that some power exists apart from our will, which is an aspect of God’s Will. Thus, things can happen to us that neither we nor God have willed (6:4). Rather than accepting the all-encompassing power of our will, we have insanely revolted against reality, and have replaced the power of our will (in our imagination) with this notion of a separate power (6:5).

The ego’s idea is fundamentally flawed, contradicting itself at the root. It asserts we *have* power to make God *powerless*, and thereby to make *ourselves* powerless as well, foiling God’s Will for us to share power with Him (6:6). But as Jesus made clear earlier, if we have the power

6 This is one of the crucial mistakes that were made in editing! Jesus is not asserting that we have appropriated power *for* ourselves; rather, he is arguing that we have taken power *from* ourselves and given it away to things separate from us.

to *do* this to ourselves, we must have the power to *undo* it! And if we have the power to undo it, we never lost our power at all.

The insane idea we worship is that power can be taken away from God and from us, which shows up in our belief that “happenings that come to [us that] were not [our] choice” (6:7). When we read lines like, “I am responsible for what I see,” we feel strangely attacked in some way we can’t explain. It’s because such statements seem to attack our faith, but our faith is in a lie.

Perhaps you think that you don’t have a lot of faith, and that because of that lack, you cannot practice the Course very well. Your weak faith makes it difficult to see Christ in others, difficult to forgive them. Jesus says, “Don’t kid yourself! You have very strong faith; it’s just in the wrong thing!” (6:9)

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The Holy Spirit can *give* you faith in holiness and vision to see it easily enough. ²But you have not left open and unoccupied the altar where the gifts belong. ³Where *they* should be, *you* have set up your idols to something *else*. ⁴This *other* “will,” which seems to *tell* you what must happen, you give [**gave**] reality. ⁵And what would *show* you otherwise must therefore seem unreal. ⁶All that is asked of you is to *make room* for truth. ⁷You are *not* asked to make or do what lies *beyond* your understanding. ⁸All you are asked to do is *let it in*; only to stop your *interference* with what will happen *of itself*; simply to recognize again the presence of what you *thought* you gave away.

• Study Question •

7. *How would you sum up this paragraph in one sentence?*

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The faith you think you lack can be yours very easily, as a gift from the Holy Spirit (7:1). But your faith-altar, the place in your mind that holds the objects of your faith, is occupied by “your idols to something else” (7:2–3). The object of our misplaced faith was identified in the previous paragraph as the belief that “power can be taken from God and us” (6:7), which leads to the “idea that it is possible that things could happen to the Son of God without his will” (6:4). This is what we have “enshrined upon [our] altars” (6:7). These are the ideas and beliefs that we have faith in. We have faith in “this other ‘will,’ which seems to tell you what must happen” (7:4). We made it up⁷.

Because we have faith in this hallucination, anything that seems to deny its reality seems unreal (7:5). The whole Course is about undermining our false faith, in order to make room for the truth (7:6). Nothing the Course asks of us is beyond our ability or understanding (7:7). We just need to stop impeding the entrance of the truth into our minds. If we end our resistance to the notion that our mind and will is sovereign, that we are affected only by our own thoughts (W-pII.338), the truth will “happen of itself” (7:8). We simply recognize the power we thought we gave away (7:8)⁸. So amazing is this power that we “can recognize our power in one instant and change the world in the next” (T-7.V.7:5).

⁷ "What if you recognized this world is an hallucination? What if you really understood you made it up" (T-20.VIII.7:3-4).

⁸ Very early in the Text, T-2.VI.9, the Course affirmed the necessity of recognizing the power of the mind.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Be willing, for an instant, to leave your altars free of what *you* placed upon them, and what is *really* there you *cannot* fail to see. ²The holy instant is *not* an instant of creation, but of *recognition*. ³For recognition comes of vision and *suspended* judgment. ⁴Then only it is possible to look within and see what *must* be there, plainly in sight, and wholly *independent* of inference and judgment. ⁵Undoing is *not* your task, but it *is* up to you to welcome it or not. ⁶Faith and desire go hand in hand, for everyone believes in what he wants.

• Study Question •

8. *Once again the moment in which we are willing to stop believing our own perception, and to be shown what is really there, is referred to as a holy instant. In the following list of “steps” in this process (some items in the list are just different names for the same step), identify which ones are something we do or are responsible for by listing the related letters; the items you do not list should be things done by the Holy Spirit or God.*
- A. *Sin or guilt is seen in a brother.*
 - B. *Inference and judgment are used to see a brother.*
 - C. *Willingness to let go of our false perception.*
 - D. *Welcoming the undoing of false perception.*
 - E. *Suspended judgment.*
 - F. *Vision sees the holiness that is really there.*
 - G. *Recognition of God's creation.*

Just for an instant, let go of all belief in any power outside of your own mind (which is shared with God). The instant you do that, “what is really there [within your mind] you cannot fail to see” (8:1). What *is* “really there”? The gifts of the Holy Spirit, the means of accomplishing our goal: faith in holiness and the vision with which to see it. In a holy instant, it's not that something new is given to us. Rather, we are simply recognizing what always has been true (8:2). We remove the illusion that has been obscuring the reality; the reality has always been there. We suspend judgment, which activates vision, and we recognize reality (8:3). Judgment must go before this vision can occur (8:4). (Note: Notice the reference to “inference” in 8:4, something previously mentioned in 21.I.1:2. There is no need to “connect the dots” or draw conclusions from obscure or confusing evidence; reality is plain as day.)

As we've been told, “I need do nothing.” Undoing our false thinking isn't our task, but “it *is* up to you to welcome it or not” (8:5). Another way of putting this is, “I will step back and let Him lead the way” (W-pI.155).

"Do not make the mistake of believing that you understand what you perceive, for its meaning is lost to you. Yet the Holy Spirit has saved its meaning for you, and if you will let Him interpret it, He will restore to you what you have thrown away. Yet while you think you know its meaning, you will see no need to ask it of Him" (T-11.VIII.2:3-5).

You must desire this, you must want to see before you have the faith to see it: “Faith and desire go hand in hand” (8:6). You will believe in whatever you want to see (8:6).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹We have already said that wishful thinking is how the ego deals with what it wants, to make it so. ²There is no better demonstration of the power of wanting, and therefore of *faith*, to make its goals seem real and possible. ³Faith in the *unreal* leads to *adjustments* of reality to make it fit the goal of madness. ⁴The goal of sin induces the perception of a fearful world to *justify* its purpose. ⁵What you desire, you *will* see. ⁶And if its reality is false, you will *uphold* it by *not* realizing all the adjustments *you* have introduced to *make* it so.

• Study Question •

9. How is the “power of wanting” (9:2) demonstrated by the way the ego deals with what it wants (9:1)?

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Our ego wanted to see a world that was a witness to separation (sin), so by its wishing, it made such a world appear (9:1). What a dramatic demonstration of the power of our minds—our wanting, our faith (9:2)! Does the world you see seem real? Does it seem quite possible? Of course, but what that shows, Jesus is saying, is just how powerful our wanting is, because the world we see *is not real*.

Because we believe in something that isn't real, we are forced to adjust reality to make it fit our desired picture (9:3). An entire section of the Text was dedicated to the topic of “Sin as an Adjustment” (T-20.III). There, we read: “You make the world and then adjust to it, and it to you” (T-20.III.3:6). It told us:

The world you see is but a judgment on yourself. It is not there at all. Yet judgment lays a sentence on it, justifies it and makes it real. Such is the world you see; a judgment on yourself, and made by you (T-20.III.5:2-5).

Adjustment was also mentioned in the last section of Chapter 20 and in 21.I as well. See T-21.I.45, T-20.VIII.6, and also T-20.VIII.9:6, where we read that, controlled by the ego, our perception of the outside world adjusts itself to the ego's goal of sin, and we, in turn, adjust *ourselves* to what we perceive and believe to be true.

The world we see is fearful, which justifies the ego's goal of separation (9:3–4). We judge the world *because* it lays the same judgment on ourselves, feeding the ego's need for guilt. It's a law: “What you desire, you *will* see” (9:5). And if what we desire is something that isn't real (which is the case), we'll twist reality in our perception to match our wishes and hide from ourselves the fact that we have done so (9:6).

Paragraphs 10 & 11

10. ¹When vision is *denied*, confusion of cause and effect becomes inevitable. ²The *purpose* now becomes to *keep obscure* the cause of the effect, and make effect appear to *be* a cause. ³This seeming independence of effect enables it to be regarded as *standing by itself*, and capable of serving as a *cause* of the events and feelings its maker thinks *it* [the effect] causes. ⁴Earlier, we spoke of your desire to create your own creator, and be father and not son to him. ⁵This is the same desire. ⁶The Son is the effect, whose Cause he would deny. ⁷And so he seems to *be* the cause, producing real *effects*. ⁸Nothing can have effects *without* a cause, and to confuse the two is merely to fail to understand them both.

11. ¹It is as needful that you recognize you *made* the world you see, as that you recognize that you did *not* create yourself. ²*They are the same mistake*. ³Nothing created *not* by your Creator has *any* influence over you. ⁴And if you think what *you* have made can *tell* you what you see and feel, and place your faith in its ability to do so, you *are* denying your Creator and *believing* that you made yourself. ⁵For if you think the world you made has power to make you what *it* wills, you *are* confusing Son and Father; effect and Source.

• Study Question •

10. *This paragraph describes the next logical step, which comes after our power of wanting has produced its effect, namely, a world that justifies the goal of sin. What is the next logical step after this effect?*
- A. *Our mind confuses cause and effect, and sees the world as causing our “reactions” to it, such as feelings of anger.*
 - B. *We deny vision.*
 - C. *We attempt to create our own Creator.*
11. *The last part of paragraph 10, and this paragraph, contend that two apparently unrelated mistakes are really the same mistake. What are these two mistakes which are said to be the same?*
- A. *Thinking we created ourselves.*
 - B. *Thinking we are the effect and not the cause.*
 - C. *Thinking we did not create the world.*

Extra question (optional): *Explain in your own words why 11:1 and 2 are true.*

•

When we reject Christ's vision and prefer the distorted perception of the ego, we end up confusing cause with effect, and vice versa. We have to, if we want to achieve the ego's purpose and to hide from conscious awareness the fact that *we* are the cause. The ego deliberately arranges things so that the effect (the projected hallucination that we mistake for reality) seems to be the cause our distress or pain, hiding the fact that our mind is the cause, and what we think is causing our pain is actually the effect of our thinking (10:1–2).

Our thinking seems to be detached from and unconnected to events that occur “outside” of us. By hiding that connection, it becomes possible for us to imagine that the outside things and persons are independent agents that are capable of causing “the events and feelings its maker [which is *us*] thinks *it* [the independent, outside thing, which is actually the effect of our mind’s thinking] causes” (10:3). In a nutshell, we choose the feelings and the outside occurrences, conveniently forget we made them, and then *blame* them for the pain and grief we experience!

Jesus now compares this insane projection to another insane belief of the ego, previously discussed⁹: that we can create our own creator, thus becoming God’s father instead of God’s son (10:4). He makes the dramatic and startling declaration: “*This is the same desire.*”

How so? Both are the reversal of cause and effect, making the cause into the effect, and the effect into the cause. In the one case, we, who are the effect of God, desire to become God’s cause (10:6–7). We become the creator, and the separation we believe we have caused becomes real in our imagination (10:7). We completely fail to understand either cause or effect when we confuse the two (10:8).

In the other case, we, who are the cause of our feelings and experience in the world, desire to become their effect. We want our minds to be the effect and things “outside” to be the cause, when the reverse is true. Again, we are making the world “real” by imagining that it can affect us, when in truth, *we* have effected *it*.

Therefore, recognizing that we made the world we see is just as important as recognizing God as our creator (11:1). “*They are the same mistake*” (11:2). This whole issue of taking responsibility for what we see is *core*! We may imagine that we understand cause and effect, and recognize God as our Cause, but if we still hold back from saying, “I am responsible for what I see,” we are still confusing cause and effect. We are still giving in to the desire for the separation to be real.

Only what God creates is real; nothing else “has *any* influence over [us]” (11:3). Do we imagine that *God* created the evil in the world? Be assured: He did not. That is the intent behind Lesson 14, “God did not create a meaningless world.” Or consider these lines from Lesson 152, which parallel the message of this section:

Is it not strange that you believe to think you made the world you see is arrogance? God made it not. Of this you can be sure. What can He know of the ephemeral, the sinful and the guilty, the afraid, the suffering and lonely, and the mind that lives within a body that must die? You but accuse Him of insanity, to think He made a world where such things seem to have reality. He is not mad. Yet only madness makes a world like this.

To think that God made chaos, contradicts His Will, invented opposites to truth, and suffers death to triumph over life; all this is arrogance. Humility would see at once these things are not of Him. And can you see what God created not? To think you can is merely to believe you can perceive what God willed not to be. And what could be more arrogant than this (W-pI.152.6:1-7:5).

Therefore, if you think the “outside world,” which in reality *you* have made, “can *tell* you what you see and feel”—if you have faith in the world’s power to affect you—“you *are* denying your Creator and *believing* that you made yourself” (11:4)! If you are blaming something outside

⁹ “The authority problem is still the only source of conflict, because the ego was made out of the wish of God’s Son to father *Him*” (T-11.Int.2:3).

yourself for any of your problems, you are denying God. It's the same mistake; you are confusing effect and Source, and thus confusing Son and Father (11:5).

When you find yourself tempted to see yourself as the effect of something external, big or little (no order of difficulty here, either)—“You make me so angry!” “The news makes me feel so depressed.” “I'm afraid of global warming.”—When you notice that, stop. Affirm that this event, this person, does not cause you or affect you; it has no influence over you at all, because God did not create it. Acknowledge that you are responsible for what you see, and choose any feelings that have arisen. And choose again.

Paragraph 12

12. ¹The Son's creations *are* like his Father's. ²Yet in creating *them* the Son does not delude himself that he is *independent* of his Source. ³His union with It is the *Source* of his creating. ⁴*Apart* from this he *has* no power to create, and what he makes is meaningless. ⁵It changes *nothing* in creation, depends *entirely* upon the madness of its maker, and *cannot* serve to justify the madness. ⁶Your brother thinks he made the world with you. ⁷Thus he denies creation. ⁸With you, he thinks the world he made, made *him*. ⁹Thus he denies he *made* it.

• Study Question •

12. What fact(s) is (are) true of what we have attempted to create without God?

- A. It is meaningless, and changes nothing in creation.
- B. It is something we have made with our brothers.
- C. We have denied that we made it.
- D. It is real because of our union with God.
- E. We think that it has made us what we are.
- F. All of the above.

•

The “Son’s creations” refer to that which we genuinely create, not to what we have *made* in obedience to our egos. These creations “*are like his Father’s*” (12:1). Just because we have been told that the world we have made is unreal, it does not diminish the reality of our *creations*. They are as real as God’s own creations, and as holy and as eternal as they are.¹⁰

Why? because in true creating, we do not insanely believe that we are *independent* of our Source (God) (12:2); rather, it is our *union* with our Source that enables us to create (12:3). Apart from that union we cannot create, and what we “make” “is meaningless” (12:4).¹¹ It is meaningless in several ways: Our independent fabrications have no effect whatsoever on actual

¹⁰ "That is why He created His Son, and gave him the power to create with Him. Our creations are as holy as we are, and we are the Sons of God Himself, as holy as He is. Through our creations we extend our love, and thus increase the joy of the Holy Trinity" (T-8.VI.8:7-9).

¹¹ “Man is capable of this kind of creation, too, being in the image and likeness of his own Creator. Anything else is only his own nightmare, and does not exist. Only the Creations of Light are real.” (Miracle Principle 23 from the Urtext)

“While the miscreation is NECESSARILY believed in by its own creator, it does not exist at all at the level of true Creation.” (Miracle Principle 42 in the Urtext)

“The miscreations of the mind do not really exist.” (T-2.V.1:5)

“I have said that only what God creates or what you create with the same Will has any real existence” (T-3.II.3:6).

creation. They are the fruit of madness, nothing more, and their production in no way validates the insanity that makes them (12:5).

If you compare 12:6 with 12:9 you will see they seem to contradict one another. 12:6 says, "Your brother thinks he made the world with you." 12:9 says, "Thus he denies he *made* it." This simply reflects the reversal of cause and effect we've been talking about. Sentence 6 states a partial truth, that we "made" the world. I say "partial" because as we've just seen, what we "make" is without any meaning or reality. But we *do* "make" the world, as we were told in 11:1, as well as earlier: T-20.VIII.7:3-4: "What if you recognized this world is an hallucination? What if you really understood you made it up?". And also in T-12.VIII.8:1: "The real world was given you by God in loving exchange for the world you made and the world you see". So in that sense we are the cause of the world.

Yet, after believing we have created independently of God, we forget that we made the world and believe it exists independently of us (12:8). We flip cause for effect; thus we believe we are at effect, and the world is the cause. That's 12:9. So not only *you* do this; so does your brother or sister. So does everyone; we all would deny that we made the world, and we do believe that the world makes us.

And what you behold upon it are your wishes, acted out so you can look on them and think them real. Perhaps you think you did not make the world, but came unwillingly to what was made already, hardly waiting for your thoughts to give it meaning. Yet in truth you found exactly what you looked for when you came.

There is no world apart from what you wish, and herein lies your ultimate release (W-pI.132.4:3-5:1).¹²

Paragraph 13

13. ¹Yet the truth is you and your brother were both created by a loving Father, Who created you together and as one. ²See what "proves" otherwise [see the world], and you *deny* your whole reality. ³But grant that *everything* that seems to stand *between* you and your brother, keeping you from each other and separate from your Father, *you made in secret*, and the instant of release has come to you. ⁴All its effects are gone, because its source has been uncovered. ⁵It is its seeming *independence* of its source that keeps you prisoner. ⁶This *is* the same mistake as thinking *you* are independent of the Source by Which *you* were created, and have never left.

¹² For your enjoyment, see the song lyrics on the last page of this commentary, "There is no world," set to the tune of "It's a small world, after all."

• Study Question •

13. What is the “source” referred to in sentence 4?

- A. The things that seem to stand between us and our brothers.
- B. The loving Father.
- C. Our minds.
- D. Our brother.

•

I and my brothers, then, believe we have been formed and shaped by the world (the world that *we made*). But “the truth is you and your brother were both created by a loving Father, who created you together and as one” (13:1). Do you see how our belief that we can be affected by the world is a denial of God’s Fatherhood? (13:6) In the oft-repeated Workbook lesson title, perhaps we should lay emphasis on the word “God”: “I am as *God* created me.”

And not only so: We each have been created “together and as one” with our brothers and sisters. We were created *without any separation between us*, and if we remain as God created us, that is still true. If we see people and events in the world that seem to “prove” otherwise, we are denying our whole reality (13:2). On the other hand, if we accept as fact that “*everything* that seems to stand *between*” us and our brothers or sisters, “keeping you from each other and separate from your Father, *you made in secret*,” then, in that moment of acceptance, “the instant of release has come to you” (13:3). That is our choice: to see proof that we are separate, or to realize that that so-called proof is all something we’ve made up, and we are all One.

The whole purpose of the world, from the ego’s point of view, is to *prove separation real*. Take five minutes some time as you are out in the world (not sitting alone, meditating, but engaging with the world), and notice how many things seem to speak to you of separateness. The witnesses are ubiquitous. Try to realize that *you* made all these witnesses “in secret,” that is, in a way that leaves *not even you* aware that you’ve done it.

What makes the witness of the world so powerful? Answer: Its apparent *independence of its source*, that is, of you (13:5). Once you realize and admit that you are making it up, that you are the source, then you realize that its witness is telling you absolutely *nothing* (13:4). It has nothing to say about who either of you are, or whether or not you are joined together. It has nothing to say about the truth of Who and What we are.

Answer Key

1. F
2. Our little part in salvation is to offer to the Holy Spirit our willingness to recognize without reservation that our mind's own choices completely determine our perception and experience of the world.
3. (a) A. False B. True C. False D. True E. True F. True
(b) "...you gave the power of decision to Him Who must decide for God for you."
4. B
5. C
6. A, B, and D
7. We are asked only to stop using our false perception to interfere with the true vision of God's Son.
8. A,B,C,D,E
9. The ego's wishful thinking causes our mind to make adjustments to reality, in order to fit the picture of what the ego wants to see. We see the world in a way that justifies the goal of sin, and we cause ourselves to be unconscious of the adjustments we are making, so that we become convinced what we see is true.
10. A
11. A and C
Extra: Recognizing that we made the world we see is the same as recognizing we did not create ourselves because both mistakes (failure to recognize these things) are based on a confusion of cause and effect, a failure to see the true cause in each instance. In the one case we believe that we, as God's creations or thoughts, can somehow leave His mind and become independent of Him; in the other case we are believing that the world, as our "creation," can somehow leave our mind and become independent of us.
12. A,B,C, and E
13. C

**There's No World Outside My Mind
(Tune: It's A Small World After All)**

When I look with Jesus at ev'rything,
When my darkest thoughts to the light I bring,
 I will find I can smile
 As I learn all the while
There's no world outside my mind.

Chorus:

There's no world outside my mind.
When I look with Him I find
Jesus' hand with mine entwined—
I am still God's son.

When in doubt and struggle I lose my peace,
Taking Jesus' hand will give me release.
 All the gloom that I see
 Has been made up by me—
There's no world outside my mind.
(Chorus)

Though I fear to look at the ego's hate,
Though I cringe and cower and fear my fate,
 I know Jesus is here,
 There is nothing to fear—
There's no world outside my mind.
(Chorus)

Nothing outside mind touches me at all,
In a word of anger I hear love's call.
 What I want, that I see,
 I can choose to be free,
There's no world outside my mind.
(Chorus)
Allen Watson