

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 30

The New Beginning

Section I:16–18

Rules for Decision, PART 2

Section II

Your Boundless Will

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition.

Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview of Section I b and II

[The commentary on this section is a revised and updated version of the commentary contained in my booklet, *A Healed Mind Does Not Plan*]

The entire chapter is about practice, but Section I (“Rules for Decision”) and Section II (“Freedom of Will”) are worth particularly careful study. Understanding what is said here about the importance of practice and the skeleton method of daily practice that it presents can transform your experience with the Course. A chart of the rules for decision, in the form of a flow chart, may help give you an overall grasp of what is being said (see the last page of the previous commentary).

Paragraph 15

15 It must be clear that it is easier to have a happy day if you prevent unhappiness from entering at all. ²But this takes practice in the rules which will protect you from the ravages of fear. ³When this has been achieved, the sorry dream of judgment has forever been undone. ⁴But meanwhile, you have need for practicing the rules for its undoing. ⁵Let us, then, consider once again the very first of the decisions which are offered here. ⁶We said you can begin a happy day with the determination not to make decisions by yourself. ⁷This seems to be a free decision in itself. ⁸And yet you *cannot* make decisions by yourself. ⁹The only question really is *with what* you choose to make them. ¹⁰That is really all.

• Study Questions •

1. *There is one primary rule. Most of the others either give a variant, or give a means of getting back on track if you forget this primary rule. What is the primary rule?*
2. **(13:1).** *How do you prevent unhappiness from entering at all?*
3. **(13:4).** *The final five rules are the rules for the undoing of the dream of judgment. How do you reach a place where you need only the first two rules?*
4. **(13:6–10).** *The first rule is re-examined here, so that we can better practice it. This re-examination is meant to further dispel the sense of opposition the rules can give rise to. How does this re-examination dispel our opposition?*

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Naturally, preventing a mess is easier than cleaning up the mess after it happens. That's the goal: to get beyond the need to *undo* unhappiness, and arrive at the place where we never let it enter (13:1). How do we prevent unhappiness from entering? By practicing the first two rules: starting the day by setting our minds to make all decisions with the Holy Spirit, and reminding ourselves of that decision frequently throughout the day, whenever we have a quiet moment (2:2; 4:1–2). Diligent application of those rules will maintain our happiness (13:2). And once we get to the place where unhappiness never enters, “the sorry dream of judgment has *forever* been undone” (13:3). Notice the reference to the “dream of judgment.” In other words, these rules for decision are indeed the specific methods for making a new beginning away from dreams of judgment, just as the introduction to the chapter said.

“Meanwhile,” that is until we have forever banished the dream of judgment from our minds, we still need to practice the remaining five rules, either the “quick restorative” of Rule #3, or the longer, gentle method of reminding ourselves that we actually *want* the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we become, once again, willing to ask for it.

Clearly, *the specific methods for reaching the goal of the Course consist of regular daily spiritual practices*, all centered on the notion of learning to follow divine guidance.

Since our need is the practice of these rules, Jesus suggests that we reconsider the first such rule (13:5).

Naturally, preventing a mess is more manageable than cleaning up the mess after it happens. That's the goal: to get beyond the need to *undo* unhappiness and arrive at the place where we never let it enter (15:1). How do we prevent unhappiness from entering? By practicing the first two rules: starting the day by setting our minds to make all decisions with the Holy Spirit, and reminding ourselves of that decision frequently throughout the day, whenever we have a quiet moment (3:2; 5:1–3). Diligent application of those rules will maintain our happiness (15:2). And once we get to the place where unhappiness never enters, “the sorry dream of judgment has forever been undone” (15:3). Notice the reference to the “dream of judgment.” In other words, these rules for decision are indeed the specific methods for making a new beginning, moving away from dreams of judgment, just as the introduction to the chapter said.

“Meanwhile,” that is until we have forever banished the dream of judgment from our minds, we still need to practice the remaining five rules, either the “quick restorative” of Rule #3 or the longer, gentle method of reminding ourselves that we actually *want* the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that we become, once again, willing to ask for it.

So we can see that *the specific methods for reaching the Course's goal consist of regular daily spiritual practices*, all centered on the notion of learning to follow divine guidance.

Since our need is the practice of these rules, Jesus suggests that we reconsider the first such rule (15:5). Notice how determined he is to drum this rule into our minds! He has already spent several paragraphs on it, yet now he returns to it moments later. He realizes that our minds have probably already begun to push it out of awareness.

The very core of the first rule is a kind of choice: determining to make no decisions by myself (15:6–7). Or *is* it a choice? Actually, it isn't, because we *cannot* make decisions alone; we always make them *with* someone or something else (15:7–9). The only choice is “*with what* you choose to make” your decisions (15:9–10). Let that sink in: the only decision you can truly make is what you choose to make decisions *with*: the ego or the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 16

16 The first rule, then, is not coercion, but a simple statement of a simple fact. ²You *will* not make decisions by yourself, whatever you decide. ³For they are made with idols or with God. ⁴And you ask help of Christ or anti-Christ, and which you choose will join with you and tell you what to do. ⁵Your day is *not* at random. ⁶It is set by what you choose to live it with, and how the friend whose counsel you have sought perceives your happiness. ⁷You always ask advice before you can decide on *anything*. ⁸Let this be understood and you can see there cannot be coercion here, nor grounds for opposition that you may be free. ⁹There *is* no freedom from what must occur. ¹⁰And if you think there is, you must be wrong.

• Study Questions •

5. (16:3–4). *What do you think it means to decide with idols or anti-Christ?*
6. (16:9). *What is the thing that “must occur” that you might wish you had “freedom from”?*

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So the first rule is merely asking us to choose who our adviser will be: God or idols. As worded, the rule is “a simple statement of a simple fact” (16:1). Today, and every day, no matter what I do, I will never make any decisions by myself! (16:2). In every decision that I make, either Christ or anti-Christ will be telling me what to do (16:3–4).

This makes sense to me when I consider it. When I make decisions that I think I am making *by myself*, I am listening to the lies being whispered to me by my idols: my body, my separate self, and the external things I cling to or crave for one reason or another. My choices will be governed by what those idols tell me or by the spark of God within me. There are no alternative options. There is *no such thing as deciding by myself*.

As I point out in the study questions and answers, the intent is to dispel our sense of opposition. You’ve probably noticed such opposition in yourself. The idea of giving your life over to “obeying God” or “finding God’s Will for your life” may have seemed like a colossal imposition, a kind of divine slavery, a loss of free will. And in a sense, it *is* a loss of free will—not a loss of actual freedom of choice, because it does not exist, but a loss of the *illusion* that we can make choices on our own, without being told what to do. The topic of free will becomes the subject of the next section and the next paragraph; it is an important one.

We typically believe that we alone determine what we do, where we go, and what we say on a given day. We think that we are at liberty to choose for ourselves. In reality, our day is never “at random,” never left totally up to us to decide what we want (16:5). When we make choices, our choices are always limited. We choose the option offered by God or the option offered by the ego. The way our day goes is “set by what you choose to live it *with*” (God, or idols), and how that particular “friend” defines our happiness (16:6). Who we choose to listen to determines what we do.

Our error is that we think the two options are: let God tell me what to do or choose for myself. However, what we think of as choosing by ourselves is merely listening to a different voice that tells us what to do. When the rules speak of deciding by ourselves, it is a gentle reference to deciding with idols.

We *always* do this (16:7). We never decide by ourselves; we ask for advice, either from God or from idols. The adviser we choose determines how we interpret people and events and what we believe will bring us happiness, and our actions then follow that belief. The key to *true* happiness, then, is *choosing the right adviser*. When we understand this clearly, the first rule will be a welcome relief rather than coercion. Who wants to be led around by idols? Would you rather be led by idols or by God?

It’s senseless to resist asking the Holy Spirit for His counsel in an attempt to garner our freedom (16:8). There is no such thing as freedom from being told what to do by an adviser, and if we think there is, we *must* be wrong (16:9–10). This is how things *must be* (16:9), a premise that will be explained by the following paragraphs. The general idea is that *nothing happens without the union of our mind with something else*.

Paragraph 17

17 The second rule as well is but a fact. ²For you and your advisor must agree on what you want *before* it can occur. ³It is but this agreement which permits all things to happen. ⁴Nothing can be caused without some form of union, be it with a dream of judgment or the Voice for God. ⁵Decisions cause results *because* they are not made in isolation. ⁶They are made by you and your advisor, for yourself and for the world as well. ⁷The day you want you offer to the world, for it will be what you have asked for, and will reinforce the rule of your advisor through the world. ⁸Whose kingdom is the world for you today? ⁹What kind of day will you decide to have?

• Study Questions •

7. (16:1-2). What is the second rule, and how is it shown here to be a fact?
8. If nothing can be caused without some form of union, what are you doing when you shrink from union?

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Rule #2 is a statement of fact, not an admonition (17:1). Jesus then introduces a rather far-reaching principle: “You and your adviser must agree on what you want *before* it can occur” (17:2). The Course has previously hinted several times that *the joining of minds* is an essential precursor to any occurrence:

“For God and His beloved Son do *not* think differently. And it is the *agreement* of their thought that makes the Son a co-creator with the Mind Whose Thought created him.” (T-25.VII.4:2-3 (FIP), (T-25.VII.5:2 (CE)))

“No mind is sick until another mind agrees that they are separate. And thus it is their *joint* decision to be sick. If you withhold agreement and accept the part you play in making sickness real, the other mind cannot project its guilt without your aid in letting it perceive itself as separate and apart from you. (T-28.III.2:1-3 (CE), (T-28.III.2:1-3 (FIP)))

“Two minds with one intent become so strong that what they will becomes the Will of God.” (W-185.3:1)

Even the mad idea of separation had to be shared before it could form the basis of the world I see. Yet that sharing was a sharing of nothing (W-54.3:3-4)

This principle is stated even more clearly in the next two sentences:

“It is but this *agreement* that permits all things to happen. *Nothing* can be caused without some form of union, be it with a dream of judgment or the Voice for God.” (17:3-4)

I’ve never seen this principle expressed anywhere else but in the Course. Nothing at all happens unless a mind unites with something else: another mind, God’s Mind, or even with a dream! *Union* drives creation. Agree with God’s Mind, and you are a co-creator with Him. Agree with another mind that you are separate, and your minds are sickened, resulting in sick bodies. Side with either the Holy Spirit or with idols about what kind of day will make you happy, and

that's the kind of day you get. Since nothing happens without an agreement, this is the way things must be, and there is no freedom from it, as we read in 16:9.

Perhaps you have come to believe that your decisions alone can cause results. The Course teaches that the only reason decisions cause results is that you *join* with another mind. Decisions that are “made in isolation” have no results (17:5). You *must* join with something—you and your adviser (17:6), “a dream of judgment or the Voice for God” (17:4)—for results to occur. There has to be some union of minds. That is the only way decisions happen and the only way decisions cause results. And when results happen, they happen “for you *and for the world as well*” (17:6). Decisions are not made *by* you alone nor *for* you alone (17:6). As both the Bible and the Course say, your thoughts (faith, in the Bible) can “literally move mountains” (T-2.VI.9:8; I Corinthians 13:2; Mark 11:23). They affect not only you but also the entire world. “I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts” (W-pI.19.Title).

When we envision the kind of day we want—whether we do so listening to God or our ego's voice—we will get that kind of day, and it will be a day we offer to the world as well (7). Our choice will “reinforce the rule of your adviser in the world” (17:7). Jesus, both here and earlier, is definitely personifying both the Holy Spirit and the “other” adviser. More than just our idols, this other adviser is the ego. This other adviser is the anti-Christ. The Bible speaks of the battle of Armageddon, in which Christ and anti-Christ battle for the world. In the Course's version, the battle takes place in our minds. The decision we make of which voice to listen to strengthens the rule of either Christ or anti-Christ.

Whose kingdom is the world for you today? What kind of day will you decide to have? (17:8–9)

These are the questions we should be asking ourselves each morning as we wake. Can we say, “This is my Father's world,” as the hymn goes? Or, by our turning to the other adviser, are we saying, “This is the ego's world”?

Paragraph 18

18 It needs but two who would have happiness this day to promise it to all the world.¹ ²It needs but two to understand that they cannot decide alone to guarantee the joy they asked for will be wholly shared. ³For they have understood the basic law which makes decision powerful and gives it all effects that it will ever have. ⁴It needs but two. ⁵These two are joined before there *can* be a decision. ⁶Let this be the one reminder that you keep in mind, and you will have the day you want, and give it to the world by having it yourselves. ⁷Your judgment has been lifted from the world by your decision for a happy day. ⁸And as you have received, so must you give.²

¹ The identity of the “two” in this paragraph has switched from being “you and your advisor” (the ego or the Holy Spirit—see previous paragraph) to being you and another person.

² Matthew 10:8 (KJV): “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give.”

• Study Questions •

9. (18:1-2). *Why does it need only two to bring happiness to the world?*
10. *What must these two decide to bring happiness to the world?*
11. (18:6). *If you remember only one thing, you will have the day you want and, by having it yourself, give it to all the world. What is the one thing to remember?*
12. (18:7). *How has your decision for a happy day lifted your judgment from the world?*

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Jesus's teaching transitions from a single mind joining with either Christ or anti-Christ (idols) to two minds who agree to recognize that they cannot decide alone, thereby choosing to have a happy day. The principle of joining or union links these concepts. If two of us join together in such holy union, it will promise happiness to the entire world; it will “*guarantee* their joy... will be wholly shared” (18:1–2). These are genuinely astounding statements! Two minds that join together have profound effects on the world—witness the results of the joining of the minds of Helen Schucman and William Thetford! *A Course in Miracles* has only just begun to bring its happiness to the world.

Earlier I quoted a single line from Workbook Lesson 185; here is more of the context:

“The world would be completely changed, should any two agree these words express the only thing they want.”

“Two minds with one intent become so strong that what they will become the Will of God. For minds can only join in truth. In dreams, no two can share the same intent.” (W-pl.185.2:9-3:3)

The “basic law” that gives decision its power (18:3) is to make it *not* alone, but make it with Christ and with a brother or sister. It takes two to tango! When two people join in remembering that they cannot decide alone, things happen. Jesus told us the same thing in the Bible:

“Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19, NASB)

In a sense, then, Rule #1 is all I need to have a happy day! Just remember that I cannot decide alone, and I will have the day I want *and* give it to the world by having it for myself (18:6).

Notice that, in the UR Text, rather than “yourself” 18:6 ends with “yourselves.” Jesus is still talking to *the two who have joined*. He is saying, “If *you two* keep this in mind, *you two* will have the day you want, and by having it, give it to the world.” It applies to any individual but applies even more strongly and emphatically to two minds joined in a single purpose.

When I choose a happy day, I am implicitly offering that happy day to the entire world; I am offering the world a gift instead of judging it. I must give what I have received (18:7–8). I have chosen to listen to the Holy Spirit, Who condemns no one, Whose evaluation of everything is always either love or a call for love. In making my decisions with Him, I will be led “from dreams of judgment to forgiving dreams and out of pain and fear,” as promised in the chapter’s Introduction (T-30.In.1:5 (FIP), T-30.I.1:5 (CE)).

Section II, “Your Boundless Will”

Overview of Section II

Section II is unusually unified in its theme and message. It expands on the thought begin in Section I: that when we ask the Holy Spirit what to do in all things, we do not violate our freedom of will. The main thought is that the Holy Spirit always guides us to do our most authentic, original will, the will we share with God, rather than our mistaken idea of what we want.

As you go through the rest of the chapter, you will notice many references to Section I’s points. “Beyond All Idols” (Section III), for instance, discusses *what* we are joining ourselves with when we choose to make our decisions with Christ rather than with idols. It shows that we do not genuinely want the forms represented by idols, but we desire actual content, i.e., the Thought God has of us.

Paragraph 1

Do you not understand that to oppose the Holy Spirit is to fight *yourself*? ²He tells you but *your will*; He speaks for *you*. ³In His divinity is but your own. ⁴And all He knows is but your knowledge, saved for you that you may do your will through Him. ⁵God *asks* you do your will; He joins with *you*. ⁶He did not set His kingdom up alone. ⁷And Heaven itself but represents your will, where everything created is for you. ⁸No spark of life but was created with your glad consent, as you would have it be. ⁹And not one thought that God has ever had but waited for your blessing to be born.³ ¹⁰God is no enemy to you. ¹¹He asks no more than that He hear you call Him “Friend.”

*Note: Here, in 1:1, is a rare case where the editors of the Second Edition actually **added** an emphasis (on “yourself”), rather than removing the too-frequent emphases of the UR Text.*

³ This does not mean that you were created first and then God created everything else “with your glad consent.” Rather, as is explained in Chapter 28, even your own creation was completed with your consent: “In his creation did his Father say, ‘You are beloved of Me and I of you forever. Be you perfect as Myself, for you can never be apart from Me.’ His Son remembers not that he replied, ‘I will,’ though in that promise was he born” (T-28.VI.6:2-4).

• **Study Questions** •

13. (1:1). Notice how this paragraph begins with a question. The question appears to respond to an objection the preceding section might have raised in your mind. Read over the last three paragraphs of the preceding section. What were they asking of us, and what objection might be raised in our minds that this paragraph is attempting to counteract?
14. (1:7–12). These sentences say some pretty amazing things about creation and Heaven. Try to summarize what these sentences say in a single sentence.

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The Text has explained earlier that the Voice for God within us is our own as well:

“You are asked to trust the Holy Spirit only because He speaks for you. He is the Voice for God, but never forget that God did not will to be alone. He shares His Will with you; He does not thrust it upon you.” (T-11.I.11:1-3)

“The Holy Spirit’s “Mind is partly yours and also partly God’s” (T-5.III.1:4).

The Workbook states it even more clearly:

“Hear, holy Son of God, your Father speak. His Voice would give to you His holy Word...”

“He speaks from nearer than your heart to you. His Voice is closer than your hand. His Love is everything you are and that He is; the same as you, and you the same as He.”

“It is your voice to which you listen as He speaks to you. It is your Word He speaks.”
(W-pl.125.4:1–2; 7:2–8:2)

He speaks “your Word.” “He speaks for *you*” (1:2). So if you oppose what He speaks, you are opposing yourself. His Divinity is yours; His knowledge is yours; His Will is yours (1:3–4). When God communicates to you, giving you some guidance about what to do, where to go, or what to say, He is asking you “to do your will” (1:5). Notice that the word “asks” is emphasized. It seems to be saying, “God isn’t against what you want to do, He is *asking* you to do your will, and He joins with you to do it.” (1:6). Even the Bible teaches as much:

Work out your salvation with fear and trembling [serious caution and watchfulness against temptation]; for **it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work** for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12–13)

The second half of the paragraph (1:7–10) informs us that *we* set up Heaven along with God, and we participated with God in the creation of all life! It goes so far as to say that creation required *our agreement* before any Thought of God’s could be born (1:10). There isn’t any part of God’s Will that we did not join in willing with Him. In communicating His Will to us, God is not opposing us; He is not our enemy (1:11). He’s just asking us to wake up from our colossal amnesia and once again recognize Him as our Friend, joining our will with His (1:12).

Practice Suggestion: (1:1–6). Look at your thoughts. Can you identify some areas where you feel the Holy Spirit’s will conflicts with what you want? Try turning these lines into a personal affirmative prayer to the Holy Spirit, and see

how it feels to repeat it. For example: "To fight You is to fight myself. Everything you are telling me is my own will; You are speaking for me."

Paragraph 2

² How wonderful it is to do your will! ²For that is freedom. ³There is nothing else that ever should be called by freedom's name. ⁴Unless you do your will, you are not free. ⁵And would God leave His Son without what he has chosen for himself? ⁶God but ensured that you would never lose your will when He gave you His perfect Answer. ⁷Hear It now, that you may be reminded of His love and learn your will. ⁸God would not have His Son made prisoner to what he does not want. ⁹He joins with you in willing you be free. ¹⁰And to oppose Him is to make a choice against yourself, and choose that you be bound.

• Study Questions •

15. (2:1–4). *What is freedom according to these lines?*
16. *Do you recall a section early in the Text that discusses this very issue at some length?*

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The very definition of *freedom* is to do your own will, and freedom, says Jesus, is “wonderful” (2:1–2). Evidently, he approves of freedom. He then drives the point home: You cannot call anything else freedom *except* “to do your will,” and if you cannot do your will, you are not free (2:3–4). So, if God gives us freedom, that must mean He gives us the gift of doing our own will. Would God Himself be free and yet choose to take our freedom from us? Of course not! (2:5) Even when we veered off into the mad delusion of having a will *different from God's*, God acted to ensure that we would never lose our true will. He sent the Holy Spirit into our minds to be His Answer to our madness (2:6).

“The Holy Spirit was God's Answer to the separation, the means by which the Atonement could repair until the whole mind returned to creating.” (T-5.II.10:5 (CE), T-5.II.2:5 (FIP) FIP has “heals” in place of “could repair.”)

The words, “Hear It now” (2:7) are a call to listen to the Holy Spirit, speaking God's Word in our minds. Listening to Him, we learn *our* will. God wants us to be free and joins us in willing that (2:8–9). Our condition now is *not* in freedom; delusion has imprisoned us. We are trapped in a way of thinking and being that is out of accord with our true nature, and that is *not what we genuinely want* (2:8). If we resist the Holy Spirit, we choose to be enslaved, not free (2:10).

Paragraph 3

3 Look once again upon your enemy, the one you chose to hate instead of love. ²For thus was hatred born into the world, and thus the rule of fear established here. ³Now hear God speak to you through Him Who is His Voice and yours as well, reminding you that it is *not* your will to hate, and be a prisoner to fear, a slave to death, a little creature with a little life. ⁴Your will is boundless; it is *not* your will that it be bound. ⁵What lies in you has joined with God Himself in all creation's birth. ⁶Remember Him Who has created you, and through *your* will created everything.

• Study Questions •

17. (3:1–2). *Is this imagined “enemy” God (see 1:11, (T-29.IX.2:2 (FIP); T-29.X.2:2 (CE)), and (T-30.V.11:1–2 (FIP); T-30.VI.9:5–6 (CE)) or your brother (see (T-29.I.3:4,8:5 (FIP); T-29.I.3:1, 8:1 (CE)), and (T-29.V.7:1 (FIP); T-29.VI.6:1 (CE))?*
18. (3:3–4:2). *When we look at our brothers, we often choose to hate instead of love, and in so doing, have condemned ourselves to suffer under the rule of fear. It seems that our will is corrupt. The Holy Spirit is “Him Who is His Voice and yours as well” (3:3). What is His message to us about our will?*

Please read the passages referred to in Question 17, think about the question, and read my answer before proceeding.

Back in Chapter 29, we read how we have come to perceive an enemy in one who is our brother. We have perceived God as our enemy as well. In asking us to look at our enemy, whom we have chosen to hate instead of love (3:1), this paragraph wants us to see this “enemy” as our savior. Our desire to be special led to our choice to hate our brothers, which brought about the entry of hatred into the world (3:2). Following the ego, we compete with one another, little creatures with little lives (3:3). We fear everything, and inevitably we die. But God's Voice has been given us to remind us that this is not our will—if we will only *listen* (3:3). Listening, we will come to realize that His Voice is our *own* as well. Our will is not bondage but limitless freedom (3:4).

Once again, Jesus asserts that we co-created the universe with God (3:5). He says that God created us, and then *through our will* created everything (3:6); all created things were born *by our will*; *our will* set every light of Heaven in place (3:7–8).

All this reminds us of the truth about us. The world we see, and the mad thoughts of hatred, jealousy, and judgment that seem to have captured our minds until we cannot seem to break free from the world's entanglements, may cause us to believe that we have irretrievably corrupted ourselves. We seem to have desired insane things—to have *willed* insanity into existence. Jesus is telling us that that is simply not true, that such things are emphatically *not* our will. Our will is one with God's. We are the co-creators of Heaven—not of hell. We may feel ugly and unlovable,

but in reality, *everything in the universe owes its existence to us and is grateful to us for it*. “Not one created thing but gives you thanks” (3:7).

Paragraph 4

4 Not one created thing but gives you thanks, for it was by your will that it was born. ²No light of Heaven shines except for you, for it was set in Heaven by your will. ³What cause have you for anger in a world which merely waits your blessing to be free? ⁴If you be prisoner, then God Himself could not be free. ⁵For what is done to him whom God so loves is done to God Himself.⁴ ⁶Think not He wills to bind you, Who has made you co-creator of the universe along with Him. ⁷He would but keep your will forever and forever limitless.

• Study Question •

19. *This section seems to equate a number of things we don't normally associate together. Which of the following things, all mentioned in one way or another in this section, seem to be viewed as basically different aspects of the same thing?*
- A. *Opposing the Holy Spirit, being unwilling to make all decisions with Him*
 - B. *Thinking that God is your enemy*
 - C. *Feeling that God is trying to take away our freedom of choice*
 - D. *Thinking that our brother is our enemy*
 - E. *Believing that it is our will to hate*
 - F. *Being angry because the world, and God, oppose our will and imprison us*
 - G. *All of the above*

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If we perceive the world as full of obstacles to our will (to having what we want and think we need to be happy), and if we perceive God's Will as being in opposition to our chosen goals, we will be angry at God and the world. If, however, we recognize our freedom *in* God, united with Him in His Will, we will perceive the world differently. We will see that it is merely waiting for us to bless it so that it, too, can be free. The seeming cause for our anger will be gone (4:1).

We are one with God. God loves us. If we are in prison, then so is God—and that cannot be! (4:2). Since this is so, it would be absurd to think that God wants to limit us, restrict us, and oppose us. He would be opposing Himself because He has made us co-creator of the universe (4:4). Rather than opposing our will, He would “keep your will forever and forever limitless” (4:5). He only wants us to recognize and claim our freedom.

Once we know we are free (and guiltless), we can forgive the world as well, thus offering it its own freedom (4:6). But that isn't going to happen until we have first forgiven God (4:7).

⁴ Matthew 25:40 (RSV): “And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.’” John 3:16 (RSV): “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” The above passage appears to combine these two Bible verses, while also putting God in place of Matthew's King, so that “what is done to him *whom God so loves* is done to God Himself” (italics added).

Forgiveness in the Course sense involves a recognition that God has not done what we thought He did. He has not become angry with us. He is not trying to impose His Will on us, to coerce us and imprison us against our will. We forgive Him for what He did *not* do. As was said earlier, God only waits for us to call Him “Friend” (1:12).

In our anger, we do not want to give the world freedom and Heaven; we want to give it prison and hell. But our *real will* is to give the world its freedom because that is God’s will for us and the world (4:8–9). When we wake up to God’s enduring love for us, despite everything we *think* we have done, so that we realize He is our Friend and not our Enemy, we will rediscover our will to bless the world. There will no longer be any reason to withhold our blessing.

Paragraph 5

5 The world awaits the freedom you will give when you have recognized that you are free. ²But you will not forgive the world until you have forgiven Him Who gave your will to you, for it is by your will the world is given freedom. ³Nor can you be free apart from Him Whose holy will you share. ⁴God turns to you to ask the world be saved, for by your own salvation is it healed. ⁵And no one walks upon the earth but must depend on your decision, that he learn death has no power over him because he shares your freedom as he shares your will. ⁶It is your will to heal him, and because you have decided with him, he is healed. ⁷And now is God forgiven, for you chose to look upon your brother as a friend.

• Study Questions •

20. My brother is healed because I have decided **with** him. What teaching in the previous section seems to underlie this statement?
21. How, then, is seeing my brother as my friend and forgiving him equivalent to forgiving God?

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If the way the world is freed starts with my forgiving God, then how do I forgive God? It begins with my salvation (5:1)—my recognizing that I share God’s own freedom because I share His will. Since His will is the salvation of the world, that will expresses itself through me to my brother. I forgive him. I look upon him as friend rather than enemy. My brother then sees his own freedom, through me; he realizes that “death has no power over him”; that is, he is not guilty of sin and therefore condemned to death. He is now healed “because [I] have decided with him” (5:3).

Thus, by choosing to look on a brother as my friend, I have forgiven God (5:4)! I have joined myself with God’s Will, which is the salvation of the world. If I have joined His Will, I have ceased seeing that Will as my enemy; I have become God’s friend, and see Him as my Friend. God’s Will is carried out through me: *I save the world*. My decision to unite with God’s Will shows everyone on earth that death has no power over him (5:2). If I am free, so is he. I choose that he be healed, and when he joins with me in that decision, he *is* healed (5:3).

Summary thoughts: To choose to make no decisions by myself is to join my will to the Holy Spirit's will. As we saw in Section I (2:1–5), this also means that we choose not to judge the situations of our lives, nor how to respond to them. That obviously includes not judging our brothers; therefore, to make all decisions with the Holy Spirit means to forgive our brothers at all times. This can feel as if we are being coerced and asked to give up our free will, but in fact, what the Holy Spirit is leading us to do *is* our original will, given us by God in creation. When our minds are healed, this is what we recognize. To think otherwise is, in fact, to view God as our enemy.

Answer Key

1. “Today I will make no decisions by myself.”
2. You prevent unhappiness from entering by practicing well the first two rules.
3. Practice with the rules of undoing until you no longer allow unhappiness to enter.
4. The paragraph attempts to dispel our opposition by pointing out that the first rule is not a coercion; it merely states a fact. We *can't* make decisions by ourselves. We always make them with an adviser. The only question is which adviser we choose: God or our idols.
5. In sum, to decide with idols means to decide with our egos, with our “individual needs” governing our choices. We allow our dependence on externals and our reliance on what we think will protect, please, and sustain us to dictate our actions. For instance, we may be guided by our stomach (or some other part of our anatomy) or controlled by greed.
6. You might object to the fact that you always have to make decisions with an adviser, but this must occur.
7. The second rule was: “If I make no decisions by myself, this is the day that will be given me” (4:2). In effect, this meant that if I make no decisions by myself *the day I want* will be given me. So whatever day you received, that is the day that you and your adviser agreed you wanted.
8. You are also shrinking from causing anything, which is one way of describing how we have lost our function of creating.
9. It needs only two because of the two principles mentioned in the previous paragraph. (1) When you decide on the day you want, you offer it to all the world. (2) When you join in making a decision, this joining causes results. So, when you join with someone in offering a happy day to the world, it happens. Another implication is that when two people join, this joining is a real joining and so causes powerful results instead of a joining with idols, which is only a pseudo-joining and so has weaker results.
10. They must decide that they will not decide alone because they cannot. The joining, however, must be real. It must not be with mere idols.
11. Remember that you cannot decide by yourself. This is the one thing to remember because this is the whole focus of the rules for decision. With this one reminder, you will not need rules 3-7.
12. Your decision for a happy day implies that you will make no decisions by yourself—you will not judge by yourself. And judgment in the form of condemnation is not in the repertoire of the Holy Spirit.
13. The preceding section asked us to make all of our decisions in conjunction with the Holy Spirit—in effect, to choose to join our wills to the will of the Holy Spirit. Our minds may object that we are “submitting” our will to that of the Holy Spirit, and thus we are giving up our freedom of will. The answer is that fighting against the Holy Spirit is fighting against our genuine will: “to oppose the Holy Spirit *is* to fight *yourself*.”

14. God joined with me in setting up His Kingdom and Heaven; every part of it is for me, represents my will, and was created only with my consent.

15. Freedom is doing your own will; nothing else should ever be called “freedom.”

16. Chapter 8, Section II: “The Difference between Imprisonment and Freedom.” Among other things, it says:

The ego cannot teach you anything as long as your will is free because you will not listen to it. It is not your will to be imprisoned because your will is free. That is why the ego is the denial of free will. It is never God Who coerces you because He shares His Will with you. His Voice teaches only in agreement with His Will, but that is not the Holy Spirit's lesson because that is what you are. The lesson is that your will and God's cannot be out of accord because they are one (T-8.II.3:1–6).

17. The “enemy” seems to be primarily God, and yet seeing our brother as our enemy is how we see that imagined conflict projected in the world. Therefore, joining with a brother is joining with God; seeing a brother as our savior instead of as our enemy is how we learn God is not our enemy. Because we chose to hate God instead of loving Him, hatred was born into the world. Nevertheless, in this paragraph, I think he is asking us to “look once again” upon our brother; to forgive; to recognize in our brother our savior.

18. The Holy Spirit teaches us that hatred and fear are not our will, despite the apparent evidence. We are God's Son, Who has joined with God in willing creation into existence; every created thing gives us thanks because it was born by our will; every light of Heaven was set there by our will. What we are is not corrupt; it is very holy.

19. G. All of the above

20. The teaching that if any two join completely in a decision, it is done. See T-30.I.16–17 (FIP), T-30.I.17–18 (CE). “Decisions cause results because they are not made in isolation.” “It needs but two to understand that they cannot decide alone, to guarantee the joy they asked for will be wholly shared.”

21. My choice to see my brother as my friend, recognize that he shares my freedom and my will, and desire his healing is God's will for me. Therefore, in joining with my brother, I am also joining with God's will, and to join with His will is to forgive Him, to cease seeing Him as my enemy.

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.

Effects of Switching Editions of the Course

The commentaries on Chapters 29, 30, and 31 were written prior to the publication of the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE) of the Course in 2017. Originally they were based on the edition published by the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP). The references to other parts of the Course were based on the FIP edition, and the comments themselves were based on the same edition. There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and these final chapters had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate CE reference if it differs from the FIP reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.³ The "tiny spark" seems to be the entire concept expressed in this series of sentences: You can't wake yourself, but you can let yourself be awakened by forgiving your brother's illusions, so that he then returns the gift and awakens you.