

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 25

The Dream of Specialness

Section VI

Your Brother's Holiness

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

Overview of Section VI

This section is all about seeing the holiness and loveliness in our brothers, and learning it is the most natural thing in all the world.

Paragraph 1

Before your brother's holiness the world is still, and peace descends on it in gentleness and blessing so complete that not one trace of conflict still remains to haunt you in the darkness of the night. ²He is your savior from the dreams of terror. ³He is the healing of your sense of sacrifice and fear that what you have will scatter with the wind and turn to dust. ⁴In him is your assurance God is here, and with you now. ⁵While he is what he is, you can be sure that God is knowable and *will* be known to you. ⁶For He could never leave His own creation. ⁷And the sign that this is so lies in your brother, offered you that all your doubts about yourself may disappear before his holiness.

• **Study Question** •

1. *This paragraph discusses several ways in which seeing our brother as holy, with the vision of Christ, shows him to us as our savior, and leads to an assurance that God is here, with us, and knowable to us. Why does seeing our brother as sinless have this effect?*
 - A. *The act of forgiving our brother makes us realize that God must have been working in our own minds.*
 - B. *Seeing our brother as sinless means seeing him as God created him, holy and part of Himself, and he thus becomes a sign to us that we, as God's creation, must also be holy and part of God.*
 - C. *Forgiving is such a virtuous act that it gains us great merit with God, Who rewards us with His Presence.*

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The previous section emphasized that “The sight of Christ is all there is to see,” and that our brothers are as perfect as we are, our companions on the journey home to remembering that perfection. Now, Jesus turns to speaking about our perfect brothers and sisters and how they look seen with the eyes of Christ. Holy: So holy the world is speechless at the sight, so holy that their very being brings a profound peace to the entire world, eliminating every trace of conflict (1:1). When we behold Christ in a brother or sister, what we see chases away our “dreams of terror” (1:2). It heals our sense of sacrifice and our fear that nothing lasts, that any good we’ve accumulated will not last (1:3). We behold something devoid of conflict, something that is more than enduring, it is *eternal*.

When we see Christ in a brother or sister, we see God in the flesh. We know that what we see is the Word that has been made flesh to dwell among us¹(1:4). It’s what people experienced who had seen Jesus. The Course is telling us that we can actually feel the same awe at the Presence of God in a person that the followers of Jesus once felt about him! Once, having experienced this very thing with someone I had come to know quite deeply, long before I encountered *A Course in Miracles*, I wrote a poem trying to express it. The poem began like this, but I can’t recall how it went on exactly:

There are times when I know
With a sense beyond mind
There’s a God in this world,
For the beauty I find...

It went on with words to the effect “the beauty I find in you.” I knew that, having seen something wonderful and holy in this person, I was seeing God, and my belief in God had gone beyond mere *belief* to *knowledge*. I had “seen God.”

Imagine experiencing another person in such a way that, “While he is what he is, you can be sure that God is knowable and *will* be known to you” (1:5)! We know that what we are seeing is of divine origin, and that as long as what we are seeing exists, God also

¹ “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14 ESV)

must exist (1:6). Jesus is telling us that this is not only desirable, not only possible, but a goal that is within reach of every one of us. It depends, not on the behavior of the other, but the choice we make of how to perceive them.

When we perceive the holiness in another, it not only cements our assurance about God, it elevates our understanding of ourselves. We know instinctively that what is true of our brother or sister must also be true of us, since we are both creations of the same God (1:7).

Paragraph 2

² See in him God's creation, for in him his Father waits for your acknowledgment that He created you as part of Him. ²Without you there would be a lack in God, a Heaven incomplete, a Son without a Father. ³There could be no universe and no reality. ⁴For what God wills is whole, and part of Him because His will is one. ⁵Nothing alive that is not part of Him, and nothing is but is alive in Him. ⁶Your brother's holiness shows you that God is one with him and you; that what he has is yours because you are not separate from him or from his Father.

• Study Question •

2. *What is it that shows us that we are one with God, part of Him and sharing all He has?*
 - A. *The Holy Spirit*
 - B. *Our brother's holiness*
 - C. *God's creation*

Therefore, Jesus calls us to look for God's creation in everyone. It is in acknowledging Christ in others that we come to recognize *ourselves* as having been created as part of God (2:1). All that this paragraph states with startling audacity is based on the fact of Oneness.

One way to absorb the impact of Oneness is to restate the ideas of these sentences with first-person application. Try repeating the following aloud:

“Without me there would be a lack in God.” (1:2)

“Without me, Heaven would be incomplete.” (1:2)

“Without me, God would not be a Father.” (1:2)

“Without me, there would be no universe.” (1:3)

“Without me, reality would not exist.” (1:3)

Does it feel as though you are saying too much? Does it perhaps feel like blasphemy? It's not. It is the truth, according to the Course. You and Jesus are equal, perfect creations of God and part of God. God's will is one, and therefore everything and everyone God wills into existence is part of that Oneness (1:4). God *is* life, and therefore whatever lives

is part of Him (1:5).² That includes “that person.” When you realize that your brother or sister is one with God, it shows you that God must also be one with you. You and he or she are one with each other and with God, and everything they have, you have, and vice versa (1:6).

Mother Teresa knew this. I’ve always liked the phrase she used, about learning to recognize Christ “in all His distressing disguises.”

Paragraph 3

3 Nothing is lost to you in all the universe. ²Nothing that God created has He failed to lay before you lovingly, as yours forever. ³And no thought within His Mind is absent from your own. ⁴It is His will you share His love for you, and look upon yourself as lovingly as He conceived of you before the world began, and as He knows you still. ⁵God changes not His Mind about His Son with passing circumstance which has no meaning in eternity where He abides, and you with Him. ⁶Your brother *is* as He created him. ⁷And it is this that saves you from a world that He created not.

• Study Question •

3. *What, according to this paragraph, is God’s unchanging Will for us?*
 - A. *That we love ourselves as He loves us, and see ourselves as lovingly as He saw us when He first conceived of us in creation.*
 - B. *That we forgive our brother.*
 - C. *That we recognize that we have never lost anything God ever created.*

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Try applying that first sentence to yourself: “Nothing is lost to *me* in all the universe”. Most people, maybe all of us, have experienced what seemed like loss in our lifetimes. People you love have died, or you’ve lost contact with them for some reason. Favorite things have become worn and discarded, irreplaceable. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastes, in the Old Testament, expresses it very well: “I saw all the deeds that are done under the sun; and see, all is vanity and a chasing after wind.” (Ecclesiastes 1:14 NRSV). It’s astounding to be told that nothing is lost to us, “nothing...in all the universe”! (3:1) Everything created by God is ours forever (3:2). Everyone you know or have ever known is, in their reality, immortal, and all of them have been given to us by God as part of what we are. All things are ours. Even the Bible says so:

All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God. (I Corinthians 3:21-23, NIV).

² The WORD existed in the beginning, and the WORD was with God, and the WORD was God. He was present with God at the beginning. All came into existence by means of Him; and nothing came into existence apart from Him. What originated in Him was Life; and the Life was the Light of Mankind. (John 1:1–4, Fenton translation)

Or, as the paraphrased version of *The Message* puts it:

Everything is already yours as a gift—Paul, Apollos, Peter, the world, life, death, the present, the future—all of it is yours, and you are privileged to be in union with Christ, who is in union with God.

As I approach 80, there are a lot of very dear people I have known who no longer walk this planet. Many of them I have really liked, and some of them I have deeply loved. “Nothing is lost.” The love that they are, the beauty of soul they have shared with me, endures forever. I truly believe that I will once again experience the joy of their presence and livingness.

“Yet all who meet will someday meet again, for it is the destiny of all relationships to become holy. God is not mistaken in His Son.” (M-3.4:6–7)

Nothing is lost. That is part of the relevance of the truth of Oneness. Even every thought of God is eternally with us, in our minds (3:3). He even gives us to love ourselves as deeply and unreservedly as He loved us when He first conceived of us before the creation of the world, and “as He knows you still” (3:4). God chose in love to create us, and nothing that has transpired since has altered the depth and degree of that love (3:5). He wills to share that love *of us with us*. Imagine that! You can, and will, love yourself just like God loves you!

What is true of you and God’s love for you is true of everyone, including your brother or sister. You remain as God created you, and he or she remains as God created him or her (3:6). The unalterable truth of creation is what saves us from the unreality of our dreams of separation and death (3:7).

I believe that our spiritual growth and maturity can be measured by the degree to which that invisible reality has become more real to us than the world of separation. Seeing the invisible has long been a defining characteristic of spirituality. When speaking of the merits of Moses, for instance, the author of the biblical book of Hebrews wrote: “By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27, ESV). In fact, Hebrews 11 defines faith in terms of the invisible:

“Now faith is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things we hope for, being the proof of things we do not see and the conviction of their reality [faith perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses]. (Heb. 11:1, Amplified)

Paragraph 4

4 Forget not that the healing of God's Son is all the world is for. ²That is the only purpose the Holy Spirit sees in it, and thus the only one it *has*. ³Until you see the healing of the Son as all you wish to be accomplished by the world, by time, and all appearances, you will not know the Father or yourself. ⁴For you will use the world for what is not its purpose, and will not escape its laws of violence and death. ⁵Yet is it given you to be beyond its laws in all respects, in every way and every circumstance, in all temptation to perceive what is not there, and all belief God's Son can suffer pain because he sees himself as he is not.

• Study Question •

4. *If we insist on seeing some other purpose for the world beyond the healing of God's Son, what things will continue to be true of us?*
- A. *We will use the world for what is not its purpose.*
 - B. *We will not know God nor ourselves.*
 - C. *We will not escape the world's laws of violence and death.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

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Paragraph 3 ended by pointing out that the fact your brother remains as God created him is the truth that will save *you* from the illusory world. The only purpose of the world, in fact, is that very healing, the end result of which is our liberation from the world (4:1). We really need to not forget this! The only purpose of the world is our healing. That's the only purpose of the world in the eyes of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, "the only one it *has*" (4:2). The Course says elsewhere that we need to change our idea about the purpose of the world, and that this will change everything:

To change all this, and open up a road of hope and of release in what appeared to be an endless circle of despair, you need but to decide you do not know the purpose of the world. (T-29.VII. 8:1 (FIP), T-29.VIII.6:3 (CE))

This is not a minor point, either. Apparently, it is part of the core lessons we must learn, because Jesus goes on to tell us that *we will never know God or ourselves* until we have come to make "the healing of the Son" the *only* purpose we see for the world, for time, and for *all* appearances (4:3)! I think "all appearances" means, literally, every single thing that exists in the physical universe.

The implications of this are enormous. Nearly everyone has thoughts about what their life is all about. We have all kinds of goals we want to achieve. Jesus is saying that none of it really matters. Anything that is merely an individual purpose or the purpose of a limited group of people, is not where our energy should be directed. The only thing that matters is "the healing of the Son," which is what he has been talking about in the preceding paragraphs, that is, the shared recognition among us all that we are One, all perfect expressions of a loving God, all literally part of each other. Notice that it does not say "the healing of God's *sons*," but "the healing of *God's Son*"—the one Son. The only

purpose for the world and everything in it is the realization of that Oneness, that Wholeness. If you have a moment, take a look at what the Workbook has to say along the same lines: Lesson 184, paragraphs 10 through 15.

When we use the world for a lesser purpose, we end up suffering (4:4). That isn't necessary. God has provided the way for us to be *beyond* all the lesser goals and free from the suffering those goals bring with them (4:5). It is the way of forgiveness, the way of recognizing one another as part of our one Self.

• **Study Question** •

5. *Apply the ideas of this paragraph to your own life. What other purposes do you see in the world, and in your brothers and sisters, other than the healing of God's Son? Think of some specific situation that is troubling you. How would this situation look different if you believed that the only purpose in the situation is healing? (Written answer is optional.)*

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Paragraph 5

5 Look on your brother, and behold in him the whole reversal of the laws that seem to rule this world. ²See in his freedom yours, for such it is. ³Let not his specialness obscure the truth in him, for not one law of death you bind him to will you escape, and not one sin you see in him but keeps you both in hell. ⁴Yet will his perfect sinlessness release you both, for holiness is quite impartial, with one judgment made for all it looks upon. ⁵And that is made, not of itself, but through the Voice that speaks for God in everything that lives and shares His being.³

• **Study Question** •

6. *What is the fundamental choice this paragraph is asking us to make?*
 - A. *Through the Holy Spirit to see our brother's perfect sinlessness.*
 - B. *To ask our brother's help in freeing ourselves from the laws of this world.*
 - C. *To expect our brother to demonstrate freedom from the world's laws.*

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Here is that way, the way of freedom from suffering. Look on your brother through the eyes of Christ, and see him free, recognizing that in freeing him you are freeing yourself (5:1–2). Look past his specialness, and see “the truth in him.” Your freedom depends on it, because any sin you see in him, any condemnation you think he deserves, will just boomerang on you (5:3). But the same reaction is true if you see your brother perfectly sinless (5:4); when you release him, you release yourself as well. Holiness has only “*one* judgment made for all it looks upon,” a judgment that is constantly sounding forth “in everything that lives and shares [God's] being” (5:5).

³. Acts 17:28 (RSV): “In him we live and move and have our being.”

Who comes to mind when you read the phrase, “my brother” or “my sister”?
Whoever comes to mind, silently say this to them, prayerfully:

"Ask this of him, that he may set you free:

Give me your blessing, holy Son of God. I would behold you with the eyes of Christ, and see my perfect sinlessness in you" (W-pI.161.11:6-8).

Paragraph 6

6 It is His sinlessness that eyes that see can look upon. ²It is His loveliness they see in everything. ³And it is He they look for everywhere, and find no sight or place or time where He is not. ⁴Within your brother's holiness, the perfect frame for your salvation and the world's, is set the shining memory of Him in Whom your brother lives, and you along with him. ⁵Let not your eyes be blinded by the veil of specialness that hides the face of Christ from him, and you as well. ⁶And let the fear of God no longer hold the vision you were meant to see from you. ⁷Your brother's body shows not Christ to you. ⁸He is set forth within his holiness.

• Study Question •

7. Consider the last sentence of paragraph 5 and the first four sentences of paragraph 6. Whose sinlessness is it that “eyes that see can look upon”? Whose loveliness do we see in everything? Who is it we look for everywhere?
- A. Our brother's
 - B. The Holy Spirit's, God's Voice
 - C. God's

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Please note the capitalization on “His” and “He” in the first three sentences; they are referring to God, of Whom we all are parts. Thus, when I look at someone with “eyes that see,” I see the sinlessness of God and the loveliness of God (6:1–2). When I open my eyes to see, I will look for God everywhere—and *I will find Him everywhere*, both everywhere in space and everywhere in time (6:3). To me, that implies that I will look back on past events that I have judged as sin, and I will see them anew. I will see sinlessness and loveliness in persons I have condemned as unworthy of my love.

Whoever lives, lives in God, because God *is* life. As Paul said of God in Athens, “In Him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28, NRSV).

Whoever lives, therefore, is holy with the holiness of God. The sight of this holiness in another brings salvation to us and to the world. It reminds us of the God in Whom our brother or sister lives, and in Whom we live as well (6:4). The experience of this sight of God's holiness in someone is a powerful one with transformative results. This is why there are so many lessons in the Workbook about seeing differently, or vision, for instance:

I am determined to see (W-20).

Vision already holds a replacement for everything you think you see now. Loveliness can light your images, and so transform them that you will love them, even though they were made of hate. For you will not be making them alone. (W-23.4:4-6)

Above all else I want to see things differently. (W-28)

Try looking up lessons 29 and 30 and reading them in the light of this discussion about God's and Christ's holiness being discovered in everyone we see, when we see with vision.

We've been used to seeing through a "veil of specialness that hides the face of Christ," which is really not seeing at all, but blindness. It hides the face of Christ from your brother as well as from you. But you have a choice: "*Let not your eyes be blinded*" (6:5). You can choose to look past the specialness, to lift the veil. You can let go of your fear of God that is preventing you from seeing "the vision you were meant to see" (6:6).

Think about that for a minute. How does your fear of God (which you may not even have been aware of) prevent you from seeing Christ in your brother? Perhaps because seeing the Christ in your brother is the *same* as seeing God. Lesson 29 says, "God is in everything I see," and declares that this is the "whole basis for vision" (W-29.1:5). In our specialness we fear the realization that God is in everything because that is the end of specialness. If we see God in everything, then "nothing is separate, by itself or in itself" (W-29.1:2).

You won't see Christ by looking at bodies. You must look past the exterior to the "invisible" holiness within (6:7-8).

"Christ's vision has one law. It does not look upon a body, and mistake it for the Son whom God created. It beholds a light beyond the body; an idea beyond what can be touched, a purity undimmed by errors, pitiful mistakes, and fearful thoughts of guilt from dreams of sin. It sees no separation. And it looks on everyone, on every circumstance, all happenings and all events, without the slightest fading of the light it sees.

"This can be taught; and must be taught by all who would achieve it. It requires but the recognition that the world can not give anything that faintly can compare with this in value; nor set up a goal that does not merely disappear when this has been perceived. And this you give today: See no one as a body. Greet him as the Son of God he is, acknowledging that he is one with you in holiness" (W-pI.158.7:1-8:4 (FIP)).

Paragraph 7

7 Choose, then, his body or his holiness as what you want to see, and which you choose is yours to look upon. ²Yet will you choose in countless situations, and through time which seems to have no end, until the truth be your decision. ³For eternity is not regained by still one more denial of the Christ in him. ⁴And where is your salvation if he is but a body? ⁵Where is your peace but in his holiness? ⁶And where is God Himself but in that part of Him He set forever in your brother's holiness, that you might see the truth about yourself set forth at last in terms you recognized and understood?

• Study Question •

8. Read the paragraph, and then attempt to expand on this thought as best you can (essay, one short paragraph): "The Course's way to God is through our brothers."

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Which, then, do you want to see: "his body or his holiness"? The choice is up to you, and you will see what you choose to see (7:1). The body, here, I believe is being used to symbolize everything external about a person. Not just the actual body, but the actions of the body, and the specialness of which the body is a symbol. Bodies are subject to the laws of the world; bodies commit acts we deem "sin." Bodies are special. Our choice is, see his holiness, or see his body (his specialness, his limitations, his sin). He says, "Choose, then," showing that the choice is the logical conclusion of what has just been said: If you want to see Christ, this is the choice you will make. It should be obvious. It should be easy. But it's not.

We will confront this choice over and over and over again, "in countless situations, and through time which seems to have no end," and over and over we will make the wrong choice! We'll keep doing that, he says, "until the truth be your decision" (7:2). That may seem depressing, but somehow I find it reassuring. It says to me that my aberrant decision-making is expected, and in the end, nothing to worry about. Eventually I will make the right choice. And so will you. Every time we choose to see our brother's specialness, we are denying the Christ in him and postponing our experience of eternity (7:3). The only way for us to find salvation, peace, and God Himself is by acknowledging and seeing our brother's holiness. The holiness in our brother is "the truth about yourself set forth at last in terms you" recognize and understand (7:4–6). This just underscores the fact that it is easier to see holiness in another than it is to see it in ourselves. Our brothers are our windows into eternity. In them we discover our Self.

"Your holy Son is pointed out to me, first in my brother; then in me. ... And as I look upon Your Son today, I hear Your Voice instructing me to find the way to You, as You appointed that the way shall be:

"Behold his sinlessness, and be you healed.'" (W-pII.357.1:2-5).

Paragraph 8

8 Your brother's holiness is sacrament and benediction unto you. ²His errors cannot withhold God's blessing from himself, nor you who see him truly. ³His mistakes can cause delay, which it is given you to take from him that both may end a journey that has never been begun and needs no end. ⁴What never was is not a part of you. ⁵Yet will you think it is, until you realize that it is not a part of him who stands beside you. ⁶He is the mirror of yourself, wherein you see the judgment you have laid on both of you. ⁷The Christ in you beholds his holiness. ⁸Your specialness looks on his body, and beholds him not.

• Study Question •

9. *How is your brother's holiness a "benediction" to you? (Look up the word if you are not sure of its meaning.)*

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Jesus is really laying it on thick! Our brother's holiness is salvation, peace, and the way to God. It is the truth about yourself in human terms. It is "sacrament and benediction unto you" (8:1). A sacrament is "a religious ceremony or ritual regarded as imparting divine grace." In the Roman Catholic Church, the term also refers to the bread and wine of the communion service, which are regarded as the body and blood of Christ. For students of the Course, that means of divine grace, that method of taking in Christ, is not a Sunday ritual but our willing perception of the holiness of Christ in our brother. *That* is what feeds us and nourishes our spirits.

Have our brothers made mistakes? Of course; many, some grave errors. Yet, those errors cannot prevent God from blessing them⁴, and when we see our brother truly, we too will bless him willingly (8:2). Are we holier than God, that we cannot forgive errors He chooses to overlook? The errors "can cause delay," but only delay; the outcome will not be affected (8:3). And delay, while annoying, "is only a matter of time, and time is but an illusion." (T-13.I.5:5 (FIP), T-13.I.9:5 (CE)). It's *our job* to lift the burden of delay from our brother by our recognition of his holiness, forgiving his errors (8:3). In doing so we will advance both him and us toward the end of the journey, which the Course calls a "journey without distance" (T-8.VI.9:7 (FIP), T-8.V.12:7 (CE)). Here, it says the journey "has never begun and *needs* no end" (8:3). That certainly implies that we are already "there," wherever it is we think we are going; we just don't know it yet.

We think we've been afflicted with some awful infection of the soul, an infection that has imbedded itself in our core. Christian tradition calls it "the Fall." But no fall ever happened, and there is no infection in our soul (8:4). Just being told this isn't enough to rid our minds of the concept and sense of guilt, though. It will continue to have its hold on our minds until we have realized that there is no such infection *in our brother* (8:5).

⁴ "Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over transgression?" (Micah 7:18 ESV)

Your brother is your mirror (8:6)! Judge him and you judge yourself; forgive him and you have forgiven yourself.

As you see him, you will see yourself. As you treat him, you will treat yourself.

As you think of him, you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose sight of yourself. (T-8.II.6:2-5 (CE), T-8.III.4:2-5 (FIP))

When you identify with your specialness, you will not see your brother's reality; you will see a separate brother, housed in a body. To his holiness, you must identify with your own (8:7-8).

Paragraph 9

9 See him as what he is, that your deliverance may not be long. ²A senseless wandering, without a purpose and without accomplishment of any kind, is all the other choice can offer you. ³Futility of function not fulfilled will haunt you while your brother lies asleep, till what has been assigned to you is done and he is risen from the past. ⁴He who condemned himself, and you as well, is given you to save from condemnation, along with you. ⁵And both shall see God's glory in His Son, whom you mistook as flesh and bound to laws which have no power over him at all.

• Study Question •

10. *This paragraph tells us that our lives will be haunted by a feeling of futility and senselessness until we do a certain thing. Which of the following phrases does **not** describe that certain thing?*

- A. *Fulfilling our function.*
- B. *Seeing our brother as he is.*
- C. *Finding the perfect mate.*
- D. *Helping our brother rise from his past.*
- E. *Saving our brother from condemnation.*
- F. *Healing God's Son.*

Therefore, if you want to hasten your own deliverance, see your brother “as what he is” (9:1). To fail to do so is to doom yourself to “senseless wandering” (9:2). Jesus produces an easy-to-remember alliterative description of the state of mind we endure when we do not choose to see our brother or sister as they are in truth: “Futility of function not fulfilled” (9:3). Have you not experienced that feeling of futility, haunting your mind? That sense that you are missing your calling somehow, that your life as it is seems to have no real, lasting purpose? You probably have not considered that the feeling arises because your brother is still asleep, waiting for your call to him to awaken.

Our function, according to this section, is an assignment from God. Someone—a different someone for each of us, and maybe more than one—someone who has condemned himself, and is mired in guilt or self-doubt, and sees you as guilty as well. That person has been given to you “to save from condemnation, along with you” (9:4).

The passage I quoted earlier from Chapter 8, that began, “As you see him, you will see yourself,” is in the section on “The Holy Encounter,” and it actually says that we are called to our function “when you meet anyone” and “whenever two sons of God meet.” So this function of finding release by releasing others, finding freedom from guilt by lifting guilt from others, is something we are called to engage in every minute of every day. There may be one particular person “assigned” to you, but you are responsible in the same way for everyone you meet.

When you succeed in saving someone from condemnation, along with yourself, both of you will behold the glory of God in Christ—in each other. You will see this is a person “whom you mistook as flesh,” a person bound by laws of sin and guilt “which have *no* power over him at all” (9:5).

Paragraph 10

10 Would you not gladly realize these laws are not for you? ²Then see him not as prisoner to them. ³It cannot be what governs part of God holds not for all the rest. ⁴You place yourself under the laws you see as ruling him. ⁵Think, then, how great the love of God for you must be, that He has given you a part of Him to save from pain and give you happiness. ⁶And never doubt but that your specialness will disappear before the will of God, Who loves each part of Him with equal love and care. ⁷The Christ in you can see your brother truly. ⁸And would you decide against the holiness He sees?

• Study Question •

11. *How can we come to recognize that the fearful laws of the world do not govern us?*

- A. *Refuse to see our brothers as governed by those laws.*
- B. *Never doubt that our specialness will disappear.*
- C. *Think about how great God's Love is for us.*

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If you want to know that the laws of sin and guilt do not apply to you, stop seeing other people as prisoner to them (10:1–2). We all are part of God, and anything that applies to one part applies to all parts (10:3). This is why, when you perceive another person as caught by the power of sin, you are placing yourself under the same law (10:4).

God, we are told, “has given you a part of Him to save from pain” (10:5). That’s amazing! God must love and trust you a lot to have done that, and to have made it a way to bring happiness to *you*. I remember, back in my evangelical Christian days, I was once taught a “technique” called “The Four Spiritual Laws,” as a method of “leading others to Christ.” (This was meant in the sense of being “born again,” but we can take it in another sense, of leading others to recognize the Christ already in them as their true Self.) The

first such law was, “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” Isn’t that what this paragraph is saying? It’s true!⁵

Once we have come to truly accept the love of God for us, specialness will disappear, because God loves us all *equally* (10:6). We can do this. We have Christ in us, and He “*can see your brother truly*” (10:7). Are we going to continue denying what He sees? (10:8)

Paragraph 11

11 Specialness is the function that you gave yourself. ²It stands for you alone, as self-created, self-maintained, in need of nothing, and unjoined with anything beyond the body. ³In its eyes you are a separate universe, with all the power to hold itself complete within itself, with every entry shut against intrusion, and every window barred against the light. ⁴Always attacked and always furious, with anger always fully justified, you have pursued this goal with vigilance you never thought to yield and effort that you never thought to cease. ⁵And all this grim determination was for this: *You wanted specialness to be the truth.*

• Study Question •

12. *What is the most prominent characteristic of the pursuit of specialness, as it is depicted in this paragraph?*

- A. *A triumphant sense of victory and accomplishment.*
- B. *An overwhelming sense of paranoid vigilance against every form of attack.*
- C. *A delightful awareness of superiority to everyone else.*

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God’s function for us is to save those around us from their self-condemnation by lifting our condemnation from them. The function we gave ourselves is specialness: “you alone, as self-created, self-maintained, in need of nothing, and unjoined with anything beyond the body” (11:1–2). The two functions are mutually exclusive. Specialness demands that we *lay guilt on* others, to make ourselves special by comparison. Forgiveness demands that we *remove guilt* from others, that our own may be removed.

Specialness is a walled and barricaded castle with shuttered windows (11:3). A spiritual teacher I once read referred to it as “the self-contraction.” It is a lonely life, a life of isolation. You can never let anyone in, not really, not without reservation and safeguards. The description here really needs no explanation, and I think we can all identify with it, at least to some degree.

Jesus is saying, in 11:4–5, that the awful truth is that *we wanted specialness to be the truth*, and we have struggled diligently all our lives to make it so.

⁵ Of course, the laws quickly got off course into more traditional theology, the second law teaching that everyone is a sinner and separated from God.

Currently, I'm in the process of purging things from my home in preparation for a move. And it's hard. There are things I have not used for a decade or more, books I read thirty years ago or more that were life-changers, but I have moved past them, and have not touched them for, in some cases, about fifty years. Yet it's hard to let go of them. I made great use of them. I cherished them, and shared them (some of them) with others. I put a lot of effort during one part of my life in learning to program computers, for instance, and made my living doing so. Just the time I spent in diligently pursuing those goals makes it hard, now, to let go of the things associated with it.

I think letting go of specialness is something like that. It's hard because we've put so much of our effort and attention into it, and now, we're being asked just to drop it. But, in this case, it should be a bit easier than divesting oneself of old, cherished books, because specialness has been the source of all the pain in our lives.

Paragraph 12

12 Now you are merely asked that you pursue another goal with far less vigilance, with little effort and with little time, and with the power of God maintaining it and promising success. ²Yet of the two, it is *this* one you find more difficult. ³The sacrifice of self you understand, nor do you deem this cost too heavy. ⁴But a tiny willingness, a nod to God, a greeting to the Christ in you, you find a burden wearisome and tedious, too heavy to be borne. ⁵Yet for the dedication to the truth as God established it, *no* sacrifice is asked, *no* strain called forth, and all the power of Heaven and the might of truth itself is given to provide the means and *guarantee* the goal's accomplishment.

• Study Question •

13. *Which is the better deal?*

- A. *A goal you must pursue entirely on your own against the entire universe, with never-ending vigilance against relentless attack, exerting enormous effort, demanding infinite sacrifices, and with no end in sight.*
- B. *A goal you pursue with all the power of God and Heaven on your side, fully aligned with the truth, requiring only minimal effort and little time, calling for no sacrifices, and absolutely guaranteed by God to succeed.*

Now ask yourself, if Goal B describes the plan of spiritual practice given in the Course, why are you not more fully engaged in it?

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And the other goal we are being asked to pursue is nowhere near as difficult as specialness, which was a futile effort to make something true that never was true and never could be. The new goal asks “far *less* vigilance, with little effort and little time.”

We have the help of God, and His promise that we can and will succeed! (12:1). Oddly, we tend to think this new goal is harder than the old one (12:2).

It has to be a misperception on our part! We've willingly given ourselves to the goal of specialness, willing to sacrifice if necessary to make it so (12:3). Yet we balk at the simple willingness to transform, to give "a nod to God, a greeting to the Christ in you," finding it a burden "too heavy to be borne" (12:4). It's crazy! Look at how difficult it seems to set up a regular spiritual practice of study or meditation. Nearly everyone who starts on the ACIM Workbook fails the first time, and often many times. It just goes to show how deeply embedded the ego is.

The truth asks no sacrifice. There is no strain to following it. "All the power of Heaven and the might of truth itself is given to provide the means and *guarantee* the goal's accomplishment" (12:5). How can this *not* be enough? What other course have you ever studied that *guarantees* you will complete it successfully?

Next time you find yourself making excuses for not meditating or not reading your Workbook lesson, think about this paragraph. Think of all the things you do day after day maintaining your ego and your body, and ask yourself why you can't find time for God.

Paragraph 13

13 You who believe it easier to see your brother's body than his holiness, be sure you understand what made this judgment. ²Here is the voice of specialness heard clearly, judging against the Christ and setting forth for you the purpose that you *can* attain and what you *cannot* do. ³Forget not that this judgment must apply to what you do with *it* as your ally. ⁴For what you do through Christ it does not know. ⁵To Him, this judgment makes no sense at all, for only what His Father wills is possible, and there is no alternative for Him to see. ⁶Out of His lack of conflict comes your peace. ⁷And from His purpose comes the means for effortless accomplishment and rest.

• Study Question •

14. *Why do all our doubts about how hard it is to see our brother's holiness rather than his body really mean nothing? (Write a two or three sentence answer based on this paragraph.)*

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Jesus asks us to get very clear about what voice is telling us that it's harder to see someone's holiness than it is to see their body (13:1). It's the voice for specialness. It is rejecting the Christ in you both, and trying to dictate what you can and cannot do (13:2).

Let me point out that what this implies is that it really *is not* easier to see the body than someone's holiness. Seeing holiness is just as easy, perhaps easier. What makes it seem the other way to us?

It all depends on what voice you are choosing to identify with. If you are allied with specialness, you will experience what specialness experiences, and it has no idea what

holiness even looks like. It's blind to it (13:4). Specialness, if asked to see the holiness in a brother, will respond something like this:

"Holiness? What's that? I don't see anything besides a body and what it does and says. You're asking the impossible."

But if you are allied with Christ, the choice itself makes no sense because, to the Christ in us, only what God the Father wills is possible, and there is no alternative to be seen (13:5). To Christ there is no conflict! It isn't a struggle to see holiness in anyone. That lack of conflict is what brings peace to us (13:6). If we are experiencing this as a struggle, we're still identified with our specialness. When we have chosen to be identified with Christ, Christ's purpose will make all of this effortless and even restful (13:7).

Think of something you do that is like second nature to you. Like breathing. You don't have to think about it or try really hard, and if you do, something is wrong. That's what seeing holiness can be like. It's just the way we see; there's no other way. "Above all else I want to see" (W-27).

• **Study Question** •

1. *What is one major positive effect of a holy relationship which is discussed in this paragraph?*
 - A. *In a holy relationship we experience forgiveness.*
 - B. *In a holy relationship we cannot look on sin together.*
 - C. *In a holy relationship we are able to look on sin together, and so forgive it.*

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Legend:

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

The 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 identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely 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. B

3. A

4. D

5. The student supplies examples from her or his own experience.

6. A

7. C

8. Our salvation is in our brother's holiness, not his body. Our peace is in his holiness. And even God, for us, is in our brother's holiness, in that "part of Him He set forever" there. In A Course in Miracles, we return to God by means of our brothers; we see Him in them, in terms we recognize and understand. This is an experience of God that is manifested to us in a human being, in a form we can recognize and understand. We will know we have begun to see the truth when we can look at a brother and sister and realize, "Through you, I see God."

9. **benediction.** blessing, prayer, invocation; grace.

So this sentence is telling us that our brother's holiness is "blessing" or a prayer of thanksgiving such as grace at a meal. Our brother's holiness is something that confers grace to us; that is, it imparts holiness to us, it makes us holy.

10. C

11. A

12. B

13. B. The answer to the supplementary question need not be written.

14. It is our specialness that thinks seeing the body is easy, and seeing holiness is hard! This judgment of our specialness applies only to what we do in league with our specialness. But the ego has absolutely no knowledge of what we can do through Christ. Therefore, all our thoughts about how hard the Course is mean absolutely nothing, and simply don't apply to the situation!