

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 30

### The New Beginning

#### Section I:1–1:14

## *Rules for Decision*

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

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

After twenty-nine chapters presenting the theory and vision of the Course, in Chapter 30, Jesus turns with firm intent to *practice*. Remember, the Text was written before the Workbook. In a sense, I believe that the opening section of this chapter is much like a precursor of the Workbook. It gives what we might call a *skeleton view* or template of daily practice, a pattern that the Workbook fleshes out with many variations.<sup>1</sup> The Course has presented its theory with clarity. What is now needed to integrate these ideas into our lives is—in a word—*practice*.

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 this commentary).

<sup>1</sup> Robert Perry, in commentary that is part of the *Course Companions* Text study on the Circle’s Website (coursecompanions.org), seems to feel that these sections describe a particular practice that is meant to be tried independently of doing the Workbook, rather than a template underlying every lesson in the Workbook, as I do. They *can* be followed without any related Workbook lesson, and doing so will almost certainly benefit you, but in my opinion, most if not all the Workbook lessons can benefit from being “wrapped” in this generic pattern of practice.

## Paragraph 1

The “new beginning” now becomes the focus of the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> <sup>2</sup>The goal is clear, but now you need specific methods for attaining it. <sup>3</sup>The speed by which it can be reached is individual, depending on only this: your willingness to practice every step. <sup>4</sup>Each one will help a little every time it is attempted. <sup>5</sup>And together will these steps lead you from dreams of judgment to forgiving dreams, and out of pain and fear. <sup>6</sup>They are not new to you, but they are more ideas than rules of thought to you as yet. <sup>7</sup>So now we need to practice them awhile, until they are the rules by which you live. <sup>8</sup>We seek to make them habits now, so you will have them ready and for any need.

### • Study Questions •

1. **(1:1).** Jesus refers to “the new beginning,” using “the” as if he is referring to some specific new beginning that he has already referred to. What is this “new beginning”? Where is the earlier reference?
2. **(1:2).** Having read and studied the preceding 29 chapters, we should be familiar with and clear about our goal. What is this goal?
3. **(1:2-5).** The Course seems to be heading toward the Workbook here. Notice the phrases “specific methods” and “practice every step.” Apparently, the Course has made clear what we are traveling toward (the goal) and what we are traveling away from. But now it needs to build a bridge between the two, a bridge of specific methods, of little steps, that will lead us gradually away from dreams of judgment and toward forgiving dreams. How fast will we cross this bridge?
4. **(1:6-8).** Even these steps, these methods, are not new to us. We are familiar with them as ideas. But what must they become to us? Can you find three phrases, one from each sentence, that describe what they must become to us?

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This chapter begins with an evident change of focus. Up to this point, the focus was on the Course’s overall theory, which it presented in the preceding 29 chapters. The focus now changes to “the new beginning” (1:1). In other words, now that we’re clear on the goal and method of the Course, let’s start to apply all this to our lives; let’s have a new beginning. Now that we clearly understand where we are going let’s start our lives over and start moving toward that goal. Most of us have made at least hesitant attempts to put the Course into practice, but now, with the entire program made clear to us, we are capable of jump-starting our spiritual lives.

“The goal is clear” (1:2). If you have studied the Text up to this point, which is assumed here, you are clear on the goal. In the context of the entire Course, the goal is to forgive the world and attain the real world: to live in perfect serenity and inner peace; to see only love everywhere you

<sup>2</sup> The reference to a “new beginning” here alludes to a line in the paragraph immediately preceding this one, the last paragraph of the previous section: “And dreams become a sign that you have made a new beginning, not another try to worship idols and to keep attack” (T-29.X.10:3).

look; to be, in actual practice, the extension of God's Love in the world; to hear only God's Voice and no other; to transcend your ego, living in a way that demonstrates you are not an ego.

The goal is high. How do we get from here to there? How do we get from A to Z? "You need specific methods for attaining it [the goal]" (1:2). That is what the Introduction and Section I set out to provide. That is what the Workbook provides in its year-long program.

Without the practical application the Workbook provides, the Text would remain largely a series of abstractions which would hardly suffice to bring about the thought reversal at which the Course aims. (Preface to FIP Edition, page ix)<sup>3</sup>

The Workbook's introduction makes clear that the Text's theory and the Workbook's practice are both necessary, but that it is the Workbook and its practice that brings it all together:

A theoretical foundation such as the text provides is necessary as a framework to make the exercises in this workbook meaningful. Yet *it is doing the exercises that will make the goal of the course possible.* (W-In.1:1–2, my emphasis)

Studying the Text, understanding the nature of the problem of separation, the extent to which our minds have been committed to the ego, and the marvelous goals set forth by the Text, you start to become *motivated*. The more serious I got with my study of the Course, the more I began to think, "I really want this. I really want to assimilate this into my life. I really want to make this work for myself. Whatever it takes to reach the goal, I want to do it." I think you need to have developed that kind of motivation before you begin to do the Workbook seriously—and when I say "seriously," I mean to do the rather demanding form of constant practicing all day long that the Workbook asks of us. It is probably a mistake to try to "seriously" do the Workbook unless you *do* have that kind of motivation.

There's nothing wrong with doing the Workbook casually, just reading through the lesson in the morning and nothing more than that. It can be inspiring. Such light reading can be helpful after a year of serious practice. But at some point, that year (or more) of serious practice is required to achieve the goal the Course has for us.

The critical factor that determines the rapidity of your progress is "one thing alone," namely, "your willingness to practice every step" (1:3). *How willing are you to practice?* I cannot emphasize this strongly enough. If you are actually interested in spiritual progress, the instructions given by the Course are plain to see. The only thing that will hold you back is the failure to *practice* and practice *every step*. You cannot get there by skipping steps. Let me repeat that: You cannot reach the goal by skipping steps. You can play around with the ideas from the Text for years, but if you do not engage yourself in the Course's program of practice, *you will not reach the goal the Course sets forth.*

So: Have you ever done the Workbook seriously for a solid year? If not, why not? Be honest with yourself about this.

Learning to play the piano provides a good analogy. When I hear a musical piece played and ask my teacher, "How can I learn to play that song?" there is only one answer, and it isn't one the ego likes to hear: practice, practice, practice. Just keep doing it over and over. As we've seen before, "it takes effort and great willingness to learn" (T-5.II.3:10 (FIP), T-5.II.12:2–3 (CE)). The

<sup>3</sup> As the Preface itself says, this part was written by Helen Schucman herself, and was not a part of the inner dictation. I feel the statement she makes is fully in accord with what Chapter 30 says.

only way to get to the point where listening to the Holy Spirit has become second nature to you is to continually make an effort to listen, to bring all your decisions to Him, consciously, willing to have Him decide for you.

Remember, just as in piano practice, you practice because *you do not know how to do it right*. The first time you attempt to play that song, it sounds absolutely terrible. It sounds nothing like the music you hear when the teacher plays. You have to keep on playing it anyhow, trusting that after a while, it will get better and better, until finally, you play the song perfectly. In making your decisions with the Holy Spirit, you are trying to learn, not a song on the piano, but the Song of Prayer (S-3.IV.10:1-2). You are trying to learn to harmonize with Heaven. And the first few times you try, it will “sound” terrible. You won’t get it right. The seeming failures are why it takes “great willingness to learn.” You need not let failure faze you; keep practicing, and eventually, you will get it right.

Each time you try, each time you choose to practice giving your decisions to the Holy Spirit, it will help a little. “Every time it is attempted” (1:4) will teach you something, although you may not be conscious of having learned anything. The more often you attempt to do it, the more quickly you will learn. Note that word “attempt.” An attempt is an attempt whether you succeed or fail. You learn just as much from the failures as from the successes, so don’t sweat your failures. Jesus knows very well you will fail a lot; that is how you learn! Learning from failure is what practice is *for*. You have to trust in the process. You have to be a happy learner.

Added all together, each little attempt you make will combine with all the other attempts to “lead you from dreams of judgment to forgiving dreams and out of pain and fear” (1:5). Just one or two attempts won’t do it! It is all the little steps, all the little attempts *taken together*, that will lead you out of pain and fear. You have to keep on practicing. Everyone has to go through this; you cannot skip steps. Keep the goal in mind: freedom from all pain, freedom from all fear. *Press on*, like the Apostle Paul, who wrote:

Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude. (Phil 3:12-15, NASB 1995)

Don’t fret that you are not there yet. Just remind yourself that all these little steps, each of which may seem insignificant, are what will get you there. Keep practicing.

The steps are not new to you (1:6). By that, I think Jesus means that what he is about to say in this section is something he has already said earlier in the Text. He has been talking about listening to the Holy Spirit, for example, since the fourth Miracle Principle in Chapter One!

“He will direct you very specifically. ‘Plan ahead’ is good advice in this world, where you should and must control and direct where you have accepted responsibility. But the universal plan is in more appropriate hands. You will know all you need to know. Make no attempts to plan ahead in this respect.” (T-I.4:1–6 (CE), T-I.I.4:2–3 (FIP))<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> This is a passage where the CE has restored several sentences dropped from the FIP.

The ideas are not new, but they have been little more than ideas up to this point. They have not become “rules of thought” to you as yet.

The principles of the Course are stated over and over in the Text. If you have read twenty-nine chapters, you can't fail to have picked up on some of them, such as: “To have, give all to all” (T-6.V(A)) or “Teach only love, for that is what you are” (T-6.I.13:2). Forgiveness, listening to the Voice for God within, looking without fear at your ego, and bringing your darkness to the Holy Spirit for healing, all these have been clearly taught. You have the ideas, but they have not become integrated into your life, which is the goal.

We don't want the laws of God engraved in stone tablets; we want them written on our hearts.<sup>5</sup> We don't want “Love” tattooed on our skin; we want Love to run through us like a watermark through a banknote. We want what the Manual for Teachers terms *honesty*:

The term actually means consistency. There is nothing you say that contradicts what you think or do; no thought opposes any other thought; no act belies your word; and no word lacks agreement with another. Such are the truly honest.” (M-4.II.1:5–7)

Without question, we aren't there yet; we have a long way to go to *consistency*. And that, without question, is the goal of the Course for us.

So how do we get there? “We need to practice them [the steps] a while” (1:7). That's all. Nothing mystical here. No transcendent experiences that miraculously change you overnight. (Well, maybe one or two, but these are not the rule.) Just simple, ordinary practice.

Notice the tone of voice here. “You're not there yet, are you? Well, OK, we need to practice for a while; no big deal.” This isn't the voice of a drill sergeant; this is the voice of a very gentle and loving teacher. He isn't upset that you aren't there yet, nor does he want you to be upset about it, to get frantic and drive yourself in wearying practice. He does want you to practice, even to practice with diligence; he knows you have to practice to assimilate the thoughts of God into your life. He also knows that you will eventually do it, and you *will* eventually learn everything he is teaching. He isn't in a rush.

*How long* will we need to practice? “...until they are the rules by which you live” (1:7).

- Until they have become assimilated into your life.
- Until they govern everything you think and say and do.
- Until you are consistent, in other words.
- Until they have become a part of you.
- Until they are written on your heart.

<sup>5</sup> I've always loved that imagery of having the Word of God written on our hearts since I first read it in the Bible:

You are a letter of Christ, cared for by us, written not with ink but with the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of human hearts. (2Cor 3:3 NASB 1995).

But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more. (Jeremiah 31:33-34 NASB 1995)

- Until every opposing thought is gone.

I can't make that sound easy. I can't make that sound as if it won't take a long *time*. But I can tell you that it won't take as long as you think! I'm sure of that because I'm sure you are probably thinking, "I won't *ever* get there!" That is definitely not true. You are already there. It helps to remember that what you are "learning" is no more than *remembering* your true nature, your true Self as God's Son. *You already know this stuff*. You have a built-in Teacher Who knows it perfectly and knows how to remind you that you know it too. You aren't going against your nature to learn this; you are going *with it*.

All that you are doing is trying to form a *new habit*; to make, for instance, consulting with the Holy Spirit so habitual that whenever the need arises, you have that "tool" ready for use whenever you need it (1:8). Habits are formed in a simple way: through frequent repetition. Do something often enough, and it becomes a habit. You have to make a conscious effort for a while. Studies have shown it is usually for about three weeks. Then the habit-formation mechanism in your mind takes over and says, "OK, this is a regular part of the program; I'll write it into the startup file for my computer." You will not learn to refer everything to the Holy Spirit in just three weeks. Still, if you consistently take fifteen minutes in the morning to practice making no decisions by yourself, those practice periods can begin to become habitual in that time.

Forming habits, of course, depends on your willingness. If you try to make a habit of something you don't want to do, it won't work. The part of your mind that is rejecting the new habit will sabotage your efforts. You'll forget, or "skip it this once," or whatever, and the habit won't take hold. The following discussion of "Rules for Decision" will deal with that problem.

## Paragraph 2

<sup>2</sup> Decisions are continuous. <sup>2</sup>You do not always know when you are making them. <sup>3</sup>But with a little practice in the ones you recognize, a set begins to form which sees you through the rest. <sup>6</sup>It is not wise to let yourself become preoccupied with every step you take. <sup>5</sup>The proper set, adopted consciously each time you wake, will put you well ahead. <sup>6</sup>And if you find resistance strong and dedication weak, you are not ready. <sup>7</sup>*Do not fight yourself.* <sup>8</sup>But think about the kind of day you want, and tell yourself there is a way by which this very day can happen just like that. <sup>9</sup>Then try again to *have* the day you want.

<sup>6</sup> A *mental set* is a tendency to approach situations in a particular way. Here, it is specifically a way of approaching decisions.

<sup>7</sup> "*Do not fight yourself*" does not mean you should give up. The fact that you are experiencing strong resistance simply means "you are not ready" to have the day you want. You therefore need to spend more time getting ready for your day. This additional time is described in the very next sentences: "But think about the kind of day you want, and tell yourself there is a way in which this very day can happen just like that. Then try again to *have* the day you want." Thus, rather than fight against your resistance, you need to remind yourself of the benefits of adopting the proper mental set.



• Study Questions •

5. (2:3). *What do you think this “set” is?*
6. (2:4–5). *Instead of being preoccupied with every step (every decision in a continuous line of decisions), what are you supposed to do?*
7. *If you are not ready to adopt the proper mindset in the morning, do not fight yourself. This reminds one of the Workbook’s injunctions to not strain. Instead of fighting yourself, what do you do? Do you give up until you become less resistant?*



You are *continuously* deciding (2:1). That seems counter-intuitive at first, but it’s obvious when you think about it. Even just walking across the room, you are deciding where to place each step. You skirt around obstacles “without thinking about it,” but in some part of your mind, you *are* thinking about it and making a decision to veer left or right. If you are sitting still, your mind is continuously deciding to *remain seated*. So you are deciding all the time.

You are primarily aware of only your major decisions. You *think* you are deciding only some of the time. Therefore, you don’t always know when you are making decisions (2:2). Some of the decisions you make are below the level of awareness; some, you recognize as decisions.

This section will advise us not to make decisions by ourselves but to make them with the Holy Spirit. However, if we don’t even recognize that we are making decisions, how can we gain control of them? The answer, in 2:3, is that by *practicing with the decisions we recognize as decisions*, we can induce our minds to include the Holy Spirit in *all* of our decisions, even the unconscious ones. By conscious practice, we form a *mindset* that carries over to every decision. This mindset is an example of what the first paragraph referred to as “rules of thought,” “rules by which you live,” and “habits” formed through repeated practice.

If we were to attempt to turn every decision over to the Holy Spirit *consciously*, it would either drive us crazy or immobilize us. Imagine consciously asking the Holy Spirit where to place your foot for literally every step you take! You’d never get anywhere—at least not on time! Stopping to pray for guidance about every bite you take while you eat, how long to chew it, when to swallow, and when to spit something out just isn’t practical. Sometimes, though, people do something very much like that. They want their lives guided, and they get preoccupied with the process of guidance and tie themselves in knots. “It is not wise” (2:4) to attempt to micro-manage your life, even using guidance as your management technique.

The Course advises us not to get lost in the details but to form a single new daily habit: Every time we wake up, we should *consciously adopt* “the proper [mind] set” (2:5). Doing so, the author says, “will put you well ahead” (2:5). The mention of being “ahead” of something, I think, means that by this simple, daily habit, we will be well on the way to taming both our conscious and unconscious decision-making.

Anyone familiar with spiritual disciplines will immediately understand that Jesus is advising us to establish a morning “quiet time,” a period of some duration—how long we don’t know yet—in which we order our mind along spiritual lines. What does it mean to adopt the proper mindset? The next paragraph will explain it more fully, but before giving the specifics, Jesus deals with some general principles.

First, he advises you not to fight yourself if you aren’t ready for forming a habit of daily spiritual practice (2:6–7). You may feel inspired to do it and begin with a flare, only to fail after a

few days. So you try again, and fail again, repeatedly. Unreadiness to form a habit implies such repeated but unsuccessful effort. How else are you going to discover your “resistance strong and dedication weak” (2:6) without first attempting to make that dedication, thus uncovering your resistance? Why warn against fighting yourself if you are not in the position of starting to struggle with your resistance? Don’t fight it.

In the extreme, I think this can mean that some people are not ready for a daily quiet time. But I believe it is more likely that it means not so much your resistance to having a daily quiet time, but more your resistance to maintaining that “proper set” of mind during the day. In the light of everything we’ve been reading, a proper mindset for Course students will include such things as letting go of the values you’ve placed on the things of this world (your idols), relinquishing judgment, and forgiving your brothers and sisters. We all know very well the kind of resistance that can arise about such things. I think Jesus is telling us not to *fight* against such thoughts, but rather to choose *other* thoughts, as he is about to instruct us in doing. I believe the last sentence (2:9) favors the latter interpretation because it implies that we have *previously* tried to have the day we want (so we must have started it with the proper mindset), have failed, and now are about to “try again” (2:9).

When we encounter failure, as we all do, fighting against our egos strengthens the ego. As Werner Erhard used to teach, “What you resist persists.” This interpretation of the current passage is in complete accord with similar instructions in the Workbook. I’ve underlined particularly pertinent lines:

Regularity in terms of time is not the ideal requirement for the most beneficial form of practice in salvation. It is advantageous, however, for those whose motivation is inconsistent, and who remain heavily defended against learning.

We will, therefore, keep to the five-minutes-an-hour practice periods for a while, and urge you to omit as few as possible. Using the first five minutes of the hour will be particularly helpful, since it imposes firmer structure. Do not, however, use your lapses from this schedule as an excuse not to return to it again as soon as you can. There may well be a temptation to regard the day as lost because you have already failed to do what is required. This should, however, merely be recognized as what it is; a refusal to let your mistake be corrected, and an unwillingness to try again.

The Holy Spirit is not delayed in His teaching by your mistakes. He can be held back only by your unwillingness to let them go. Let us therefore be determined, particularly for the next week or so, to be willing to forgive ourselves for our lapses in diligence, and our failures to follow the instructions for practicing the day's idea. This tolerance for weakness will enable us to overlook it, rather than give it power to delay our learning. (W-pl.95.6:2-8:4)

e Course advises us, rather than fighting our lapses, having a “tolerance for weakness,” meeting our lapses with forgiveness, and simply trying again to have the kind of day we want. There is a balance needed somewhere between discipline and self-abuse. Habits do not get formed without any effort, so some self-discipline is required. But when the discipline gets transformed into self-abuse, beating yourself up and making yourself miserable, forcing yourself to do something you really do not want to do, it becomes *negative* conditioning. You are training



yourself to *hate* what you are doing. At that point, it is much more supportive of the desired goal to stop and take a rest. Don't give up entirely; instead, forgive yourself, and resume as soon as you can.

When you encounter resistance, then, Jesus suggests that we do three things, which we might call the “three T’s”:

- *Think* about the kind of day you want
- *Tell* yourself there *is* a way in which this very day can happen just like that
- *Try* again to *have* the day you want (1:8–9)

Think. Tell. Try.

Robert Perry suggests writing down what you want for the day on a card, carrying it with you, and reviewing it during the day. The card should not be an outline of your ego plans but envision your ideal spiritual day. What kind of person do you want to be? How do you want to interact with others? How do you want to feel? You can be reasonably specific, perhaps, envisioning particular encounters or activities you expect to engage in during the day and imagining yourself being happy and loving in those situations. The point is to convince yourself that your spiritual discipline isn't about measuring up to some abstract ideal, but rather is something you do for your own happiness.

When you encounter resistance in yourself to the Holy Spirit, rather than fighting yourself and struggling to “obey,” remind yourself of the kind of day you want, remind yourself that this is *something you want* and that the way to obtain it is by listening to the Holy Spirit. Then, you are ready to “try again.” Once you establish the proper mindset, you are ready to have the kind of day you deeply desire.

**At the outset, we can safely say that time devoted to starting the day right does indeed save time. (M-16.3:4)**

*Note: There are really three sets of rules presented in these paragraphs. Notice that the rules are numbered 1 to 7. I would characterize the three sets of rules as:*

- **Basic:** *How to stay on track (Rules 1 & 2)*
- **Quick restorative:** *Getting back on track quickly if you slip (Rule 3)*
- **Restorative, long version:** *What to do when you resist getting back on track (Rules 4 through 7)*

*Keep this in mind as we progress through the section. The first two rules define “the way things ought to be.” The next rule handles what we can do to quickly get back on track when we lose focus and stray from the path, as we almost certainly will do. And finally, realistically, Jesus gives a more extended set of rules for what to do when we stray and think that we don't want to get back on track! Then, in the latter part of the section that we will cover in the next commentary, he returns to rules 1 and 2 to reinforce them in our minds and help us to realize why they are, in the end, the only two rules for decision that we need.*

## Paragraph 3

3 (1) The outlook starts with this:

<sup>2</sup>Today I will make no decisions by myself.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This means that you are choosing not to be the judge of what to do. <sup>4</sup>But it must also mean you will not judge the situations where you will be called upon to make response. <sup>5</sup>For if you judge them, you have set the rules for how you should react to them, and then another answer cannot but produce confusion and uncertainty and fear.

• Study Questions •

8. *Making no decisions by yourself refers to two levels of decisions. What are these two levels?*
9. **(3:6)**. *What is the other answer referred to here?*

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The first rule for making decisions, in the long run, is the only rule you need: “Today I will make no decisions by myself.” The second rule, we shall see, adds nothing new; it asks us to frequently remind ourselves of the first rule!

To make no decisions by yourself implies that the decision-making process must involve *someone else*. Perhaps it seems odd that the “someone else” is never clearly identified in this section until the sixteenth paragraph, which tells us that it ought to be God (or Christ) (16:3–4), or the “Voice for God,” which is the Holy Spirit (17:4). To anyone who has read the previous 29 chapters of the Text, it should already be clear Who is to share our decisions. They have told us numerous times:

By teaching you what to choose, the Holy Spirit will ultimately be able to teach you that you need not choose at all. This will finally liberate your will from choice, and direct it toward creation within the Kingdom. Choosing through the Holy Spirit will only lead you to it. (T-6.VII.6:1–3 (CE), (T-6.V(C).4:9-5:1 (FIP))

You know not of salvation, for you do not understand it. Make no decisions about what it is or where it lies, but ask of the Holy Spirit everything, and leave all your decisions to His gentle counsel. The One Who knows the plan of God, which God would have you follow, can teach you what it is. Only His wisdom is capable of guiding you to follow it. Every decision you undertake alone but signifies that you would define what salvation is and what you would be saved from. (T-14.IV.5:2–6 (CE), T-14.III.12:6–1:3 (FIP))

Let Him, therefore, be the only guide that you would follow to salvation. He knows the way, and leads you gladly on it. With Him, you will not fail to learn what God wills for you is your will. Without His guidance, you will think you know alone, and will decide against your peace as surely as you made the wrong decision in ever thinking that salvation lay in you alone. (T-14.IV.6:3–6 (CE), (T-14.III.14:1–4 (FIP))

Say to the Holy Spirit only, “Decide for me,” and it is done. (T-14.IV.8:1 (CE), (T-14.III.16:1 (FIP))

<sup>8</sup> This means that you will be asking the Holy Spirit what to do, rather than deciding on your own.

*I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.*

*I will to let Him by allowing Him to decide for God for me.*

(T-5.X.9:5–6 (CE), (T-5.VII.6:10-11 (FIP))

When you have learned how to decide with God, all decisions become as easy and as right as breathing. There is no effort, and you will be led as gently as if you were being carried along a quiet path in summer. Only your own volition seems to make deciding hard. (T-14.V.7:1–3 (CE), (T-14.IV.6:1–3 (FIP))

Suffer, and you decided sin was your goal. Be happy, and you gave the power of decision to Him Who must decide for God for you. (T-21.II.3:5–6 (CE), (T-21.II.3:5-6 (FIP))

The new element introduced here is beginning a *daily practice* of consciously choosing, each time you wake, to make all of your decisions this day with the Holy Spirit (2:5; 3:1–2); that is, to not judge by yourself but “*ask what you should do*” (4:2, my emphasis). Typically, if we seek guidance at all, we do so when in crisis or when we are facing what we believe is a significant decision. Of course, in deciding what decisions are significant and what decisions are not, we are making a judgment on our own! Evaluating the relative importance of decisions is, in itself, a truly major decision, one that we should share with the Holy Spirit. His simple instruction would be, “Bring them all to Me,” which should be our “practice with the ones you recognize” (2:3) whether we deem them small or large. However, as was indicated up front, we don’t want to tie ourselves in knots by becoming preoccupied with every step. Instead, we adopt this mindset in advance. We ask that He guide our choices, and then we choose and act, trusting that He *will guide us* in so doing.

The phrase “the judge” (3:3) signals a return to the previous chapter’s theme of judgment and the “dream of judgment.” Note that to make no decisions by yourself *means* that you make no judgments, either about what to do or about the situations you need to respond to (3:3–4). When you judge a situation, you are entering into the dream of judgment and all the nightmarish elements that are part of it. We want to avoid that. Relinquishing judgment is the way to shift from nightmares to forgiving dreams.

Think about sentence five a bit. Suppose you pass a neighbor in the supermarket and politely say, “Hi, neighbor!” And they give you only a perfunctory, “Oh, hi,” in response, or look away and keep walking. Your natural tendency would be to feel snubbed. If you judged the situation, you’d probably decide the neighbor was rude, or that they did not like you, or that they were angry because you backed over the corner of their lawn as you pulled your car out that morning. But you could also decide that they were distracted by something. Maybe they were feeling sick. Maybe their cat had died that morning. Maybe they didn’t even recognize you. Maybe they forgot to wear their glasses or had earbuds in, listening to music. Do you see how the judgment you make would “set the rules for how you should react to them” (3:5)?

The Course is asking you *not* to make that kind of pre-judgment. As the Course says in the Manual for Teachers:

It is necessary for the teacher of God to realize, not that he should not judge, but that he cannot. In giving up judgment, he merely gives up what he did not have. He gives up an illusion; or better, he has an illusion of giving up. He has actually merely become more honest. Recognizing that judgment was always impossible for him, he no longer attempts it. (M-10.2:3–7 (CE), (M-10.2:1-5 (FIP))

There is no way for you to know why that neighbor gave such a curt answer. And even if you did know, you can't predict what response will produce the best outcome. Therefore, there is no way you can know how to respond! You have no alternative to asking the Holy Spirit, Who does know everything. We need to realize that the same thing is true of *every* decision we make. Accurate judgment on our part, acting alone, is merely impossible.

When we *do* make a judgment on our own, we erect a barrier to hearing the correct answer from the Holy Spirit. Suppose you decide the neighbor is angry at you for some reason (which is not the case), but the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you to call after them and say, "Hey, Carrie, how's it going? Everything OK?" If somehow you "heard" that suggestion in your mind, you'd almost certainly reject it, feel confused by the inconsistency between your judgment and that action, or perhaps even feel fear. When you make a judgment, you define the parameters for a rational response and severely limit the ability of the Holy Spirit to guide you toward His choice of response (3:5–6).

## Paragraph 4

4 This is your major problem now. <sup>2</sup>You still make up your mind and *then* decide to ask what you should do. <sup>3</sup>And what you hear may not resolve the problem as you saw it first. <sup>4</sup>This leads to fear, because it contradicts what you perceive, and so you feel attacked—and therefore *angry*. <sup>5</sup>There are rules by which this will not happen, but it does occur at first to everyone who listens well.

### • Study Questions •

10. (4:1). *What is your major problem now?*
11. (4:2). *"You still make up your mind" about what?*
12. (4:4–5). *What are you afraid of and angry at?*

•

We are still talking about the problem discussed in the last paragraph. "This" refers to that problem, which is our "major problem" (3:1). Just imagine for a moment that the Course's author, Jesus, sent you a message in which he said, "I'd like to meet with you to help you with your major problem in attaining the goal of the Course." Wouldn't you be hugely interested? Well, that's what he is doing in this section—*so pay attention!*

He then goes on to summarize the problem: You continue to judge situations on your own and make up your mind about what they mean, and probably how you should respond, "and *then* decide to ask what you should do" (3:2). If this describes you, then it means that you are already asking for guidance a lot of the time, which is good. The problem is that you've already made up your mind before asking! You think you know what the situation is all about and how you should respond. Then you ask!

The answer you get probably seems inappropriate to you. It does not solve what you *think* is the problem (3:3). Perhaps you judged what you saw as an attack, yet He asks you to respond with love. That "contradicts what you perceive" (3:4). You feel put upon by the Holy Spirit, attacked, and therefore *fear* the Holy Spirit (3:4). He seems to be asking you to sacrifice, give up your rights, or suffer some loss, even if it is only loss of face. So you become angry with the



Holy Spirit (3:5)! Perhaps you think something like, “What right does He have to ask me to be nice to that S.O.B.?”

You can see why this is a major problem. It not only leads you to disregard what the Holy Spirit says, but it also teaches you to resent and fear what He says and even to stop asking for help. Jesus says that this sort of thing “does occur at first” (3:7). Not “may occur,” but “*does* occur.” If you have not already noticed this happening in your life, you will notice it if you pay attention.

We may wonder what he means by “at first.” In the FIP version, this is explained in a subordinate clause: “while you are learning how to hear.” That makes sense; in the early stages of learning how to hear guidance, we will often judge first and ask for help later. The CE, however, has what it originally said, “it does occur at first, to everyone who listens well.” That’s even more striking! It indicates that fear and anger only happens *if you listen well!* I think that’s because some of us don’t listen well enough even to hear the Holy Spirit’s answer. We just judge the situation, decide on our own what to do, and *never ask the Holy Spirit for help.* We don’t bother to listen.

If that is the case, then having fear and anger arise in connection with the Holy Spirit is, at least at the start, a *good* sign; it means that we have begun to ask and listen.

However, the good news is: “There are rules by which this will not happen” (3:6). There is a way to avoid falling into confusion, anger, and fear. Paragraph 4 describes how to avoid this pitfall.

## Paragraphs 5 & 6

5 (2) Throughout the day, at any time you think of it and have a quiet moment for reflection, tell yourself again the kind of day you want: the feelings you would have, the things you want to happen to you, and the things you would experience.<sup>9</sup> <sup>2</sup>And say:

*<sup>3</sup>If I make no decision by myself, this is the day that will be given me.*

6 These two procedures, practiced well, will serve to let you be directed without fear, for opposition will not first arise and then become a problem in itself.

### • Study Question •

13. (6:1). Notice yet another reference to practice, as well as another reference to heading off opposition (resistance). If you practice these two rules well, this

<sup>9</sup> Clearly, you are not meant to dream up your ego’s fantasy day. That would be to fall into the error of writing a script that reflects “your plans for what the day *should* be” (T-30.VIII.2:1), and indeed the error of believing that “the day you want is one in which you get *your* answer to *your* question” (9:2). Rather, since this whole section is about employing specific methods for achieving the goal of the Course (“The goal is clear, but now you need specific methods for attaining it”—1:2), you are meant to choose a day that reflects that goal; that reflects, as the section says later, “what you really want” (9:3).

*opposition will not arise. An earlier sentence said almost the exact same thing.  
Can you find this sentence?*

•

The second rule is simple: to remind yourself of the first rule over and over, “at any time you think of it and have a quiet moment” (5:1), and to repeat the same procedure you first followed after waking. This practice foreshadows the “frequent reminders” of the Workbook. Having your goals for the day written down will come in handy and facilitate the process.

It may seem odd or even dangerous to leave it up to us to choose the kind of day we want, our feelings, and the things we want to have happen or to experience. It could be an open invitation to the ego. But remember to whom the Course is speaking here: We are people to whom the Course’s goal is clear (1:2). We already *have* the right goal overall; we are just making it specific to our lives and to our day. We are learning the practice that makes the goal attainable.

The words we must repeat (5:2) don’t contain much new. We call them to mind to remind ourselves that the way to have the day we want is to make no decisions alone. In other words, we are engaging in this practice because we *want* what it brings to us, not because it is being imposed on us by some divine authority. If we start the day as instructed (Rule 1) and pepper our day with frequent reminders that *we want the results* from giving up judgment and asking the Holy Spirit what to do (Rule 2), opposition to the Holy Spirit will not arise and result in fear and anger (6:1).

## Paragraph 7

7 But there will still be times when you have judged already.<sup>10</sup> <sup>2</sup>Now the answer will provoke attack, unless you quickly straighten out your mind to want an answer that will work. <sup>3</sup>Be certain this has happened if you feel yourself to be unwilling to sit by and ask to have the answer given you. <sup>4</sup>This means you *have* decided by yourself and cannot see the question.<sup>11</sup> <sup>5</sup>Now you need a quick restorative before you ask.

<sup>10</sup>. This means there will be times when you have judged (or evaluated) the meaning of the situation. As explained earlier, doing so means “you have set the rules for how you should react” (3:5). You have, in other words, defined a narrow range of answers that you regard as sensible options in this situation.

<sup>11</sup>. The real question you ask the Holy Spirit should be an open-ended one that does not assume a particular judgment of the situation before you. According to the above sentence, the reason you cannot see the real question is because your question assumes your judgment of the situation. As a result, rather than “What should I do here?” your question may amount to some version of “How can I get my way here?” As the paragraph says later, the sign that this has happened is “if you feel yourself to be unwilling to sit by and ask” (7:3).

• Study Questions •

14. *At this stage in our learning, there will still be times when we fall into the situation described in Paragraph 3, becoming entrenched in our own judgment. How do we know when this has happened?*
15. *If you have decided by yourself, why does this make you unable to see the question?*

•

Especially as we begin the regular spiritual practice set forth here, we won't always escape making judgments alone (5:1). Making decisions by ourselves is our lifelong habit; it will likely happen quite frequently. You know you have strayed into judgment when you find yourself reluctant to ask the Holy Spirit what you should do about some situation. That is a clear indication that you've already decided by yourself (7:3–4). What should you do? Surprisingly, the answer is *not*, "Ask for guidance." Something else is needed "*before* you ask again" (7:5). You need what is called "a quick restorative," something that will "quickly straighten out your mind to *want* an answer that will work" (7:5, 7:2). The quick restorative introduces the second set of rules (really just one, Rule 3): how to get back on track when you realize you've strayed.

The problem with asking the Holy Spirit for an answer when we have already made a judgment is threefold:

1. Because we've defined the problem already and are expecting an answer to the problem as we have defined it, the Holy Spirit's answer to the *actual* problem "will provoke attack" (5:2). That is, it will anger us and evoke fear in us.
2. For the same reasons, we won't *want* the right answer (5:2); we will resist it.
3. We won't even be able to see the real question (5:4). For instance, if someone criticizes us, and we interpret that as an attack, our question will be, "How should I respond to this attack?" But the Holy Spirit never sees attack. He sees only love or a call for help.

The *real* question, then, is, "How should I respond to this call for help?"

It's interesting that when we find ourselves falling into judgment, our first job is not to solve the external problem but to rearrange our minds (7:2). We need to do something that will counter our judging and open us to wanting the real answer.

## Paragraph 8

**8** (3) Remember once again the day you want, and recognize that something has occurred which is not part of it. <sup>2</sup>Then realize that you have asked a question by yourself and must have set an answer in your terms. <sup>3</sup>Then say:

*<sup>4</sup>I have no question. <sup>5</sup>I forgot what to decide.*<sup>12</sup>

<sup>12</sup> This statement means "I have let go of my earlier question (which assumed my own judgment of the situation). I forgot that I am deciding with the Holy Spirit." This statement is the undoing of what is said in the previous paragraph: "This means you *have* decided by yourself and cannot see the question."

“This cancels out the terms which you have set, and lets the *answer* show you what the question must have really been.

• **Study Question** •

16. (8:6). *What is “the answer” here?*

•

First, as Rule 2 told us, we need to remember the kind of day we want, but this time we add our realization that *something has interfered* with our achieving our goal (8:1). What has interfered? We’ve asked a question *without consulting the Holy Spirit* (based on our interpretation of the situation) and have pre-defined the answer with our false question (8:2).

Instead of asking the Holy Spirit our *incorrect* question, we need first to let go of our question based on our incorrect judgment. So we are told to say:

I have no question. I forgot what to decide. (8:4–5)

Acting on your judgment, you *thought* you knew what the question was. For instance, when responding to verbal abuse, you thought the question was how to respond to this person’s attack. That was “what to decide”: how to respond to attack. But in doing that, you *forgot* what the real decision was: to choose to decide with the Holy Spirit. Therefore, you now let go of your false question.

With that out of the way, you are open to listening to the real answer. When you hear the answer, it shows you “what the question *must* have really been” (8:6). An answer of “forgive” or “express your love” shows you that the question was not, “How do I respond to attack?” but “How do I respond to this call for love?”

So, that’s the quick restorative: remember the day you want; recognize that your false question has interfered with the goal, and let it go. Then, you can ask what to do.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Paragraph 9

9 Try to observe this rule without delay despite your opposition. <sup>2</sup>For you have already gotten angry, and your fear of being answered in a different way from what your version of the question asks will gain momentum, until you believe the day you want is one in which you get *your answer to your question*. <sup>3</sup>And you will not get it, for it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you really want. <sup>4</sup>This can be very hard to realize when once you have decided by yourself the rules which promise you a happy day. <sup>5</sup>But these decisions still can be undone, by simple methods which you can accept.

• **Study Question** •

17. **(9:1-5).** *Why should you try to observe Rule 3 “without delay,” even in the face of your resistance? To answer this, read the paragraph carefully several times. Try to see how what it says relates to the section as a whole and what it is trying to teach.*

•

Implicit in Jesus' injunction to “try to observe this rule without delay” (9:1) is that delay is costly. Your mind is already misguided. You've become angry (9:2) because the ego's perception always places blame on something outside of you. Unless handled at once, your fear and opposition to the Holy Spirit will grow (9:3). If your mind is left uncorrected, it will come eventually to believe that what will make you happy is to get the answer you want to the question as you have framed it (9:3). You might begin to think that the only thing that will satisfy you is for the person who hurt you to suffer worse than you have suffered.

You won't get what you *think* you want, however, because “it would destroy the day by robbing you of what you *really* want” (9:4). Sometimes, you need to be grateful for unanswered prayers! Chapter 13 told us that the Holy Spirit knows your real needs and will give you only what does not interfere with your real goal:

Therefore, ask not of yourselves what you need, for you know not, and your advice unto yourself will hurt you.<sup>13</sup> For what you think you need will merely serve to tighten up your world against the light, and render you unwilling to question the value that this world can really hold for you.

Only the Holy Spirit knows what you need, for He will give you all things that do not block the way to light. (T-13.VIII.2:1-3:3 (CE), (T-13.VII.11:5-12:2 (FIP)))

If you let your thoughts go uncorrected, the wrong thinking sprouts roots and branches. It becomes harder and harder to dislodge those thoughts (9:5). If you act quickly, Rule 3 is enough to turn the tide, but if not, it will take a bit more work, which Rules 4 through 7 outline (9:6).

<sup>13</sup> Ephesians 2:8 (KJV): “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.” Just as the Bible says that faith does not come to you “of yourselves,” so the above passage says that knowledge of what possessions you need should not come to you “of yourselves.”



## Paragraph 10

**10** (4a) If you are so unwilling to receive you cannot even let your question go, you can begin to change your mind with this:<sup>14</sup>

*<sup>2</sup>At least I can decide I do not like what I feel now.<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>3</sup>This much is obvious, and paves the way for the next easy step.

### • Study Questions •

18. (10:1). “If you are so unwilling to receive you cannot even let your question go” can be understood to mean: “If you are even too resistant to make use of Rule Number [what number?].”
19. (10:2). What specifically are you feeling here that you do not like?

•

If Rule 3 isn't enough, and you find yourself unwilling to let go of the question you have asked (10:1), there is still a more gradual way out. It starts by noticing how you feel and realizing that the feelings are unpleasant (10:2). I find it very interesting that a course so often accused of being “too mental” and “too intellectual” bases its last-ditch method for self-recovery on *feelings*.

Next time you are in the middle of a fierce argument with your significant other, your parent or child, or your boss, try to stop a moment and notice how you feel. *Do you like how you feel?* I know that when I have done this, it is “obvious,” as Jesus says here (10:3), that I don't like how I feel. Without fail, this will always be true. Asking the question slips in a wedge to separate you from your resistance. Once you become conscious that you *do not like* how you feel, you can move to the next step.

## Paragraph 11

**11** (4b) Having decided that you do not like the way you feel, what could be easier than to continue with:

<sup>14</sup>. The remaining steps are all numbered “4” (4a-d) because they are all sub-steps within a single procedure, which might be called the *longer restorative*. The idea behind rule 4 is that rule 3, the “quick restorative,” did not work, and rather than giving up, you spend time reasoning yourself into once again asking the Holy Spirit what you should do, thereby restoring your plan to make no decisions by yourself today.

<sup>15</sup>. What you “feel now” is your fear that the Holy Spirit will answer you in a way you do not want, which results in unwillingness to ask Him. You “do not like” feeling this because it goes against your entire plan to have a happy day through letting Him guide all your decisions.

<sup>2</sup>And so I hope I have been wrong.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>3</sup>This works against the sense of opposition, and reminds you that help is not being thrust upon you, but is something that you want and that you need because you do not like the way you feel. <sup>4</sup>This tiny opening will be enough to let you go ahead with just the few more steps you need to let yourself be helped.

• **Study Question** •

20. (11:2). *This is the next step. “Wrong” about what?*

•

The sequence so far is, “I don’t like how I feel, and so I *hope* I have been wrong” (10:1–2). Notice the similarity to the earlier formula Jesus gave us:

*I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace. (T-5.VII.6:7 (FIP), (T-5.X.9:2 (CE))*

Both formulas have us noticing our unpleasant feelings and taking them as a sign that we have made a wrong decision. It’s worth paying attention here to a bit of Course psychology. Notice the connection implied between what we think and decide and how we feel. “If my emotions are unpleasant, there must have been some incorrect thinking in my mind.” Thought produces emotion, not vice versa. Therefore, we can accomplish correction or healing by working on our thoughts and decisions, on our minds, and not by working on our emotions. Working with our emotions, yes, using emotions as signals that indicate the state of our minds, yes. But the change that heals comes from changing our thoughts.

When we recognize that we don’t like how we feel and that our decisions so far have produced these unpleasant feelings, it’s quite natural to hope that those decisions have been wrong. We aren’t convinced yet that they *are* wrong, but we *hope* they are. If the decisions have produced feelings we do not like, it would be great to discover that we could have decided something different and produced different, more pleasant results.

That recognition opens us to considering alternatives; we realize that, if there is a better choice to be made, we *want help* in finding that choice (11:3). It defuses our potential anger at the Holy Spirit when He presents us with a course of action that differs from the one we have decided upon. Maybe His way will be better. It’s a small shift, a “tiny opening,” but it enables us to take “a few more steps” toward receptivity (11:4).

## Paragraph 12

**12** (4c) Now you have reached the turning point, because it has occurred to you that you will gain if what you have decided is *not* so. <sup>2</sup>Until this point is reached, you will believe your happiness depends on being right. <sup>3</sup>But this much reason have you now attained: You would be better off if you were *wrong*.

<sup>16</sup> What you hope you have been wrong about is your belief that the Holy Spirit’s answer will be against your interests and that you should therefore oppose His help.

• Study Question •

21. *Why is it best for you if your decision is found to be wrong?*

•

This paragraph elaborates on paragraph 11, identifying our recognition that we hope we've been wrong as "the turning point" (12:1) in the restorative process. This is a blatant appeal to our self-interest: "...it has occurred to you that *you* will gain if what you have decided is *not* so" (12:1). You have arrived at a point where changing your mind seems like a good idea! Up to this point, you have believed (based on your false judgment and wrong decision about what the problem is and how to solve it) that your happiness depends on your decision being *right* (12:2). "Joe disrespected me, and the only thing that will make me happy is if he eats humble pie and publicly apologizes." Yet you've felt quite unhappy or even guilty about your unloving thoughts about your brother. Now, you've recognized that your unhappiness may come *from your thoughts* rather than from the external circumstance. So you'd be better off if your thoughts are wrong because you can replace them with other thoughts (12:3).

These two sentences, 12:2–3, clarify and expand on what is meant by that well-known statement in T-29.VII.1:9 (FIP), T-29.VIII.1:9 (CE): "Do you prefer that you be right or happy?" In light of these sentences, that question means: *Do you prefer that your current view (that your happiness will come in the future from attacking your brother) be right or that you be happy now? In the face of the unhappiness your current view has caused, don't you see that you would be better off if it were wrong?*

## Paragraph 13

**13** This tiny grain of wisdom will suffice to take you further. <sup>2</sup>You are not coerced, but merely hope to have the thing you want. <sup>3</sup>And you can say in perfect honesty:

*<sup>4</sup>I want another way to look at this.<sup>17</sup>*

<sup>5</sup>Now you have changed your mind about the day and have remembered what you really want. <sup>6</sup>Its purpose has no longer been obscured by the insane belief you want it for the goal of being right when you are wrong. <sup>7</sup>Thus is the readiness for asking brought to your awareness, for you cannot be in conflict when you ask for what you want and see that it is this for which you ask.

<sup>17</sup>. "This" is the issue of being afraid of the Holy Spirit's guidance and being therefore "unwilling to sit by and ask" (7:3).

• Study Questions •

22. (13:1). What is “this tiny grain of wisdom”?
23. (13:1-2). Now you can go to the next step. “You are not coerced....” In what way were you feeling coerced?
24. (13:4). You want another way to look at what?

•

A “tiny opening” (11:4), “this tiny grain of wisdom” (13:1), Jesus says, is *enough*. It “will suffice” (13:1), be sufficient, be adequate. It’s all you need to move along in the restoration process. All you need is the recognition that you would be better off if you were wrong (12:3). If that is true, when the Holy Spirit proffers His advice, He isn’t *coercing* you, which would be to persuade you against your will (13:2) or to undermine your decision. He is offering you a better way, a better way *for you*. In fact, you *want* what He is offering because it promises to be the way “to get a thing you *want*” (13:2). (I believe he is speaking here of what your true self wants, not what you *think* you want.) You have arrived at what was the third line in the earlier formula:

*I will to decide otherwise, because I want to be at peace.* (T-5.VII.6:9 (FIP), (T-5.X.9:4 (CE))

Before, you thought the day was for making your own decisions. Since it is not, it amounted to the goal of being right (about the sufficiency of your own deciding) when you were wrong (13:6). Now, “you have changed your mind about the day” (13:5). You have recalled to your mind the purpose you gave the day at the outset, the kind of day you wanted (13:5). Your goal is once again clear. You’ve been looking at the day and its events in one way, with a false goal, and now you can honestly say, “I *want* another way to look at this” (13:4). You are ready once again to ask the Holy Spirit for help (“the readiness for asking”), and you know it (13:7).

*Note: The concept of being made ready to ask crops up again in the next paragraph, but only in the CE version of 14:5. The editing in the FIP Edition obscures that connection.*

## Paragraph 14

14 (4d) This final step is but acknowledgment of lack of opposition to be helped. <sup>2</sup>It is a statement of an open mind, not certain yet, but willing to be shown:

<sup>3</sup>*Perhaps there is another way to look at this.*

<sup>4</sup>*What can I **lose** by asking?<sup>18</sup>*

<sup>5</sup>Thus are you made ready for a question that makes sense, and so the answer will make sense as well. <sup>6</sup>Nor will you fight against it, for you see that it is *you* who will be helped by it.

<sup>18</sup>. These lines do not mean that you are supposed to *ask* for “another way to look at this.” The question “*What can I lose by asking?*” essentially *is* the other way to look at this. The way you have been seeing things is that asking for the Holy Spirit’s guidance *means* loss, because it means giving up your self-made version of the day you want. Thus, the idea that you have nothing to lose by asking Him *is* the new way to look at things.

• **Study Questions** •

25. (14:3-4). *What do you think the “this” is that you will look at differently?*  
26. (14:5). *What is the question that will make sense?*

•

The last step is to openly acknowledge your willingness to receive help from the Holy Spirit instead of opposing Him (14:1). You are affirming that your mind is open to guidance (14:2). You thought you knew what to do; now, you admit you are “not certain yet, but willing to be shown” (14:2).

The statements suggested for us can be applied both to any specific situation in which we find ourselves and our general approach to decision-making. We recognize that our perception and our judgments may not be the only way to look at things. We also recognize that making decisions by ourselves is *not* the only possible way of operating in life. We’ve realized that we have nothing to lose by asking the Holy Spirit for His help (14:3–4). Indeed, we *want* to ask.

We’ve come back to a mental state that enables us to ask the right questions and get the right answers without any struggle with that answer (14:5–6). We’ve been restored to that “proper set” of mind that can carry us through all our decisions.

Think for a moment of the importance Jesus must place upon our asking for help since he has outlined a rather thorough, multi-tiered course of action whose sole purpose is *to bring us to the point of readiness to ask*. Near the end of The Manual for Teachers, it calls referring our decisions to the Holy Spirit “the core of the curriculum”:

There is another advantage—and a very important one—in referring decisions to the Holy Spirit with increasing frequency. Perhaps you have not thought of this aspect, but its centrality is obvious. To follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance is to let yourself be absolved of guilt. **It is the essence of the Atonement. It is the core of the curriculum.** The imagined usurping of functions not your own is the basis of fear.<sup>19</sup> The whole world you see reflects the illusion that you have done so, making fear inevitable. To return the function to the One to Whom it belongs is thus the escape from fear. And it is this that lets the memory of love return to you. Do not, then, think that following the Holy Spirit’s guidance is necessary merely because of your own inadequacies.<sup>20</sup> **It is the way out of hell for you.** (M-29.3, my emphasis)

*[Section I continued in next commentary]*

## Answer Key

1. The previous paragraph, T-29.IX.10:2, referred to “a new beginning” in which we put down judgment and idols and enter forgiving dreams.

<sup>19</sup> The function here is making decisions on our own. To understand why this would give rise to fear, see M-17.5-7, which explains that we usurp God’s function by trying to do for ourselves what He is meant to do for us, and that once we have taken God’s place in this way, we fear Him: “Who usurps the place of God and takes it for himself now has a deadly ‘enemy’” (M-17.5:8).

<sup>20</sup> See 2:11-14 for discussion of our “inadequacies.”



2. The goal of the curriculum, which has been variously expressed as salvation, forgiveness, relinquishment of judgment, right-mindedness, a complete reversal of thought, true perception, the happy dream, the real world, knowing your Self, or simply *peace*.
3. The speed at which we cross the bridge from where we are to the real world (the goal) will be determined entirely by our willingness to engage in diligent practice of all the steps.
4. “Rules of thought” (1:6), “rules by which you live” (1:7), and “habits...ready for whatever need” (1:8).
5. Webster’s Dictionary defines “set” as “a mental inclination, tendency, or habit.” This is really the same as a “mindset,” which is “a mental attitude or inclination.” In this context, then, a set is a mental inclination to make certain kinds of decisions.
5. Instead of being preoccupied with every step, work on establishing the proper set by employing proper practice (to be defined) with the decisions you recognize, especially by establishing the right set when you wake each day (note the similarity to Workbook practice).
6. What you do when you resist forming the proper mindset is to work around your resistance by enticing your mind with the promise of the kind of day you want. This is meant to lower your resistance. After that, as Sentence 9 says, try again to establish the proper set.
7. The first is decisions about what to do. The second is decisions about how to look on the situations that you will have to respond to.
8. The “other answer,” of course, is the Holy Spirit’s counsel about what you should do. Making no decisions by yourself assumes that you will be asking the Holy Spirit about what to do throughout the day. This is crucial to understanding this section.
9. Your major problem is the activity described in the preceding paragraph: You judge situations, thereby restricting the range of responses you will consider, and thus blocking out the answer of the Holy Spirit.
10. You still make up your mind about how to see the situation.
11. You are afraid of and angry at the Holy Spirit for His answer.
12. 3:6. Both converge on this idea: When you learn to follow the rules for decision well, your opposition to the Holy Spirit’s guidance will not arise to become a problem in itself.
13. You know you are entrenched in your own judgment when you are unwilling to step back from deciding and ask for guidance.
14. By judging the situation, you have basically defined what the question is. You are not merely asking, “What should I do?” You are asking, “What should I do to solve the problem as I define it?” “What should I do to move in this situation as I interpret it?”
15. The real answer that comes from the Holy Spirit. Notice how it reveals what the real question was, which must mean that it also reveals how the Holy Spirit interprets the situation.

16. Because your fear of the Holy Spirit's answer will gain momentum. This fear will convince you that "the rules that promise you a happy day" (7:5) consist of your making all the decisions: deciding what the situation is, what the question is, and what the answer is. This effectively blots out the real rules that promise you a happy day, for the first such rule is that you make no decisions by yourself. Interestingly, according to Sentence 5, you have decided these other rules *by yourself*.
17. Rule Number 3.
18. There are several possible ways to understand this. The feelings you do not like may be all the anger and fear toward the Holy Spirit. They may be simply your anger toward your brother. (Anger produces unpleasant reactions in the body, such as nausea, a burning in the chest, a pounding of the heart.) They also might be the feelings that come from not getting the day you really want because you are insisting on the wrong rules for obtaining it. If you stop and notice how you feel when you are locked into wrong-mindedness, you will honestly be able to say you do not like what you are feeling.
19. You have been wrong about the Holy Spirit's answer being a threat to you because you have been wrong about how you saw the situation. This amounts to: You have been wrong in making decisions by yourself.
20. It will be best for you if your decision is found to be wrong because that decision led to feelings you don't like. It justifies changing your mind.
21. The tiny grain of wisdom is the recognition that "you would be better off if you were wrong" (10:3).
22. You were feeling coerced by the Holy Spirit's decisions for you. You were feeling as if His help was being thrust on you against your own best interests.
23. You want another way of looking at how to get the day you want and what the day is for.
24. The answer is the same as the previous question: how to have the day you want, and what the day is for. It isn't so much about the specific situation confronting you as it is about your whole approach to navigating through this world and this life.
25. It is the open question that asks without first judging the situation: "Holy Spirit, how do *You* see this, what do *You* want from me?"

# Rules For Decision

## Flow Chart

### Basic Rules

### Rules For Correction

