

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 22

The Function of the Holy Relationship

Section III

The Escape from Misery

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section III

This section contrasts the effects of our belief in truth (innocence) and illusion (sin), asserting that all of our misery comes from lingering faith in illusions. It insists that there can be no exceptions; that we must be willing to see *everyone* sinless, which, though it may seem impossible, *is* possible if and when we finally choose to escape from our misery.

Paragraph 1

The opposite of illusions is not disillusionment, but truth.¹ ²Only to the ego, to which truth is meaningless, do they appear to be the only alternatives, and different from each other. ³In truth, they are the same. ⁴Both bring the same amount of misery, though each one seems to be the way to lose the misery the other brings. ⁵Every illusion carries pain and suffering in the dark folds of the heavy garments with which it hides its nothingness. ⁶Yet in these dark and heavy garments are those who *seek* illusions covered, and hidden from the joy of truth.

¹. “Disillusionment” is the disappointment we feel when we discover that something in the world is not the wonderful thing we thought it was. According to this paragraph, we think the only options are to be in a state of *illusion* (to believe that certain things in the world promise happiness) or to be *disillusioned* (to feel disappointed by realizing that their promises are empty). The point in this paragraph is that these two options are not really different, because both are states of illusion and “both bring the same amount of misery.” The truth stands apart from either one and the truth brings joy.

• **Study Question** •

1. Sentence 2 here says, “Only to the ego...do they appear to be the only alternatives....” What are these apparent only alternatives?
 - A. Truth and illusion.
 - B. Illusions and disillusionment.
 - C. Truth and disillusionment.
 - D. Illusions and misery.

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Robert’s footnote summarizes the paragraph well. We buy into illusions such as finding happiness in a better job or new location or new relationship, and then, when happiness is not the result, we become *disillusioned*. The two states of mind are really one and the same (1:1–3): faith in illusions. In the initial state we think our faith is, or will be, working; in the latter state, we realize that our faith was “misplaced.” The failure is not in our faith, but in the object of our faith: The job was not good enough; the location didn’t live up to its hype; the partner in our relationship failed to make us happy as they ought to have done. The common thread is that we still believe that something outside of us can make us happy, or make us miserable.

Actually, both states make us miserable (1:4). They offer offsetting kinds of misery. *Finding* an illusion to believe in relieves us from disillusionment and fills us with hope, but it hides the inner anxiety that the illusion won’t last—which it never does. Then, *losing* the illusion offers relief from that anxiety, but leaves us feeling empty and unfulfilled, disillusioned. We need to internalize the sage saying that, “Every illusion carries pain and suffering in the dark folds of the heavy garments in which it hides its nothingness” (1:5). Every illusion presents itself to us like a beautifully wrapped gift box which, when we open it, proves to be empty. We go through life unwrapping one illusion after another, never finding the content we seek. The endless search blinds us to the happiness of finding the truth (1:6).

We need to stop looking for another illusion and realize that the opposite of illusions is *truth* (1:1).

Paragraph 2 (2:1–7; 3:1–3 (FIP))

2 Truth is the opposite of illusions because it offers joy. ²What else *but* joy could be the opposite of misery? ³To leave one kind of misery and seek another is hardly an escape. ⁴To change illusions is to make no change. ⁵The search for joy in misery is senseless, for how *could* joy be found in misery? ⁶All that is possible in the dark world of misery is to select some aspects out of it, see them as different, and define the difference as joy. ⁷Yet to perceive a difference where none exists will surely fail to *make* a difference. ⁸Illusions carry only guilt and suffering, sickness and death, to their believers. ⁹The form in which they are accepted is irrelevant. ¹⁰No form of misery, in reason's² eyes, can be confused with joy.

• Study Question •

2. *Truth is the only real opposite to illusions, whereas we try to escape illusions by finding different illusions that we define as joyous. What does sentence 5 mean by the search for joy in misery?*
- A. *Trying to find happiness in this dark world.*
 - B. *Trying to find happiness by switching from one illusion to another illusion.*
 - C. *Trying to escape from pain of illusions through becoming disillusioned.*
 - D. *All of the above.*
 - E. *B and C.*

Truth offers us joy, not misery (2:1). Of course! If illusions offer only misery, and truth is their opposite, then truth must offer the opposite of misery: joy (2:2).

Going from illusion to illusion is only leaving one kind of misery for another—“hardly an escape” (2:3)! We’re just exchanging one illusion for another. “I don’t like living in the city; I’ll be happy if I can live in the country.” “My marriage is a disaster. I want to fall in love again with a new partner.” “I need a new car. A new computer. A new dress. A vacation.” Changing illusions is not a real change (2:4)! All illusions bring is misery; we will *never* find happiness in them (2:5). We may find one illusion or another that we prefer over everything else and *call* it “joy,” but that does not *make* it joy. It’s still misery (2:6–7). In fact, no illusion can bring true joy! *All* they bring to those who believe in them is “guilt and suffering, sickness and death” (2:8).

It may be hard to believe that *everything* you have ever sought after to bring you happiness is concealing guilt and suffering beneath its surface. Anyone who has ever been “head over heels in love” knows how impossible it seemed, in that moment, that the object of your affections could ever bring you anything but pure delight. But, if you were

² I have highlighted the occurrences of the word “reason” in paragraphs 2 through 8, to show how strongly the Course wants us to use our reason.

thinking that person could “make you happy,” eventually you were dismayed to discover that was not the case. The author of the biblical book of Ecclesiastes saw the truth of this. He wrote:

“I have seen everything that is done under the sun, and behold, all is vanity and a striving after wind.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14 ESV)

We may think that some forms of illusion are better than others, but the *form* of the illusion does not matter (2:9). When you look with the eyes of reason (There’s that *reason* again!), you cannot confuse *any* form of misery with true joy (2:10). This is another thing that “reason would tell you” (See footnote #2).

Paragraph 3 (3:4–10 (FIP))

3 Joy is eternal. ²You can be sure indeed that any seeming happiness that does not last is really fear. ³Joy does not turn to sorrow, for the eternal cannot change. ⁴But sorrow can be turned to joy, for time gives way to the eternal. ⁵Only the timeless must remain unchanged, but everything in time can change with time. ⁶Yet if the change be real and not imagined, illusions must give way to truth, and not to other dreams which are but equally unreal. ⁷This is no difference.

• Study Question •

3. *Let’s say that you meet someone with whom you fall madly in love. You feel happier than you have ever felt in your life. Yet as the relationship progresses you notice that this happiness does not last, and even turns to misery. According to this paragraph, what was that happiness really?*
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What’s one sure sign you are fastening your hopes on something illusory? Ask yourself this: Is it eternal? Joy is (3:1). If anything seeming to bring joy is not eternal, you will always be wondering how long it will last, and fearing the loss that inevitably will come (3:2). Workbook lesson 133 makes this point powerfully:

"First, if you choose a thing that will not last forever, what you chose is valueless. A temporary value is without all value. Time can never take away a value that is real. What fades and dies was never there, and makes no offering to him who chooses it. He is deceived by nothing in a form he thinks he likes" (W-pI.133.6:1-5).

Nothing, in a form you *think* you like. That’s what all illusions are. Real joy, being eternal, cannot turn into sorrow, as happens to us when we cling to something that does not and cannot last forever (3:3). The opposite, however—turning sorrow into joy—is indeed possible. Time can and does give way to the eternal (3:4). We can bring all our transient joys *and* sorrows to the Holy Spirit, and let Him replace them all with Truth, because truth is eternal. When we connect with eternal truth, we also encounter eternal

joy. Remember when we encountered the idea of *constant* joy and happiness back in T-21.VII?³ In commenting on that, I said:

Happiness must be *constant*. Happiness isn't affected by anything that shifts and changes with time or place. Do you think your happiness depends on where you live? Where you work? Having the best streaming TV service? Being with certain people? If your happiness depends on anything that can change, it *cannot* be constant.

The secret of constant joy is detaching from the temporal and temporary, and latching on to the eternal. Anything in and affected by time can change; only the timeless remains unchanged (3:5). If we detach from the temporal and attach to the eternal, our joy will be constant. There can be *real* change as well as the change that is nothing more than a shift in illusions. The illusions can give way to truth—that is a *real* change (3:6). A change that is just a switch from one illusion to another equally unreal dream is “no difference” in reality (3:7).

What this boils down to, in practical terms of our relationships, is detaching from the external appearances of bodies, words, and behaviors, all of which change, and resting our faith in the eternal, unchanging Christ within our brothers and sisters. As the Bible puts it, it means enduring “as seeing him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27, ESV). It means seeing them without sin, as we shall see in the ensuing paragraphs.

Paragraph 4

4 **Reason** will tell you that the only way to escape from misery is to recognize it and *go the other way*. ²Truth is the same and misery the same, but they are different from each other—in *every way*, in every *instance*, and *without exception*. ³To believe that one exception can exist is to confuse what is the same with what is different. ⁴One illusion cherished and defended against the truth makes all truth meaningless and all illusions real. ⁵Such is the power of belief. ⁶It cannot compromise. ⁷And faith in innocence is faith in sin if the belief excludes one living thing and holds it out apart from its forgiveness.

• Study Question •

4. Paragraph 4 talks about the mutual exclusivity of truth and illusion. True or false: *Since all is one, and all is one with God, then everything, including physical forms and negative emotions, is part of the great oneness, part of God.*
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³ “Elusive happiness, or happiness in changing forms that shift with time and place, is an illusion that has no meaning. Happiness must be constant, because it is attained by giving up the wish for the inconstant. Joy cannot be perceived except through constant vision, and constant vision can be given only those who wish for constancy.” (T-21.VII.13:1–3)

Appealing again to reason, Jesus makes the very reasonable statement: “The only way to escape from misery is to recognize it and *go the other way*” (4:1). That seems just like common sense, except for the part about *recognizing* our misery. We so often fail to do that. Jesus pointed this out way back in Chapter 14:

“You who are steadfastly devoted to misery *must* first recognize that you *are* miserable and not happy. The Holy Spirit cannot teach without this contrast, for you believe that misery *is* happiness” (T-14.II.1:2-3).

In the light of the current section, perhaps we can see that, in failing to recognize that all illusions, without exception, bring us misery—even the most appealing illusions—we are doing just what these passages assert: believing that misery (that is, our cherished illusion) *is* happiness, and failing to recognize our misery in the situation. We are proclaiming that we are happy and burying the feelings of misery, not wanting to admit that our happiness is only a thin layer over a deeper discontent. We need to recognize the misery in being attached to the ephemeral (which can only bring unhappiness), detach from it, and “go the other way,” attaching to the eternal.

Now, Jesus hammers home the fact that truth and misery (illusion) are utterly, completely different from each other—“in *every* way, in every *instance*, and *without exception*” (4:2). We don’t realize how prone we are to making exceptions! “Surely this doesn’t apply to my relationship with my children, does it?” Maybe this is why, when alive in Galilee, Jesus is reported to have said, “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple.” (Luke 14:26 ESV) It is a disturbing teaching. The Gospel of Matthew has a somewhat-toned-down version of the saying that helps us understand it: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.” (Matthew 10:37 ESV)

But that is just an example of the kind of exceptions we all want to make. That is precisely our problem. We are, perhaps, willing to relinquish *nearly* all of our illusions, but we want to keep certain ones. Won’t work! We are confusing an illusion that is 100% the same as all illusions, and thinking it is somehow different (4:3). The effect is to (seem to) make *all of truth* meaningless and *all illusions* real (4:4). The truth is, “What God and His Sons create is eternal, and in this and this only is their joy” (T-8.V.3:3; T-8.VI.3:3 (FIP)). Holding on to one illusion negates that truth. Our belief *is that* powerful (4:5). No compromise is possible (4:6).

The next statement, 4:7, brings this home in a startling way. It declares that what we want to believe is our faith in innocence—which we all have as good students of the Course—is *really faith in sin* if we exclude “*one living thing*” from our forgiveness (4:7). If you exclude *one person*, then *nobody* is truly forgiven. You’ve negated the foundation of forgiveness—that *everyone* is created by God and remains as God created them: whole, complete, perfect, and innocent. If that is *not* true in one, single case, then it cannot be relied on for anyone. Not even for yourself. Your faith declares that, in this instance, the power of sin is greater than God. If that’s so, we are *all* damned.

Paragraph 5

5 Both **reason** and the ego will tell you this, but what they make of it is not the same. ²The ego will assure you now it is impossible for you to see *no* guilt in anyone. ³And if this vision is the only means by which escape from guilt can be attained, then the belief in sin must be eternal. ⁴Yet **reason** looks on this another way, for **reason** sees the *source* of an idea as what will make it true or false. ⁵This must be so, if the idea is *like* its source. ⁶Therefore, says **reason**, if escape from guilt was given to the Holy Spirit as His purpose, and by One to Whom nothing He wills can be impossible, the means for its attainment are more than possible. ⁷They must be there, and you must *have* them.

• Study Question •

5. *Reason says that escape from guilt must be possible, since this idea comes from the Holy Spirit and was given Him by God, to Whom nothing is impossible. The ego, however, says that escape from guilt is impossible. Why, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *Because God is a liar.*
 - B. *Because the ego says that you have sinned and are eternally guilty.*
 - C. *Because to escape from guilt you must see guiltlessness in others and they are truly guilty.*
 - D. *Because to escape from guilt you must see guiltlessness in everyone without a single exception.*

Reason will tell you this (the statement in 4:7), and the ego—Surprise!—agrees. But the ego and reason arrive at entirely different conclusions based on this fact. The ego concludes that since you can't possibly see *everyone* as sinless, you can't really see *anyone* as sinless (5:2). If the only way you or I can escape from guilt is by a vision of universal sinlessness, then we are doomed to remain sinners forever (5:3).

Reason sees it differently, because reason understands that the truth or falsity of an idea is determined by its *source* (5:4). That is only reasonable because an idea is *like* its source, so if the source of an idea is God...the idea *must* be true (5:5). More than that, if the idea of perceiving *everyone without exception* as sinless is an idea that comes from God—God for Whom *nothing* He wills is impossible—then, reason will tell us, *it must be possible for us to do it*. The means for doing it must be here, and *we* must *have* them (5:6–7).

Encouraging news, but challenging. It challenges us to reexamine our belief that we just cannot forgive certain people or certain things, that the demand on us to see everyone and everything without sin is unreasonable or beyond our capabilities. *We already have the means to attain this goal, and seeing everyone sinless is possible.*

Paragraph 6 (6:1–7 (FIP))

6 This is a crucial period in this course, for here the separation of you and the ego must be made complete.⁴ ²For if you have the means to let the Holy Spirit's purpose be accomplished, they can be used. ³And through their use will you gain faith in them. ⁴Yet to the ego they must be impossible, and no one undertakes to do what holds no hope of ever being done. ⁵You know what your Creator wills is possible, but what you made believes it is not so. ⁶Now must you choose between yourself and an illusion of yourself—not both, but *one*.

• Study Question •

6. *True or false, the ego is a tiny, mad idea that is the source of all your pain. Yet it is part of you, the part of you that is like a scared, frightened child, calling for love. Therefore, embrace the ego, love it, soothe its fears, and you will be healed.*

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When Jesus says this is a crucial period in the Course (6:1), I think it is because he is confronting us so pointedly with the decision we *must* make, the question we *must* answer, if we are to move forward. The word “crucial” comes from the same root as “crucifix” or “crossroad.” This is a crossroads, a turning point, in the Course. If we listen to reason, we’ll move ahead. If we don’t, we’ll take another detour.

What is the crux (another “cross” word) of the matter? It is a time when “the separation of you and the ego must be made complete.” Have you ever thought about being *separated* from your ego? Interesting concept, because for so long we’ve been accustomed to thinking the ego *is* us. It’s not. “. . .you are not an ego” (T-14.XI.3:5; T-14.X.5:5 (FIP)). What the Course is encouraging us to do is to *disengage from* our ego: to recognize the ego’s voice when it speaks to us, and to declare, “This is not me!” It has been contrasting the voice of the ego and the voice of the Holy Spirit (or of reason), and it wants us to learn to tell them apart and to choose the Holy Spirit over the ego every time. To make the separation of yourself from the ego *complete*.

We have the means to let the purpose of the Holy Spirit be accomplished. If we have them, we can *use* them (6:2). We *can* see no guilt anywhere. When we choose to, we can do it! And every time we do it we will “gain faith in them,” that is, the means for doing it, the power of forgiveness (6:3). Don’t listen when the ego says it’s impossible, or you won’t even try (6:4). What God the Creator wills *is* possible and you *know* that. The ego does not (6:5). Do you want to listen to *yourself* or to an illusion of yourself that you

⁴. How, in this context, do we completely separate ourselves from the ego? We reject its claim that the means to accomplish the Holy Spirit’s purpose—seeing no guilt in anyone—is impossible and thus should not even be attempted. Instead, we side with what we know: that since the Holy Spirit’s purpose was given Him by God, the means for achieving that purpose must be possible, must exist, and must be in us. We decide, in other words, that we *are* able to “see no guilt in anyone.”

made up (6:6)? You cannot have it both ways. You either listen to your Self, or to the ego; it's up to you (6:7).

Paragraph 7 (6:8–10, 7:1–4 (FIP))

⁷ There is no point in trying to avoid this one decision. ²It must be made. ³Faith and belief can fall to either side, but **reason** tells you that misery lies only on one side and joy upon the other. ⁴Forsake not now each other, for you who are the same will not decide alone, or differently. ⁵Either you give each other life or death; either you are each other's savior or his judge, offering him sanctuary or condemnation. ⁶This course will be believed *entirely* or not at all, for it is wholly true or wholly false, and cannot be but partially believed. ⁷And you will either escape from misery entirely or not at all.

• Study Question •

7. *Paragraph 7 makes many absolute statements that seem very extreme. Let's say that you love the Course, feel that it is truth with a capital "T" and know that it is your way home, but you have a problem accepting that part of the Course which says that others really cannot injure you. What does this problem of yours mean (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *That you do not believe the Course at all.*
 - B. *That you have not escaped from misery at all.*
 - C. *That you are your brother's judge, giving him death.*

Very pointedly, Jesus tells us there's "no point in trying to avoid this one decision" (7:1). Avoiding it is impossible (7:2). In fact, we *are making* this decision in every minute: Either we are listening to our ego or to the Holy Spirit. For many of us the decision is mostly unconscious, a habitual response. We've grown accustomed to listening to the ego. A big step upward would be to become *conscious* of our choices, even when we are choosing madness. When we make a choice for the ego *consciously*, we will begin to connect the ensuing misery with that decision, and that will begin to motivate us to choose differently.

How can you teach someone the value of something he has thrown away deliberately? He must have thrown it away because he did *not* value it. ³You can only show him how miserable he is without it and bring it near very slowly, so he can learn how his misery lessens as he approaches it. ⁴This conditions him to associate his misery with its absence, and to associate the opposite of misery with its presence. ⁵It gradually becomes desirable, as he changes his mind about its worth.

I am conditioning you to associate misery with the ego and joy with your spirit. (T-4.VIII.22:1–23:1; T-4.VI.5:1–6 (FIP)).

³That is why the question “What do you want?” ⁴must be answered. ⁵You *are* answering it every minute and every second, and each moment of decision is a judgment which is anything but ineffectual. ⁶Its effects⁵ will follow automatically until the decision is changed. (⁷This is a redundant statement, because you have not learned it.)⁶ ⁸But again, any decision can be unmade as well as made.

11But remember that the alternatives are unalterable. ²The Holy Spirit, like the ego, is a decision. ³Together they constitute all the alternatives which the mind can accept and obey. ⁴The ego and the Holy Spirit are the only choices which are open to you. (T-5.VI.10:3–11:4; T-5.V.6:2-8 (FIP))

So, we can place our faith and belief in the ego’s voice, or we can listen to the Voice of reason. Reason, as well as our own personal experience, will make it clear that listening to the ego always brings misery, while listening to the Voice for God always brings joy (7:3). But let’s remember that these chapters are now firmly planted in the context of holy relationships. The underlying context should tell us that what we are listening to the ego or the Holy Spirit *about* is our partners in relationship. Which is why Jesus suddenly says, with great emphasis: “*Forsake not now each other*” (7:4)! Don’t choose your ego over your partner. Don’t judge and condemn one another. Don’t let *sin* become real in your perception. Believe in a world—in a relationship—in which you have no enemy, but only a friend and brother or sister.

Remember that what you decide about your partner is what you are deciding about *yourself* (7:4), and vice versa: Condemn *yourself* and you are condemning your partner as well. Just don’t condemn. Period. Listen to your ego and you will be judging and condemning, giving each other death. Listen to the Spirit and you will be offering sanctuary, saving one another, and giving each other life (7:5).

As I have pointed out, we make this choice every moment. But what Jesus is urging us to do here is to *make this choice once and for all*, to get off the fence. Are we going to be one another’s saviors, or one another’s judges? This is a crucial period; there is no point in continuing to avoid the final decision. You will either believe this Course *entirely* or not at all (7:6). The Course is either completely true or completely false; it “*cannot* be but partially believed” (7:6). Some people tell you to read the Course and, “Just take what fits and leave the rest.” Apparently, the author does not think that is even possible. He’s already told us that we cannot make exceptions, that “faith in innocence is faith in sin” (4:7) if we exclude even one living being from our forgiveness. He’s relentlessly driving that point home. Condemn one person (even yourself) and you have condemned everyone. So get off the fence! If you want to escape from misery *at all* you have to escape *entirely*, and the only way to do that is to forgive the world (7:7).

⁵ Joy or misery.

⁶ T-4.VII.16:5: “When you make a decision of purpose, then, you have made a decision about future effort, a decision which will remain in effect unless you change the decision.”

And to this purpose let us dedicate our minds, directing all our thoughts to serve the function of salvation. Unto us the aim is given to forgive the world. It is the goal that God has given us (W-FL.In.3:1–3).

Paragraph 8 (7:7–8, 8:1–8)

8 Reason will tell you that there is no middle ground where you can pause uncertainly, waiting to choose between the joy of Heaven and the misery of hell. ²Until you choose Heaven, you *are* in hell and misery. ³There is no part of Heaven you can take and weave into illusions. ⁴Nor is there one illusion you can enter Heaven with. ⁵A savior cannot be a judge, nor mercy condemnation. ⁶And vision cannot damn, but only bless. ⁷Whose function is to save will save. ⁸How He will do it is beyond your understanding, but *when* must be your choice. ⁹For time you made, and time you can command. ¹⁰You are no more a slave to time than to the world you made.

• Study Question •

8. “Whose function is to save, will save.” Whose function is “to save,” in this sentence?
- A. Yours.
 - B. Your brother’s.
 - C. The Holy Spirit’s.
 - D. God’s.
 - E. A and B.

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As always, the Course is radically black and white: You’re either in hell and misery, or in Heaven and joy. There is no middle ground. If you have not made the ultimate choice and answered that final question decisively, once for all, “you *are* in hell and misery” (8:1–2). Fence-sitting is not an option. You can’t spruce up hell with little bits of Heaven (8:3). You can’t take any illusions with you into Heaven (8:4). You can’t be a savior *and* a judge; you can’t both bless *and* damn (8:5–6). The function of the Holy Spirit is to save, and he will do only that; if you have accepted His program, the same is true of you (8:7). When that happens in your relationships is up to you, and you do not need to concern yourself with *how* that blessing can or will come (8:8). Forget the *how*; you are in charge of the *when*. You are time’s maker and master (8:9). There is no need to wait on time or wonder how long it will take to bring salvation; you can *command* time. You are not a victim of the world you see (and made), nor are you a slave to time—for the same reason: You made them both (8:10).

The dual point of the paragraph, then, is this: There is no reason or even possibility to wait on your choice; you can choose Heaven *now*.

Paragraph 9

9 Let us look closer at the whole illusion that what you made has power to enslave its maker. ²This is the same belief that caused the separation. ³It is the meaningless idea that thoughts can leave the thinker's mind, be different from it, and in opposition to it. ⁴If this were true, thoughts would not be the mind's extensions, but its enemies. ⁵And here we see again another form of the same fundamental illusion we have seen many times before. ⁷ ⁶Only if it were possible the Son of God could leave his Father's Mind, make himself *different*, and *oppose* His will would it be possible that the self he made, and all it made, should be his master.

• Study Question •

9. Paragraph 9 reintroduces a concept that we have seen before: that ideas leave not their source. Only if we have left God's Mind could our "self" and our world leave our minds and be our master. What specific thing that we made and that we think can enslave us is being referred to here?
- A. The separation.
 - B. Enemies.
 - C. Time.
 - D. The ego.

According to what was just said, we made both time and the world.⁸ That ought to place us in charge of both, but the belief that we are at the mercy of both time and the world is nearly universal. We don't think we have power over them; we think they have power over us. It sure *seems* as if there has to be a really major change in the world before we can be constantly happy, and it sure *seems* as if that is going to take a long, long time. Jesus asserts that this picture of things is an illusion we need to examine more closely (9:1).

To believe that what we made has the power to enslave us "is the same belief that caused the separation" (9:2). How so? It's identical to the notion that thoughts can leave our mind and take on an independent existence, one that not only differs from us but comes to oppose us.

Ideas leave not their source, and their effects but seem to be apart from them.

Ideas are of the mind. What is projected out and seems to be external to the mind

⁷ T-21.II.11:2-5: "It is as needful that you recognize you made the world you see as that you recognize that you did not create yourself. *They are the same mistake*. Nothing created not by your Creator has any influence over you. And 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."

⁸ If we made up the separation, it's logical to conclude that we made time and space as well. Space separates things; so does time. If there is no separation, there can be no time nor space.

is not outside at all, but an effect of what is in, and has not left its source (T-26.VII.4:7-9).

There is no world apart from your ideas because ideas leave not their source, and you maintain the world within your mind in thought (W-pI.132.10:3).

Ideas leave not their source. The emphasis this course has placed on that idea is due to its centrality in our attempts to change your mind about yourself. It is the reason you can heal. It is the cause of healing. It is why you cannot die. Its truth established you as one with God (W-pI.167.3:6-11).

For us to be enslaved by time or the world, which are merely extensions of or effects of our own ideas, those ideas would have had to become separated from our minds and transformed into our enemies (9:4). They are *not* independent of our thoughts. They are *effects* of our thoughts, and only “*seem* to be apart from them,” “*seem* to be external to the mind” (my italics). You “maintain the world within your mind in thought.”

This illusion of time and the world as things outside of us, controlling us, is nothing more than “another form of the same fundamental illusion we have seen many times before” (9:5): the illusion that, being created by the Mind of God, we could *leave* that Mind, become different, and *oppose* His will (9:6). If that were possible (and it isn’t), then it would be possible for that the ego self we made, and all of *its* effects, to become different from us and oppose us. (See Footnote 7 above.)

Paragraph 10

10 Behold the great projection, but look on it with the decision that it must be healed and not with fear. ²Nothing you made has any power over you, unless you still would be apart from your Creator, with a will opposed to His. ³For only if you would believe His Son could be His enemy does it seem possible that what you made is *yours*. ⁴You would condemn His joy to misery and make Him different. ⁵And all the misery you made has been your own. ⁶Are you not glad to learn it is not true? ⁷Is it not welcome news to hear not one of the illusions that you made replaced the truth?

• Study Question •

10. Please pick which one of the following best summarizes the central message of this paragraph.

- A. The world you made is a projection from your mind, a projection of your split with your Creator.
- B. Are you not glad that the world you made and your split with God have no power over you and are not real?
- C. You have made a will opposed to God and this has made you miserable.

•

What is “the great projection” we are to behold with healing intent, rather than with fear (10:1). It’s everything we made: the ego; the world; time; space. Don’t be afraid of any of it. None of it has any power over you—that is, it has no power over you *unless* you still *want* to be independent of (separate from) God, with a separate will (10:2).⁹ Our continuing choice to be the ego is what keeps us in prison. Believing the ego, and separation, are real is what makes it seem possible that time and the world can be enemies to us (10:3). More specifically, when you believe that your partner (or anyone) could “sin” and thus be God’s enemy, deserving misery and not joy, you bring all that misery *on yourself* (10:3–5).

Perhaps it seems dismaying that the world and time are only illusions, projections of our minds. We should rejoice instead, knowing that our illusions are only illusions and have never replaced the truth (10:6–7).

Paragraph 11

11 Only *your* thoughts have been impossible. ²Salvation cannot be. ³It is impossible to look upon your savior as your enemy and recognize him. ⁴Yet it *is* possible to recognize him for what he is, if God would have it so. ⁵What God has given to your holy relationship is there. ⁶For what He gave the Holy Spirit to give to you, He *gave*. ⁷Would you not look upon the savior that has been given you? ⁸And would you not exchange in gladness the function of an executioner you gave him for the one he has in truth? ⁹Receive of him what God has given him for you, not what *you* tried to give.

• Study Question •

11. *Who specifically is your savior in this paragraph?*
- A. *Your brother, any brother, is your savior.*
 - B. *Your holy relationship partner, since this paragraph is talking about the holy relationship.*
 - C. *Jesus, who is speaking about himself here in the third person.*
 - D. *The Holy Spirit, since the eighth paragraph told us that it was His function to save us.*

So stop thinking that total forgiveness and the vision of complete, universal sinlessness is impossible. That the world is so corrupt it could never happen. That if there were an outside chance it could happen it would take impossibly long. The ego has claimed that salvation is impossible, but what is really impossible is the ego. “*Your thoughts*” are impossible, not God’s thoughts (11:1–2).

Paragraph 11 is a plea to truly recognize your savior. But as long as you look upon a brother as an enemy, recognizing him as your savior is impossible (11:3). To look on a

⁹ The ego’s goal quite explicitly is ego autonomy. From the beginning, then, its purpose is to be separate, sufficient unto itself, and independent of any power except its own. (T-11.V.4:1–2; T-11.V.4:4-5(FIP))

brother or sister as an enemy means that you are believing in the separation, believing that he or she has left God's Mind and become God's enemy, and belief in separation precipitates all the misery and bondage you experience. It is God's Will for you to recognize him that way; therefore, it *is* possible (11:4). Stop thinking it's not.

God's gift to your relationship is there for the taking (11:5). His giving is complete and completed. "He *gave*" it (11:6). He gave you a savior; don't you want to see him (11:7)? Instead of seeing him as an executioner, trying to kill you, wouldn't you prefer to see him as a savior given to *heal* you (11:8)? That is the function God gave him. Receive *that* instead of the dark function *you* projected onto him (11:9).

Paragraph 12 (12:1–8 (FIP))

12 Beyond the bodies that you interposed between you, and shining in the golden light that reaches it from the bright, endless circle that extends forever, is your holy relationship, beloved of God and holy as Himself. ²How still it rests, in time and yet beyond, immortal yet on earth. ³How great the power that lies in it. ⁴Time waits upon its will, and earth will be as it would have it be. ⁵Here is no separate will, nor the desire that anything be separate. ⁶Its will has no exceptions, and what it wills is true. ⁷Every illusion brought to its forgiveness is gently overlooked, and disappears. ⁸For at its center Christ has been reborn, to light His home with vision that overlooks the world.

• Study Question •

12. Paragraph 12 is really an ode to the holy relationship, saying that it is beloved of God, is in time yet eternity, is greatly powerful, is master over time and earth, has no separate will or desire, wills no exceptions or falsehoods, overlooks and forgives every illusion, has Christ reborn at its center, and is only joyous. How can all these things be true of any relationship on earth?
- A. This paragraph is speaking of a highly advanced holy relationship which few have yet achieved.
 - B. It is speaking about Helen and Bill's relationship as it one day will be.
 - C. It is describing the current reality of any holy relationship, but this is a state that exists largely below the conscious level.
 - D. It is describing the relationship in ecstatic poetry; we should not take all these statements literally.
 - E. A and B.
 - F. All of the above.

We turn now to a poetic attempt to portray *what* the vision of the Holy Spirit sees. Once again, as in T-21.I.10:1 and T-22.I.4:8, the image is that of a golden, endless circle of light, an image that first appears in T-14.VII, "The Circle of Atonement." This is what

we “see” when we look with inner vision “beyond the bodies that you interposed between you” (12:1). But more exactly, we see our holy relationship, shining in the light that radiates from that golden circle. This relationship is “beloved of God and holy as Himself.” We look past the physical sight of separate individuals and we perceive a shining *relationship*, one as holy as God! We see a unity, a wholeness, and not separateness. It exists in time and in the world,

It is *this relationship* that has the ultimate power over time and the world; time does its bidding, and earth “will be as it [the relationship] would have it be” (12:4). I believe this refers, not to the manifest relationship on earth, which can be tumultuous or full of conflict, still in its infancy (as we’ve seen it characterized earlier in T-22.II.8), but rather to the ideal holy relationship, the template that consists of God’s thought, God’s will for the relationship, which exists out of time and space. Its manifestation is growing and maturing *in* time and space, and as it takes form more and more fully, the world will be transformed by it and through it (12:2–3). Just as every individual, in time, is a work in progress, a gradually perfecting expression of the perfect Christ within, so too every relationship is a work in progress, a gradually perfecting expression of the invisible pattern of relationship held safely in the Mind of God.

In that pattern relationship, there is no will separate from God’s or in one individual separate from the other, nor is there any desire to *be* separate. There is only one will, with no exceptions, and it wills only truth (12:5–6). This total harmony is the goal toward which every relationship is growing. In this oneness nothing is beyond forgiveness; “every illusion...is gently *overlooked* and disappears” (12:7). This gentle, easy, automatic forgiveness is another part of the goal toward which we all are growing. Christ lives at the center of this relationship (12:8), granting His vision to it as it looks upon the world.

Paragraph 13 (12:9–10, 13:1–7 (FIP))

13 Would you not have this holy home be yours as well? ²No misery is here, but only joy. ³All you need do to dwell in quiet here with Christ is share His vision. ⁴Quickly and gladly is His vision given to anyone who is but willing to see his brother sinless. ⁵And no one can remain beyond this willingness if you would be released entirely from all effects of sin. ⁶Would you have *partial* forgiveness for yourself? ⁷Can you reach Heaven while a single sin still tempts you to remain in misery? ⁸Heaven is the home of perfect purity, and God created it for *you*. ⁹Look at your holy brother, sinless as yourself, and let him lead you there.

• **Study Question** •

13. Paragraph 13 says that to dwell in this holy place described in paragraph 12 you need only accept Christ's vision by being willing to see your brother sinless. Then it says, "no one can remain beyond this willingness." What does that mean?

- A. It means that you must be willing to see everyone sinless, not just your holy relationship partner.
- B. It means that everyone in the world must be willing to see their brothers sinless or salvation will not be complete.

•

Isn't this what you want as your home? asks Jesus (13:1). This is the consciousness in which there is "no misery...but *only* joy" (13:2). This is the secret of constant, pure joy.

Sometimes, such pictures of the ideal relationship can be disheartening or discouraging. It seems so far off from our everyday reality. It seems far off in the future somewhere...but wait! I think this is where we came in! Let me just repeat what we said discussing paragraph #8:

When that happens in your relationships is up to you, and you do not need to concern yourself with how that blessing can or will come (8:8). Forget the how; you are in charge of the when. You are time's maker and master (8:9). There is no need to wait on time or wonder how long it will take to bring salvation; you can command time. You are not a victim of the world you see (and made), nor are you a slave to time—for the same reason: You made them both (8:10).

The dual point of the paragraph, then, is this: There is no reason or even possibility to wait on your choice; you can choose Heaven now.

Rather than allowing this high vision to *discourage* you, allow it to *inspire* you. This is what is being born in your life. This is why you are here. This is the *truth* of who you are, and what your relationships are; anything *unlike* it is illusion. "Is it not welcome news to hear not one of the illusions that you made replaced the truth?" (10:7)

Just *share the vision*; that's all you need to do (13:3). Breathe it in and allow it to lift you up. Choose to be willing to see your brother as sinless *and you will*; the Holy Spirit is quick to respond with the gift of vision. Allow that willingness to extend to everyone, leaving no one out, if you want *entire* release from misery (13:3). We can probably propose a mathematical formula: The degree of misery we experience is directly proportional to the amount of unforgiveness we harbor. "My grievances hide the light of the world in me" (W-69).

Heaven is a home of perfect purity that God has created for *you*. If you want to experience Heaven on earth, you cannot cherish a single sin in yourself or anyone else; all must be forgiven. Only the sinless can enter Heaven, and only your sinless brother can lead you there (13:6–9).

Yes; it's possible. The choice is yours.

• **Study Question** •

14. *Summary: Please summarize the main themes of this section, or the themes that struck you most, in a paragraph.*

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Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is exactly the same as the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often quite different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Answer Key

1. B
2. D
3. Fear.
4. False.
5. D
6. False.
7. A,B,C
8. C (see sentences 7 & 8)
9. C (Cf. 8:9–10)
10. B
11. B
12. C
13. A
14. My summary: Truth and illusions are mutually exclusive. Truth brings joy and all illusions bring misery. Salvation can have no exceptions. Yet it is possible, because God wills it. When you receive it is up to you. Receive it from your brother by choosing to see him sinless.