

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 24

### The Dream of Specialness

#### Section III

## *Forgiveness as the End of Specialness*

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

### Overview of Section III

The overall theme of this section is stated clearly in the first sentence: “Forgiveness is the end of specialness” (1:1). It points out the close connection between specialness and sin, a connection that requires forgiveness to undo the specialness. It entails not only forgiveness of oneself and of others around us, but forgiveness of God Himself for *refusing* to grant us the specialness we craved.

### Paragraph 1

Forgiveness is the end of specialness. <sup>2</sup>Only illusions can be forgiven, and then they disappear. <sup>3</sup>Forgiveness is release from all illusions, and that is why it is impossible but *partly* to forgive. <sup>4</sup>No one who clings to one illusion can see himself as sinless, for he holds one error to himself as lovely still, and so he calls it unforgivable and makes it sin. <sup>5</sup>How can he then give his forgiveness wholly, when he would not receive it for himself? <sup>6</sup>For it is sure he *would* receive it wholly the instant that he gave it so. <sup>7</sup>And thus his secret guilt would disappear, forgiven by himself.

• **Study Question** •

1. *In sentences 6 and 7, the impossibility of partial forgiveness is applied to accepting forgiveness for both yourself and your brother. Which of the following statements seems to be closest to completely true?*
  - A. *You cannot give forgiveness completely until you have received it for yourself.*
  - B. *You will not receive forgiveness for yourself until you have wholly given it to your brother.*
  - C. *Complete forgiveness is not possible until you are willing both to receive it for yourself and to give it wholly to your brother.*

Why is forgiveness the end of specialness (1:1)? One key reason is that all specialness is illusory. We are never separate from one another or from God; we remain One, as God created us. Forgiveness dispels illusions (1:2). It recognizes illusion *as* illusion, and overlooks it or lets it go. Therefore, since forgiveness ends illusions, and specialness is an illusion, forgiveness is the end of specialness.

But forgiveness is the release from *all* illusions” (1:3). It must be total; partial forgiveness, or dissolution of only selected illusions, is not forgiveness at all. It’s all or nothing. That means that we cannot completely forgive anyone until we forgive *everyone*.

If you hold on to a particular grievance (or *illusion*), you must still see yourself and the source of your grievance as separate, and therefore, you cannot see yourself as sinless (1:4). You view something as an unforgivable sin. It really does not matter whether you perceive sin in another person or in yourself. As long as you value sin in principle, you cannot see yourself without it, and therefore cannot *give* forgiveness to anyone else (1:5).

When you can give forgiveness, you will instantly *receive* it (1:6). You may not have even realized you were judging yourself as well as another; your guilt may have been secret, even from you, but projected onto another. In forgiving that other, you have forgiven yourself (1:7).

The connection to specialness is not immediately clear. But once you realize the way forgiveness works, you will understand that to perceive sin in yourself or another person you must see yourself and the other as separate, as different, and therefore, special. One is better than the other. When the belief in specialness is gone, so is the belief in sin—and the reverse is true as well.

## Paragraph 2

2 Whatever form of specialness you cherish, you have made sin.  
2Inviolable it stands, strongly defended with all your puny might against the will of God. 3And thus it stands against yourself—*your* enemy, not God's.  
4So does it seem to split you off from God, and make you separate from Him as its defender. 5You would protect what God created not. 6And yet this idol that seems to give you power has taken it away. 7For you have given your brother's birthright to it, leaving him alone and unforgiven, and yourself in sin beside him, both in misery before the idol that can save you not.<sup>1</sup>

### • Study Question •

2. *Sentence 1 seems to mean that if you cherish your own specialness, you make yourself sinful; if you make your brother special and different by seeing guilt in him, you have made him sinful. Valuing specialness in any form makes sin real, and seemingly powerful enough to separate you from God. Is specialness, therefore, God's enemy?*
- A. *Yes, because it fragments His creation and makes something that God did not create seem real.*
- B. *No, it is your enemy because it cuts you off from God and takes away your power.*

•

When you cherish specialness in any way, you have “made sin” (2:1). Simply to perceive differences, you must engage in some judgment. “Separate but equal” is nice in theory, but it isn't really practical. And, since God's Will is oneness, to value specialness is to take a stand against that will, which, perhaps subconsciously, or perhaps consciously, you must judge as sin (2:2). Since valuing specialness makes you a sinner, an opponent to God, it is an attack on yourself, and not on God. After all, how could *you* constitute a threat to God (2:3)? But your belief in specialness *seems* to “split you off from God, and make you separate from Him as its [specialness's] defender” (2:4).

God did not create specialness, but here you are defending it (2:5)! You hold on to it because you think it gives you some power, and yet, in reality, it has robbed you of power (2:6). You could be your brother's savior. You could be offering him his birthright, the awareness that he, like you, shares the divine DNA, and is part of God and like God. But

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 25:29-34 (RSV): This is the famous story of Jacob and Esau, in which Esau is famished and begs his brother Jacob to give him some of the red pottage (lentil stew) he is fixing. “Jacob said, ‘First sell me your birthright.’ Esau said, ‘I am about to die; of what use is a birthright to me?’” Esau then gives away his birthright for some pottage. In the above passage, rather than giving your birthright away to your brother, you give *his* birthright to your specialness, “the idol that can save you not.” In both cases, though, someone's precious birthright is given away in exchange for something worthless. Esau gives his birthright away to gain a bowl of pottage, and you give your brother's birthright away to gain something equally worthless—specialness.

by insisting on specialness, by refusing to forgive, you *both* wind up in sin, both miserable, both clinging to the god of specialness who cannot save you (2:7)

### Paragraph 3

3 It is not *you* that is so vulnerable and open to attack that just a word, a little whisper that you do not like, a circumstance that suits you not, or an event that you did not anticipate upsets your world and hurls it into chaos. <sup>2</sup>Truth is not frail. <sup>3</sup>Illusions leave it perfectly unmoved and undisturbed. <sup>4</sup>But specialness is not the truth in you. <sup>5</sup>*It* can be thrown off balance by anything. <sup>6</sup>What rests on nothing never can be stable. <sup>7</sup>However large and overblown it seems to be, it still must rock and turn and whirl about with every breeze.

#### • Study Question •

3. *When we feel vulnerable and open to attack; when just a word or a circumstance we don't like upsets our world and throws us off balance, what is going on?*
  - A. *We have identified with specialness instead of the truth about ourselves.*
  - B. *We are just experiencing the normal state of a finite being in this world.*
  - C. *We are failing to recognize our individual power to stand against the onslaughts of the world, and need to strengthen ourselves.*

•

You can probably recall many times when “just a word, a little whisper that you do not like, a circumstance that suits you not, or an event that you did not anticipate upsets your world and hurls it into chaos” (3:1). It seems quite commonplace in my experience, and I suspect in yours as well. When you hear that description, it seems to fit. I find myself thinking, “Yup! That’s me.”

Does it seem likely or even possible that a being created by the Infinite God could be “so vulnerable and open to attack” (3:1)? Jesus confidently states that whatever it is that is so easily thrown for a loop, “It is not *you*” (3:1). My reaction of “Yup! That’s me,” shows me just how easy it is for me to identify with specialness. I don’t spontaneously think, “Nope! That can’t be me because I am God’s perfect creation.” But that’s the truth.

When we find ourselves being so easily upset, we need to remind ourselves, “Hey! That’s your specialness reacting; that is not *you*.” An old Christian hymn contains the line, “Things that once were wild alarms cannot now disturb my rest.” Whoever wrote that must have discovered the truth the Course is talking about and found his or her stability in God. “Truth is not frail. Illusions leave it perfectly unmoved and undisturbed” (3:2–3). One of the writers of the Psalms in the Bible got it, too:

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart

of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.” (Psalms 46:1–3 ESV)

Truth isn't frail; it is immovable. Specialness isn't like that *because it isn't the truth* (3:4). Truth can't be moved by an earthquake, but specialness “can be thrown off balance by *anything*” (3:5). It makes me think of the time I tried doing the yoga “Tree pose,” in which you stand on one leg with the other foot pressed against the knee you are standing on. Like specialness, I was inherently unstable because I had no foundation. The line about an overblown figure rocking with every breeze makes me think of a balloon character, like Snoopy in the Macy's parade (3:6–7).

The practical point for us, I think, is to realize that whenever we are thrown off balance by circumstances, we're identifying with our specialness and not with our True Self.

## Paragraph 4

4 Without foundation nothing is secure. <sup>2</sup>Would God have left His Son in such a state, where safety has no meaning? <sup>3</sup>No, His Son is safe, resting on Him. <sup>4</sup>It is your specialness that is attacked by everything that walks and breathes, or creeps or crawls, or even lives at all. <sup>5</sup>Nothing is safe from its attack, and it is safe from nothing. <sup>6</sup>It will forevermore be unforgiving, for that is what it is: a secret vow that what God wants for you will never be, and that your will opposes His forever. <sup>7</sup>Nor is it possible the two can ever be the same, while specialness stands like a flaming sword of death between them and makes them enemies.<sup>2</sup>

### • Study Question •

4. *The illusion of specialness has no foundation (it “rests on nothing,” 3:6), and “Without foundation nothing is secure” (4:1). “Specialness” here could be understood as a synonym for “ego.” Based on this paragraph, can we expect our egos to change; to improve and become more spiritual, for instance?*

A. *No, because it will always be unforgiving; it is a secret vow that God's Will for us will never be.*

B. *Yes, because the ego can be trained and learn to be better.*

•

If God did not create separate beings capable of specialness, there can be no such beings, and specialness has no foundation. Being without foundation it is inherently insecure and unstable, which is why it is so easily shaken by every hiccup of life (4:1).

<sup>2</sup>. Genesis 3:24 (RSV): “He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.” The flaming sword, then, stands between Adam and Eden, preventing his return to paradise. Here, the flaming sword is specialness, which prevents our return to the awareness that our will and God's are the same.

Recall the parable Jesus told about two houses, one built on sand and the other on a rock. When the storms came, the house on sand was swept away, while the house on a rock stood firm.<sup>3</sup> Our rock is the Truth, the reality of who and what we are. Specialness is mere sand. I am reminded, too, of an old gospel hymn: “On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is sinking sand.”<sup>4</sup>

As he so often does, Jesus appeals to our reason, our common sense. Would an all-powerful, wise, loving God have created us without a solid foundation, “a state where safety *has* no meaning” (4:2)? And he answers his own question: “No, His Son is safe, resting on Him” (4:3). God is our Rock. The Bible often refers to God as our Rock.<sup>5</sup> The truth is that we are all parts of God. What He is, we are. That truth is our solid foundation.

We cannot be separated. Whom God has joined cannot be separated, and God has joined all His Sons with Himself. Can you be separated from your life and your being? The journey to God is merely the reawakening of the knowledge of where you are always and what you are forever. (T-8.V.12:3–6 (CE), (T-8.VI.9:3-6 (FIP)).

It is specialness that constantly feels attacked by everything and anything. It attacks everything, and fears attack from everything (4:4–5). Specialness never feels safe. It is incapable of forgiveness (4:6), because at heart what it is *is* unforgiveness. It cannot forgive fault in another because it depends on that perception of “sin” to create the illusion of its own superiority.

That implacable unforgiveness is never going to change, so we need to give up any thoughts of reforming and taming our egos. You might as well ask water to stop being wet. Specialness is “a secret vow that what God wants for you will never be, and that your will *opposes* His forever” (4:6). That the vow is *secret* indicates its hiddenness; it is a vow we made and promptly blotted out from our awareness. The attention we pay to shoring up our individual identities and stroking our egos does not seem like deliberate opposition to the Will of God, but that’s what it is. God’s Will is Oneness, and separateness is the exact opposite of Oneness. To foster and feed separateness is to oppose God’s Will. It’s impossible for your will and God’s to be the same as long as you hold on to specialness.

The imagery of the flaming sword of death calls to mind the story of “the fall” in Genesis:

“Then the Lord God said, ‘Behold, the man has become like one of us in knowing good and evil. Now, lest he reach out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—’ therefore the Lord God sent him out from the garden of Eden to work the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man, and at the east of the garden of

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 7:24–27

<sup>4</sup> Edward Mote, 1797-1874

<sup>5</sup> For example: “There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.” (1 Samuel 2:2 NIV11) “The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (2 Samuel 23:3; Psalms 18:2 NIV11)

Eden he placed the cherubim and a flaming sword that turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.” (Genesis 3:22–24 ESV)

In that story, it is God who places an angel with a flaming sword to keep Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Life, which would cause them to live forever.<sup>6</sup> Here, the image is reversed in a way: specialness is “like a flaming sword of death” that stands between us and God, and it is *we* who wield the sword, making God our enemy.

## Paragraph 5

5 God asks for your forgiveness. <sup>2</sup>He would have no separation, like an alien will, rise between what He wills for you and what *you* will. <sup>3</sup>They are the same, for neither one wills specialness. <sup>4</sup>How could they will the death of love itself? <sup>5</sup>Yet they are powerless to make attack upon illusions. <sup>6</sup>They are not bodies; as one Mind, they wait for all illusions to be brought to them and left behind. <sup>7</sup>Salvation challenges not even death. <sup>8</sup>And God Himself, Who knows that death is not your will, must say, “Thy will be done,” because you think it is.<sup>7</sup>

### • Study Question •

5. *The later sentences in this paragraph speak of “they.” It says “they” are the same; neither one wills specialness; neither one wills the death of love; both are powerless to make attack on illusions; and both are not bodies. What does “they” refer to?*
- A. *The Holy Spirit and Jesus.*
  - B. *God’s Will and our will.*
  - C. *Forgiveness and specialness.*

•

We (mostly below the level of consciousness) think God, who wills absolute Oneness, is the enemy of what we want, which is specialness. So God asks for our forgiveness (5:1)! He is asking us to forgive Him for being what He is. He isn’t the one keeping us apart. Ever since Genesis was written, humankind has blamed God for that flaming sword. To forgive Him means to see that we made up the sword, not Him. He has never willed separation (5:2).

We’ve imagined that our will differs from His, that we want something that He does not want to give to us. The truth is we made that up. God does not want specialness, and we do not *really* want (or will) specialness (5:3). Our will and God’s are the same. The Course insists that our will has always been the same as God’s:

<sup>6</sup> Some have suggested that “guard the way to the tree of life” might be understood to mean that God is preserving the path to eternal life, not blocking us from taking it.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew 6:10 (KJV): “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Here, God says to us “Thy will be done” when we choose specialness and thus will death. Death is not really our will, but we “think it is,” and therefore God will not stand in our way.

You *are* the will of God. Do not accept anything else as your will, or you are denying what you are. (T-7.VI.11:1-2 (CE), T-7.VII.10:1-2 (FIP))

In believing that we do want specialness, we've actually tricked ourselves, or brain-washed ourselves. We are shutting our eyes to the fact that specialness causes all our pain, and that "All real pleasure comes from doing God's Will" (T-1.46.3:3 (CE), T-1.VII.1:4 (FIP)). When our eyes are opened, we realize that our will is God's. We do not want specialness; we are wholly aligned with God's Will.

To will specialness is to will the death of love, and certainly that isn't anything we want (5:4). God's Will and ours are the same, but despite their agreement that specialness is undesirable, standing together in truth our wills "are powerless to make attack upon illusions" (5:5). Neither you nor even God can fight against something that does not exist in reality.

If you or God were a body, then as an illusion you might engage in combat with illusions. But you aren't a body, nor is God. Together, God and you in your Reality are one Mind. All that is to be done with illusions is to wait for the illusions to be brought to you and then left behind (5:6). This is bringing illusion to truth, darkness to the light. When we are tempted to believe in the reality of separateness or specialness, we must turn to the truth of our being, the knowledge of our union with God, and let the light of that truth shine away the illusions' darkness.

If we choose to cling to the illusion of separation and death, even God Himself will not challenge us, nor our imagined will. He "must say, 'Thy will be done,' because *you* think it is" (5:7-8). We experience death because we choose it, and God Himself refuses to resist our choice.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See also: "No one can suffer loss unless it be his own decision. No one suffers pain except his choice elects this state for him. No one can grieve nor fear nor think him sick unless these are the outcomes that he wants. And no one dies without his own consent" (W-pl.152.1:1-4 (FIP)).

## Paragraph 6

6 Forgive the great Creator of the universe—the Source of life, of love and holiness, the perfect Father of a perfect Son—for your illusions of your specialness.<sup>9</sup> <sup>2</sup>Here is the hell you chose to be your home. <sup>3</sup>Seek not your Father here. <sup>4</sup>He chose not this for you. <sup>5</sup>Ask not He enter this. <sup>6</sup>The way is barred to love and to salvation. <sup>7</sup>Yet if you would release your brother from the depths of hell, you have forgiven Him Whose will it is you rest forever in the arms of peace, in perfect safety and without the heat and malice of one thought of specialness to mar your rest. <sup>8</sup>Forgive the Holy One the specialness He could not give, and yet you made instead.

### • Study Question •

6. *In 5:1, 6:1 and 6:7, we are asked to forgive God. And we are told in 6:6 that we forgive God by forgiving our brother. What are we to forgive God for, and why does He need our forgiveness? (Essay, 1 short paragraph please.) You may want to compare this paragraph with T-13.III.11-13 (CE), T-13.III.10-12 (FIP).*

So when God asks our forgiveness, it is only for allowing us to experience “your illusions of your specialness” (6:1). God did not create death nor a world in which His Son is splintered into billions of separate parts. Those are *our* illusions. They are “the hell you chose to be your home” (6:2). This was not His choice (6:4). We are not going to find God here, nor detect His fingerprints on the tragedies of this world (6:3). “Why did God allow this to happen?” we ask, as if God were responsible for whatever we may be complaining about. The answer is, He didn’t. And your anger is really not that He *allowed it to happen*, but that He *did not allow it to happen in reality*.

We make the mistake of asking God to intervene in our world, and then becoming furious or disgusted when He does not do so. We’re asking the wrong thing (6:5). God cannot intervene in the world of illusion without making it real, and He won’t do that (6:6).

The solution is up to us! We can forgive one another, and if we do so, in that act we have forgiven God and freed Him to realize His will for us, namely, that “you rest forever in the arms of peace, in perfect safety and without the heat and malice of one thought of specialness to mar your rest” (6:7). We need to stop blaming God for the agony of our specialness. He could not give that to us! Yet, we made it in His place (6:8).

<sup>9</sup> We are forgiving God for our dream of specialness—presumably for all the pain that dream has brought us. We blame God for this pain, because, as the next paragraph says, “He did not make [our] dream reality.” We think, in other words, that He could have fulfilled our dream by making us truly, eternally special. Yet the idea of specialness—which we chose—inherently contains pain, and God wills that we rest in perfect safety, free of pain. The way we forgive God is by forgiving our brother, the one in front of us who, like God, seems to be thwarting our dream of specialness.

## Paragraph 7

7 The special ones are all asleep, surrounded by a world of loveliness they do not see. <sup>2</sup>Freedom and peace and joy stand there beside the bier on which they sleep, and call them to come forth and to waken from their dream of death.<sup>10</sup> <sup>3</sup>Yet they hear nothing. <sup>4</sup>They are lost in dreams of specialness. <sup>5</sup>They hate the call that would awaken them. <sup>6</sup>And they curse God because He did not make their dream reality. <sup>7</sup>Curse God and die, but not by Him Who made not death, but only in dreams.<sup>11</sup> <sup>8</sup>Open your eyes a little; see the savior God gave to you that you might look on him, and give him back his birthright. <sup>9</sup>It is yours.

### • Study Question •

7. *How does forgiving our brother and giving him back his birthright free us from the dream of specialness?*
- A. *Forgiving our brother for the wrongs he has done to us is the price we must pay for our own entry into Heaven.*
  - B. *Forgiving our brother and accepting him as God created Him opens the way for us to accept the same truth about ourselves.*
  - C. *Forgiving our brother makes us more spiritual than him, and thus ensures our own holiness.*

•

You and I and all the world of “special ones” are actually “all asleep, surrounded by a world of loveliness [we] do not see” (7:1). If you have seen the movie, “The Matrix,” this will remind you of scenes in that movie. We are like zoned-out dreamers lying on a “bier,” which my dictionary describes as “a stand on which a corpse, coffin, or casket containing a corpse, is placed to lie in state or to be carried to the grave.” We are asleep, but being prepared for death and burial. Freedom and peace and joy are standing beside us, trying to wake us from our “dream of death” (7:2). The real world is all around us; the dream of death, which is all we are conscious of, is totally within our minds and nowhere else.

<sup>10</sup>. A bier is a flat stand on which a corpse is placed to lie in state. Calling to the seemingly dead to “come forth” from where they lie seems to be a reference to John 11:43 (KJV): “And when he thus had spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth.”

<sup>11</sup>. Job 2:9 (RSV): “Then his [Job’s] wife said to him, ‘Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God, and die.’” At the beginning of this story, God praises Job as “a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil” (1:8). But then Satan says, “But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he has, and he will curse thee to thy face” (1:11). God therefore allows Satan to take Job’s wealth, children, and health, at which point his wife (understandably) urges him to curse God. In the above reference, we curse God because He refused to grant reality to our dream of death—our specialness—and instead calls us to awaken to the “world of loveliness” that surrounds us.

We can't hear them calling to us, because we are lost in our dreams of specialness (7:3–4). If some wisp of love's call breaks through our dream now and then, we hate it; it's disturbing our dream (7:5). We resent God for not making the dream into reality (7:6).

So, in the words the Bible attributes to Job's wife, addressed to Job, the Course tells us to "Curse God and die." If that's what you want, go ahead—but God won't kill you; you will experience it, but only in dreams (7:7).

But if you, the dreamer on the bier, will just open your eyes a little, you will see your brother or sister as the savior God gave you. He was born to be your savior. That is his birthright, and you can give it to him because it is your birthright to be *his* savior (7:8).

The Course says it flat out in Lesson 256: "The way to God is through forgiveness here. There is no other way" (W-pII.256.1:1-2 (FIP)).

## Paragraph 8

8 The slaves of specialness will yet be free. <sup>2</sup>Such is the will of God and of His Son. <sup>3</sup>Would God condemn Himself to hell and to damnation? <sup>4</sup>And do you will that this be done unto your savior? <sup>5</sup>God calls to you from him to join His will to save you both from hell. <sup>6</sup>Look on the print of nails upon his hands that he holds out for your forgiveness.<sup>12</sup> <sup>7</sup>God asks your mercy on His Son, and on Himself. <sup>8</sup>Deny Them not. <sup>9</sup>They ask of you but that your will be done.<sup>13</sup> <sup>10</sup>They seek your love that you may love yourself. <sup>11</sup>Love not your specialness instead of Them. <sup>12</sup>The print of nails is on your hands as well. <sup>13</sup>Forgive your Father it was not His will that you be crucified.

### • Study Question •

8. *If we withhold forgiveness from a brother, what are we actually doing? (More than one answer is correct.)*
- A. *We are loving our specialness more than our brother and more than God.*
  - B. *We are condemning our brother to hell.*
  - C. *We are denying our own will.*
  - D. *We are crucifying ourselves.*
  - E. *All of the above.*
- 

<sup>12</sup>. John 20:25 (RSV): "But he [Thomas] said to them, 'Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe.'" In the Course's image, it is not Jesus but your brother who holds out the print of nails on his hands. Your condemnation has crucified him, and now he asks your forgiveness that he may be resurrected.

<sup>13</sup>. Whereas earlier (see footnote 12 in this chapter), God allows the death that we *thought* was our will, here He and His Son ask that our *true* will be done—our will to be set free by releasing our brother from crucifixion.

No matter how dark the picture of our condition seems to be—unconscious dreamers of death, oblivious to the beautiful reality of God surrounding us, deaf to His Voice, slaves to our delusions, unwilling to wake up—“The slaves of specialness will yet be free” (8:1). This darkness cannot be the end. As John Lennon once said: “Everything will be okay in the end. If it’s not okay, it’s not the end.” “Okay” is the will of both God and of His Son (us) (8:2). The Course also assures us, “God’s Will for me is perfect happiness” (Lesson 101).

There is no way God would condemn Himself to hell and to damnation, and we are part of Him (8:3). So is your brother or sister, that person you have a grievance with. Do you want *them* to go to hell (8:4)? Really? Recognize this: God is calling to you *from that person* to “join His will to save you *both* from hell” (8:5). Open your ears to hear that call; open your heart to forgive.

You have punished him, or her, more than enough. You can tell from “the print of nails upon his hands” (8:6). God is asking you to extend mercy to this person, and to God Himself (8:7). Forgive your savior the things you have believed have caused you grief, a grief you alone have chosen. And, as has been asked three times in this section, forgive God. Forgive Him for not granting you specialness. Forgive Him for not making specialness real. Forgive Him for not obviating the seemingly tragic effects of specialness.

All they ask, you and your brother, is “that your will be done” (8:9). Oneness is your will. Giving love is your will, that you may know that love is what you are and love yourself for it (8:10). Let go of your specialness and embrace oneness with your brothers and with God (8:11).

In forgiving them, you forgive yourself: “The print of nails is on your hands as well” (8:12). You—your specialness—are the one who has nailed yourself to the cross, not God. Forgive Him for not making specialness real: He never wanted to see you crucified (8:13). Forgive God, forgive your brother, and know, in so doing, that you are forgiven as well.

"It is indeed but you your mind can try to crucify. Yet your redemption, too, will come from you" (W-pI.pI.196.12:5-6 (FIP)).

I suggest reading all of Lesson 196; it’s extremely relevant to the message of this section.

**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. C
2. B
3. A
4. A
5. B
6. We are to forgive God for not giving us the specialness we chose, and which we made. We hold this failure against Him; we want Him to enter our hell of specialness and make it real for us. He has refused to do it, and we blame Him for it. He needs our forgiveness because only in accepting ourselves as God created us (not special) will we ever find peace and joy, which are His Will for us.
7. B
8. E