

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 30

The New Beginning

Section VI

The Cost of Idols

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 VI

Section VI continues the line of thought begun in Section I: the new beginning, our decision to do whatever it takes to make the transition from idols and dreams of judgment to God and happy dreams of forgiveness. This section shows us what it is like to live in the real world, the happy dream, and warns us not to allow idols to prevent our enjoyment of it.

Paragraph 1

The real world is the state of mind in which the only purpose of the world is seen to be forgiveness. ²Fear is not its goal, and the escape from guilt becomes its aim. ³The value of forgiveness is perceived and takes the place of idols, which are sought no longer, for their “gifts” are not held dear. ⁴No rules are idly set, and no demands are made of anyone or anything to twist and fit into the dream of fear. ⁵Instead, there is the wish to understand all things created as they really are, and it is recognized that all things must be *first* forgiven, and *then* understood. ⁶Here it is thought that understanding is acquired by attack. ⁷There it is clear that by attack is understanding *lost*.

• Study Questions •

1. *Is the real world an actual place, a state of mind, or something beyond this life entirely?*
2. *What step must be taken first before we can understand the divinely created truth about anyone or anything?*

•

In what has preceded, the Course has said much about the purpose *we* assign to things and the roles we want people to play to fulfill our imagined needs. Now Jesus speaks about “the *only* purpose of the world”: forgiveness (1:1). When we have recognized that we do not want idols or their supposed gifts—when we have seen that nothing in the world can complete us, satisfy us, or make us happy—when we have stopped placing demands on anyone or anything in the dream—when we have realized that all we want is to understand the divinely created reality of everyone and everything—then we know that we must forgive them all.

We aren't looking to *fear them* but to *forgive them*. We must absolve the world of the guilt we have attributed to it, and we must recognize that our goal is to *free* the world from guilt. We stop idly setting rules the “toys” should obey; we make no demands of anyone or anything (1:4). We have recognized that only when we have forgiven can we “understand all things created as they really are” (1:5). First, forgive; then, understand.

When a passion for forgiveness has replaced our lust for idols, we live in the real world. We may be in a battle zone, surrounded by death and destruction, but if *in our mind* the only purpose of everything we see is forgiveness, we are living in the real world.

Try to imagine the state of mind presented here. Your desire to see the reality of everything controls you. You know that to understand the reality of anything, you must *first* forgive it. You see the *value* of forgiveness (1:3), so you desire to forgive just as you used to desire your idols.

Note the contrast between “here” and “there” in 1:6 and 1:7. “Here” refers to this world, while “there” refers to the real world. In this world, governed by the ego's thought system, we believe that attacking someone will bring us real understanding (2:1). We need to see the concept presented here in the light of the previous section's discussion about attacking our idols (see T-30.V.1:1; 1:7; 1:9; 5:4; 30.IV in FIP). We attack our idols because they fail to satisfy us, and often, in our anger and disappointment, we believe that *now* we *really* have understood what they are all about. “I thought she really loved me, but now I see that she is just a selfish shrew!” We think we have been *disillusioned*, but only illusions can be attacked, so when we attack, we are just proving that illusions still deceive us (previous section, 5:4–5).

By contrast, in the real world (which we now know is a state of mind), we recognize that attack destroys understanding rather than fostering it (1:7).

Study Note: (1:3-4). Notice the allusions to the previous section. Sentence 4, *I think*, clarifies the “rules” from the previous section (2:3–4, 3:2–4, 3:7–8, 4:1, 4:8 (FIP), 4:7 (CE)). The rules we make for our idols are both observations of how they do behave and demands for how they ought to behave (in order to satisfy us). Also, subtle references to “Dream Roles” (T-29.IV (FIP)), T-29.V (CE)) have been showing up here and in the last section (see last section, 1:1 ; 8:9 (FIP), 8:6 (CE)).

Paragraph 2

2 The folly of pursuing guilt as goal is fully recognized, and idols are not wanted there, for guilt is recognized as the sole cause of pain in any form. 2No one is tempted by its vain appeal, for suffering and death have been perceived as things unwanted and not striven for. 3The possibility of freedom has been grasped and welcomed, and the means by which it can be gained can now be understood. 4The world becomes a place of hope, because its only purpose is to be a place where hope of happiness can be fulfilled. 5And no one stands outside this hope, because the world has been united in belief the purpose of the world is one which all must share, if hope be more than just a dream.

• Study Question •

3. *When someone or something has really disappointed you, you probably felt disillusioned and angry. What, according to 2:3, was the real cause for your anger? (The sentence may seem unrelated to this question at first, but think about it and try to see the connection.)*

•

When we attack, we see something that isn't there; we see a holy child of God as wicked, unworthy of love, deserving of punishment, and—in a word—guilty. We see the other as guilty and, when we attack, *we* feel guilty because of our attack. We attack or become angry because guilt is our goal (2:1). Remember, the ego thrives on guilt. “Without guilt the ego has no life, and God's Son *is* without guilt” (T-13.I.2:5 (FIP), T-13.I.6:6 (CE)). In the real world, we see how insane it is to *try* to be guilty, which we do when we attack. We understand that “guilt is...the sole cause of pain in any form” (2:1), and so we have no desire to take part in the drama of idols that we first crave and then attack, producing guilt all around. We no longer want suffering and death and no longer seek them (2:2). To quote the incredible song sung by Carly Simon:

All those crazy nights when I cried myself to sleep
Now melodrama never makes me weep anymore
'Cause I haven't got time for the pain
I haven't got room for the pain
I haven't the need for the pain
Not since I've known you

You showed me how, how to leave myself behind
How to turn down the noise in my mind
Now I haven't got time for the pain
I haven't got room for the pain
I haven't the need for the pain
Not since I've known you

Suffering was the only thing that made me feel I was alive
Thought that's just how much it cost to survive in this world
'Til you showed me how, how to fill my heart with love
How to open up and drink in all that white LIGHT

Pouring down from the heaven
I haven't got time for the pain
I haven't got room for the pain
I haven't the need for the pain
Not since I've known you.

In the real world, we've realized that freedom from pain and guilt is possible. We know how we can attain that freedom (2:3–4). Forgiveness! With that realization, with the knowledge that there is a way out of hell and we *know what it is*, our heart explodes with hope: *This is what the world is for!* (2:4). This is why I am here, why you are here, why *everyone* is here. Just imagine what the world would be like if everyone united in this hope (2:5)! And it will be so.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Not yet is Heaven quite remembered, for the purpose of forgiveness still remains. ²Yet everyone is certain he will go *beyond* forgiveness, and he but remains until it is made perfect in himself. ³He has no wish for anything but this. ⁴And fear has dropped away, because he is united in his purpose with *himself*. ⁵There is a hope of happiness in him so sure and constant he can barely stay and wait a little longer, with his feet still touching earth. ⁶Yet is he glad to wait till every hand is joined, and every heart made ready to arise and go with him. ⁷For thus is *he* made ready for the step in which is all forgiveness left behind.

• Study Question •

4. *Sometimes it may seem as though you are ready to leave the world behind, and you feel impatient with the way the rest of the world is dragging its feet and refusing to wake up. What reason is given here for actually being glad to wait for the rest of the world to wake up?*

•

As glorious as the real world sounds, it isn't quite Heaven. Forgiveness is still necessary (3:1), and forgiveness is not needed in Heaven:

“Forgiveness represents your function here. It is not God's creation, for it is the means by which untruth can be undone. And who would pardon Heaven? Yet on earth, you need the means to let illusions go.” (W-pl. I 92.2:3-6)

Yet, in the real world, “everyone is certain he will go *beyond* forgiveness, and he but remains until it is made perfect in himself” (3:2). We are here practicing forgiveness. We are practicing until forgiveness in us is perfected, and we'll be here as long as our forgiveness is imperfect. However, we are *certain* that we *will* attain that goal, and so we are happy learners. We have no other goal than perfect forgiveness (3:3). Because our intent for forgiveness is pure, we have integrated with our true Self; we have united with our real will. Therefore, “fear has dropped away” (3:4). Our confidence and optimism are unbounded; we can barely keep our feet on the ground. We're ready to fly (3:5)!

I am reminded of how I felt the day when, in my teens, I first decided consciously to give my life to God. It occurred in the context of a Billy Graham crusade. Graham presented a thought system quite different from what I now believe, but it was a clear call from God for me. My desire to give myself to God, be free of guilt, and allow Him to live in me and through me was genuine. The joy that arose in me was so great that I felt as though I were walking around about two feet off the ground for days. There is a reason why the classic book, *Pilgrim's Progress*, describes the experience of forgiveness as dropping a heavy burden at the foot of the cross. When guilt is lifted from us, and our heart is united once again with our real will, given to us by God in creation, we feel as if we could fly.

And yet—here we are, our feet still on the ground. Perhaps we think this is a discouraging picture. Perhaps we believe it burdensome to be forced to wait for Heaven until everyone wakes up. However, with a little thought, we can easily see that this is just another subtle form of unforgiveness. We are angry or impatient with our brothers and sisters; we believe *they* are holding us back, yet that very thought is a thought of unforgiveness, a thought that needs healing. Even though it feels so very ready to leave earth behind, the healed mind does not resent waiting. Instead, a fully healed mind is “glad to wait” until every other mind awakens to Christ and is “made ready to arise and go with him” (3:6). The awakening of other minds is what makes us *truly* ready for Heaven (3:7). The Buddhists talk of the vow of the bodhisattva, which expresses a similar idea:

The Bodhisattva's Vow

*So long as space remains,
So long as sentient beings remain,
I will remain,
In order to help,
In order to serve,
In order to make
My own contribution.* (Tibetan prayer translated by The Dalai Lama)

The bodhisattva determines to continue to practice until every pebble, every blade of grass, awakens. To me, the Course makes this concept even more compelling. It insists that since Heaven “is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within” (T-18.VI.1:6), it would be impossible for us to experience Heaven if we excluded *anything*. The absolute necessity of including everything in the oneness shows up over and over in the Course. We need to grasp this important concept.

“Exclude any part of the Kingdom from yourself and you are not whole” (T-7.IX.4:3 (FIP), T-7.VIII.4:3 (CE)).

“For you cannot understand Wholeness unless you are whole, and no part of the Son can be excluded if he would know the Wholeness of his Father” (T-11.III.7:10 (FIP), T-11.III.12:3 (CE)).

“The lonely journey fails because it has excluded what it would find” (T-14.X.10:7 (FIP), T-14.XI.9:7 (CE)).

“Your savior waits for healing, and the world waits with him. Nor are you apart from it, for healing will be one or not at all, its oneness being where the healing *lies*. What could correct for separation but its opposite? There is no middle ground in any aspect of salvation. You accept it wholly or accept it not. What is unseparated must be joined, and what is joined cannot be separate.” (T-28.VII.2:3–8 (CE), T-28.VII.2:3-10 (FIP))

I love the way this is expressed in the section titled “The Circle of Atonement”:

“Stand quietly within this circle, and attract all tortured minds to join with you in the safety of its peace and holiness... Holiness must be shared, for therein lies everything that makes it holy. Come gladly to the holy circle, and look out in peace on all who think they are outside. Cast no one out,¹ for this is what he seeks along with you. Come, let us join him in the holy place of peace, which is for all of us, united as one within the cause of peace.” (T-14.VII.7:6, 10:1–9 (CE), (T-14.V.8:6, 11:6-9 (FIP))

Paragraph 4

4 The final step is God's, because it is but God Who could create a perfect Son and share His fatherhood with him. ²No one outside of Heaven knows how this can be, for understanding this is Heaven itself. ³Even the real world has a purpose still beneath creation and eternity, but fear is gone, because its purpose is forgiveness, not idolatry. ⁴And so is Heaven's Son prepared to be himself, and to remember that the Son of God knows everything his Father understands, and understands it perfectly with Him. ⁵The real world still falls short of this, for this is God's Own purpose; only His, and yet completely shared and perfectly fulfilled.

• Study Questions •

5. (4:1-2). *If you had hoped that you would someday figure out the puzzle of how God could create a Son who was perfect and who shared everything with God (even God's Fatherhood), this is not going to happen until you are all the way home. Why, according to these two sentences, must God take the final step Himself?*

6. (4:2,4). *How does it feel to imagine that in Heaven God keeps no secrets from you, that He has not a shred of knowledge that you and He do not share perfectly and completely?*

7. (4:4). *How is God's Son prepared to be himself?*

•

“The final step” (4:1) refers to “the step in which is all forgiveness left behind” (3:7), the moment when God reaches down and raises us up to Himself (W-pI.60.1:6; T-11.VIII.15:4-5 (FIP), T-11.VIII.15:3–4 (CE)). We cannot initiate that step. All we can do is continue to perfect our practice, extending our forgiveness more and more broadly, deeper and deeper, drawing every mind around us into our circle of atonement. Forgiveness is our purpose here, even in the

¹ This injunction to “Cast no one out” of the circle of Atonement may be meant as a contrast to Matthew 8:12 (KJV): “But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out [of the kingdom] into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

real world (4:3), and so “fear is gone” (4:3); “fear has dropped away” (3:4). Now, we can wait with patience:

“Those who are certain of the outcome can afford to wait, and wait without anxiety. Patience is natural to the teacher of God. All he sees is certain outcome, at a time perhaps unknown to him as yet, but not in doubt.” (M-4.VIII.1:1-3)

Thus, life in the real world is a happy life, free of anxiety and fear, as we joyfully extend forgiveness to everyone and everything. Then, when we all are ready, God will gather us up in His arms and take us home.

How could it be otherwise? Only God knows how to create a perfect Son and, at the same time, share His Fatherhood with that Son (4:1–2). How could we, in our confusion, know how to get to that place? But God knows! And we know, too, but cannot remember that knowledge until we have forgiven. Remember what I said in commenting on the first paragraph: “Only when we have forgiven can we ‘understand all things created as they really are’ (1:5)”. In the real world, the practice of forgiveness prepares us to be ourselves; it prepares us to remember that we share a perfect understanding of everything with God Himself (4:4)!

“This,” in 4:5, refers to the preceding sentence, which speaks of God’s having a Son who perfectly understands all knowledge with Him and who is entirely himself as God created him. That is “God’s Own purpose” and “*only* His,” but its fulfillment is Heaven, not anything in the real world (4:5). The Course always distinguishes between its goal for us, the real world, and Heaven, which is the *ultimate* goal, God’s goal. It is a goal we share entirely; we are intimately involved in it; indeed, we *are* that goal, and yet it is God’s goal, not ours. The real world, through forgiveness, removes everything that blocks the realization of that ultimate goal.

Paragraph 5

5 The real world is a state in which the mind has learned how easily do idols go when they are still perceived but wanted not. ²How willingly the mind can let them go when it has understood that idols are nothing and nowhere, and are purposeless. ³For only then can guilt and sin be seen without a purpose and as meaningless. ⁴Thus is the real world’s purpose gently brought into awareness, to replace the goal of sin and guilt. ⁵And all that stood between your image of yourself and what you are, forgiveness washes joyfully away. ⁶Yet God need not create His Son again that what is his be given back to him. ⁷The **gap** between your brother and yourself was never there, and what the Son of God knew in creation he *must* know again.

• Study Questions •

8. (5:1). *When you have reached this state of mind called the real world, will you still perceive idols?*
9. (5:1–2). *In the real world it will be extremely easy to let your idols go. What four ways (in these two sentences) must you see idols in order to easily let them go?*
10. (5:2). *Do you recall what recent section talked about these same three things: idols being nothing, being nowhere, and having no real purpose?*
11. (5:4). *By seeing idols as purposeless, the purpose of guilt is replaced by the real world's purpose—which is what?*
12. (5:7). *What two things does this sentence suggest are yours?*

•

In particular, the real world removes our idols, replacing them in our minds with forgiveness. Sentence 5:1 defines the real world as a particular *state of mind*; this is the second time the Course has done so. At the start of this section, we read, “The real world is the state of mind in which the only purpose of the world is seen to be forgiveness” (1:1). Sentence 5:1 says it is a state of mind that easily lets go of idols because it no longer wants them, even though they are “still perceived,” that is, we can still see them (5:1).

Since both of these are definitions of the same thing, the real world, they must be the same thing. Therefore we can conclude that when you hold on to an idol, you create grounds for unforgiveness. If I insist that I must have a Mercedes Benz to be happy, I will hold grievances against anyone and anything that keeps me from obtaining that car, and I will probably be jealous of people who have a Mercedes when I don't. When I have let go of all my idols, forgiveness is the only natural reaction to everything (see also T-30.VI.2:4-8 (FIP), T-30.VII.2:3-6 (CE)).

Let's face it: We find it difficult to let go of our idols. You know you are in the real world when letting go of idols becomes *easy*. When does it become easy? When we have realized we do not *want* the idols anymore. They are not what will satisfy us. We come to understand “that idols are nothing and nowhere, *and are purposeless*” (5:2). When something has no substance, does not even exist, and would have no purpose if it did exist, we have no trouble seeing that we don't want it and letting go of any attempts to obtain it. Why would we waste our time? So when we find ourselves craving something in this world and attaching our happiness to it, a good practice would be to remind ourselves, “This idol is nothing I want. It is nothing at all; it is nowhere. It has no purpose for me.” Only when we can say this and mean it will guilt and sin become equally purposeless and meaningless to us (5:3), and forgiveness becomes natural and easy. Notice this relationship cropping up again—a close connection between idols and guilt. In this case, only by seeing that *idols* serve no purpose can we let go of the purpose of *guilt*.

Guilt and sin stand between our false image of ourselves and our reality, blocking the way and hiding our reality from us. As we let go of all idols, the real world's purpose, forgiveness (1:1; 3:1), replaces our insane goal of sin and guilt and washes all this guilt and sin out of our minds (5:4-5). Now we are free to remember our real identity. God does not have to recreate what we are because that has never changed (5:6). The gap we have perceived between “us” and “them” (our brothers and sisters) was an imaginary gap consisting of imaginary guilt; it “was never there” (5:7). Together we all are still the only begotten Son of God, the one creation of the one Father. When the guilt and sin are washed away, no part of reality has changed. Reality

always *was*; or better, it always *is*. What is gone are the blocks to our awareness of it. When that occurs, all that we knew in creation, the perfect understanding of everything God the Father knows, we will know *again* (5:7).

Practice Suggestion: (5:5). *Try to imagine what this sentence is saying (I will supply some interpretation). On the one hand is your image of yourself as a separate human being with a name and various personal characteristics. On the other hand is your reality as a Son of God. In between these two lies a colossal cloud of sin and guilt. Now imagine that forgiveness comes in and joyfully washes away this cloud. Now your image of yourself and your reality can meet face-to-face, with your reality shining your false self-image away. Allow yourself to feel what that experience will be like.*

Paragraph 6

6 When brothers join in purpose in the world of fear, they stand already at the edge of the real world. ²Perhaps they still look back and think they see an idol that they want.² ³Yet has their path been surely set away from idols toward reality, for when they joined their hands, it was Christ's hand they took. ⁴And they will look on Him Whose hand they hold. ⁵The face of Christ is looked upon before the Father is remembered. ⁶For He must be unremembered till His Son has reached beyond forgiveness to the love of God. ⁷Yet is the love of Christ accepted first, and then will come the knowledge they are one. ⁸How light and easy is the step across the narrow boundaries of the world of fear when you have recognized Whose hand you hold!

• Study Question •

13. (6:5-8). True or false: To really love your brother you must first love God.

14. (6:8). If you “step across the narrow boundaries of the world of fear,” what territory will you enter? (Compare with 6:1.)

•

The Text has been speaking of the purpose of forgiveness. Now, it begins to talk about *two brothers* (or two sisters, or a brother and sister) who have joined in common purpose, the purpose of forgiveness. Such a joining in purpose is a holy relationship and brings the two to “the edge of the real world” (6:1). The paragraph goes on to talk about the way this purpose will progress, the inevitable outcome of the initial joining.

² This section's repeated image of looking back is reminiscent of the story of Lot's wife (“But Lot's wife behind him looked back, and she became a pillar of salt”—Genesis 19:26 [RSV]) and of Jesus' statement that “No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:62 [RSV]).

A pair that has joined in this way does not become perfect at once. They may still be drawn to idols; in fact, they may yet see *one another* as idols and look to their relationship partner to complete themselves or to make them happy (6:2). That does not matter. Choosing the goal of forgiveness together, they have begun to move in the right direction, away from idols (6:3).

When we join hands with a brother or sister in the holy purpose of forgiveness, whether we know it or not, we have taken the hand of Christ (6:3)! And if we have taken Christ's hand, we *will* see Christ's face (6:3–4). I find this immensely encouraging. There are times as I began a relationship with a holy purpose when I have wondered if I would ever see the face of Christ in the relationship. The Course assures me, I will. I think we have to be content with that assurance and to have faith even when there is no evidence that the face of Christ will ever show up.

The sequence the Course always presents is that we first behold Christ in a brother or sister, and only then will we remember God (6:5–7).

“At God's altar, Christ waits for the restoration of Himself in you. God knows His Son as wholly blameless as Himself, and He is approached through the appreciation of His Son.” 2 (T-11.IV.6:7-7:1 (CE), (T-11.IV.6:1-2 (FIP))

Those who try to know God without practicing forgiveness, and thus without seeing the face of Christ in those around them, have chosen a very difficult, if not impossible, path. God's Love forgives; to God, there is no sin. How can we know the Love of God when we have not experienced It, flowing through us, toward a brother or sister? At first, it seems as if we are joining with another human being, but when we do, we realize that this “human being” and God are one and the same (6:7–8); it's all God!

“The way to God is through forgiveness here. There is no other way.” (W-
p11.256.1:1–2)

Offer each other freedom and complete release from sin, here in the garden of seeming agony and death. So will we prepare together the way unto the resurrection of God's Son, and let him rise again to glad remembrance of his Father, Who knows no sin, no death, but only life eternal.

Together we will disappear into the Presence beyond the veil, not to be lost, but found; not to be seen, but to be known. And knowing, nothing in the plan God has established for salvation will be left undone. This is the journey's purpose, without which is the journey meaningless. (T-19.IV.18:5-19:3 (CE), T-19.IV(D).18:4-19:3)

Once you realize that you are not just holding the hand of your brother, but actually *holding Christ's hand*, it becomes easy to step across the boundary between the world of fear and the real world (6:8).

Paragraph 7

7 Within your hand is everything you need to walk with perfect confidence away from fear forever, and to go straight on and quickly reach the gate of Heaven itself. 2For He Whose hand you hold was waiting but for you to join Him. 3Now that you have come, would He delay in showing you the way that He must walk with you? 4His blessing lies on you as surely as His Father's love rests upon Him. 5His gratitude to you is past your understanding, for you have enabled Him to rise from chains and go with you together to His Father's house. 3 6An ancient hate is passing from the world, and with it goes all hatred and all fear. 7Look back no longer, for what lies ahead is all you ever wanted in your heart.

• Study Question •

15.(7:7). *Look back no longer* at what?

•

We have no conception of how much spiritual power lies in joining another in a holy relationship. “Within your hand” (7:1), he says—and what is within your hand? Your *brother's* hand—“Within your hand is everything you need” for the spiritual journey. *Everything!* That's quite amazing. It makes me want to take another look at the emphasis, or lack of it, that I place on my relationships. So often, it feels to us, or at least to me, that I am trapped in this world of suffering and pain; that, despite my deep longing to be free, I can't seem to break loose; that I am wading through deep, deep mud and making almost no progress. But, if I join with another person in a common goal, Jesus says, everything changes. I have everything I need to walk away from fear *forever* (My heart leaps at the thought!), to “go straight on” (No detours, no delays!), “and quickly (!) reach the gate of Heaven itself” (7:1). O, how I want that to be my experience! It all comes from a heart-felt joining with another in the common purpose of forgiveness.

Christ has been waiting for this moment (7:2)! He's more than ready to show us the way (7:3). He blesses us for coming; We cannot begin to understand how grateful He is to us for the choice we have made (7:4–5). Our joining with our brother has unchained Him, and now He will walk with the two of us to His Father's house (7:5). The picture here is similar to Workbook Lesson 182:

³ The image of Christ rising from chains and going to His Father's house is probably a reference to the parable of the prodigal son, in which the prodigal son, finding himself hungry and destitute, says to himself, “I will arise and go to my father” (Luke 15:18 [KJV]). The image of a holy figure rising from chains is reminiscent of Helen's first inner vision in the period leading up to the dictation of the Course, in which she saw an ancient priestess “heavily draped and kneeling with bowed head, heavy chains twisted around her wrists and ankles.” As this vision recurred over several weeks, “The chains began to drop away and she began to raise her head. Very slowly she finally stood up, with only a short, unconnected length of chain still tied to her left wrist” (*Helen Cohn Schucman, Ph.D.: Autobiography*, p. 29). The implication is that Helen and Bill's joining is what had allowed the priestess to rise from chains, just as in the above passage it is “brothers join[ing] in purpose” (6:1) that enables Christ to rise from chains.

“He came because He knew you would not fail. He whispers of His home unceasingly to you. For He would bring you back with Him, that He Himself might stay, and not return again where He does not belong, and where He lives an outcast in a world of alien thoughts. His patience has no limits. He will wait until you hear His gentle Voice within you, calling you to let Him go in peace, along with you, to where He is at home and you with Him.” (W-pl.182.7:3-7)

The Course has spoken before of “an ancient hate” passing from the world (7:6); compare this line with T-26.IX.3:8; 6:1 (FIP), T-26.IX.3:6; 5:4 (CE). I believe it refers to our stubborn hatred of our brothers, a hatred that stems from our wish to have more and be better than others, our wish for specialness. As we release our idols and forgive, we join again with our brothers and sisters. *All* hatred and fear vanishes (7:6) because all of it arises from the same roots of specialness.

Jesus appeals to us to no longer look back to our idols, like Lot’s wife fleeing Sodom and Gomorrah (7:7; Genesis 19:26). He says that, in comparison to the idols that are nothing and nowhere, “what lies ahead is all you *ever* wanted in your heart” (7:7). The idols have been deceptions and delusions that drew us away, and falsely promised to fulfill our heart’s desire. What lies ahead in the real world and Heaven is the actual object of our longing.

Practice Suggestion: (T-30.VI.6:8-7:5 (CE)). *Imagine Jesus speaking these words directly and personally to you. Insert your name where appropriate, for instance, wherever it says “you” or “your.”*

Paragraph 8

8 Give up the world! ²But not to sacrifice. ³You never wanted it. ⁴What happiness have you sought here that did not bring you pain? ⁵What moment of content has not been bought at fearful price in coins of suffering? ⁶Joy *has* no cost; it is your sacred right. ⁷And what you pay for is not happiness. ⁸Be speeded on your way by honesty, and let not your experiences here deceive in retrospect. ⁹They were not free from bitter cost and joyless consequence. ¹⁰Do not look back except in honesty. ¹¹And when an idol tempts you, think of this: There never was a time an idol brought you anything except the “gift” of guilt. ¹²Not one was bought except at cost of pain, nor was it ever paid by you alone.

• Study Questions •

16. (8:8–9). *What is he implying here about honesty and being deceived in retrospect? Is he saying we haven’t been honest? How?*

•

He commands us, “Give up the world!” (8:1), which could sound like an enormous sacrifice, but he quickly adds, “But not to sacrifice. You never *wanted* it” (8:2–3). You never wanted the world, not in the core of your being. To repeat one of my favorite quotes from the missionary, Jim Elliott, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.” To give up what you never wanted is not sacrifice!

Jesus then presents some potent reasons to prove we never really wanted the world. He points out that every happiness we ever sought brought pain with it, and every moment of contentment has, in some way and some time, cost us “fearful price in coins of suffering” (8:4–5). I think of the joy I experienced in a loving relationship years ago, one that ended with my friend’s death. It also hurt another relationship and put geographic distance between my children and me. It seems that in this world, there is no joy without sorrow, no peace without pain. Did we ever really want *this* world? I think not.

“Joy *has* no cost. It is your sacred right, and what you pay for is *not* happiness” (8:6–7). If it costs you something, it is not real joy, not true happiness. How could it be? The Manual for Teachers says:

“There is one thought in particular that should be remembered throughout the day. It is a thought of pure joy.” (M-16.6:1-2)

Pure joy! Joy unadulterated by sorrow or pain or cost of any kind. That is what should characterize our days and will characterize them when we lose our addiction to idols and step across that boundary into the real world. Try saying those words to yourself: “Joy has no cost. It is my sacred right” (8:6). In telling us not to let our “experiences here deceive in retrospect” (8:8), Jesus is aware of our tendency to edit the past and to selectively remember only what we want to remember. “Sure, we had some rough spots, but over all, we had some good times.” I recall a friend telling me how her abusive father, in a phone call shortly before his death, asked her, “I wasn’t really a bad father, was I?” It wasn’t easy for her to answer that question. We think back on our experiences in this world, and (at least sometimes) we focus on the good. We focus on the memories of what we liked about our lives, and we ignore the “bitter cost and joyless consequence” of other actions (8:9). Such selectivity is just the ego’s attempt to seduce us into clinging to our idols and refusing to let them go and step out of the world of fear into the real world. It’s worth thinking about the ways we do this. It’s worth being *honest* with ourselves about the pain we have experienced and the pain we have caused others to buy ourselves a little pleasure or happiness. Being brutally honest will speed us on our way (8:8).

“Be speeded on your way by honesty” (8:8) and, in fact, “Do not look back *except in honesty*” (8:10, my emphasis). Here we are given a very good, particular practice. It would be a good thing to memorize and a good thing to practice right now.

Practice Suggestion: *Think of any idol that still tempts you, and then read over the following, inserting the specific idol in place of “an idol”:*

“There never was a time [name your idol] brought me **anything* except the “gift” of guilt. Not one was bought except at cost of pain, nor was it ever paid by me alone.*” (8:11-12)

The last phrase is particularly chilling. Our idols not only cost *us* pain, but they also cost *others*. And they never brought us anything but guilt! There can’t be any question here about how strongly we are being encouraged to lay aside all of our idols.

Paragraph 9

9 Be merciful unto your brother, then. ²And do not choose an idol thoughtlessly, remembering that he will pay the cost as well as you. ³For he will be delayed when you look back, and you will not perceive Whose loving hand you hold. ⁴Look forward, then, and walk in confidence, with happy hearts that beat in hope and do not pound in fear. ⁵The will of God forever lies in those whose hands are joined. ⁶Until they joined, they thought He was their enemy, but when they joined and shared a purpose, they were free to learn their will is one. ⁷And thus the will of God must reach to their awareness. ⁸Nor can they forget for long that it is but their own.

• Study Questions •

17. (9:1). *How are you supposed to be merciful to your brother here?*
18. (8:11–9:3). *Please catalog all the negative results mentioned in these sentences of your looking back and choosing an idol.*

•

When we look back longingly at our idols, we delay our brothers around us (9:3). We extend mercy to our brothers when we do not choose an idol thoughtlessly (9:1–2). We also fail to see their hands as the hand of Christ (9:3)—and, if you recall, realizing Whose hand we hold is what makes it easy to cross into the real world (7:1–2). So we impede our *own* progress *and* the progress of others. We need to take a deep breath, lift up our heads, and look *forward* to the real world that awaits us. Our hearts can beat in hope rather than pound in fear (9:4). There is no need to fear the loss of idols; their loss is actually a *gain* to us.

• Study Question •

19. (9:5–8). *The section closes with a description of just what happens when two brothers join in a shared purpose. It brings to mind the discussion from Section II (see 1:11–12, 4:7, and 5:4 (FIP), 1:10-11, 5:2, 5:7(CE)) in which we forgive God and, in so doing, shift from seeing Him as the enemy to seeing Him as our Friend. Please try to select the proper order for the following statements:*
- A. *They learned that they share the same will.*
 - B. *They think God is their enemy.*
 - C. *God's Will comes into their awareness.*
 - D. *They realize that God's Will is their own (and that God is their Friend).*
 - E. *They join in a shared purpose.*

•

Sentences 5 to 8 summarize this section's teaching about "those whose hands are joined" (9:5). Joined hands symbolize the Will of God for His creation. Before two people join in common purpose, they believe God is their enemy (9:6). They see themselves as guilty. Being guilty, they deserve God's judgment, and they feel guiltier because they also judge one another. But then, they join together and share a purpose. The purpose isn't specifically identified here as forgiveness or healing, but since "Only dreams of pardon can be shared" (T-30.VII.6:17 (FIP), T-30.VIII.6:11 (CE)), their common purpose *must* be pardon. They realize they want the same

thing (peace, to love and be loved, freedom from guilt)—“their will is one” (9:6). This joining enables them to realize that God, too, wills their good and their guiltlessness, and before long, they realize their wills are also one with God’s Will (9:7–8). They no longer perceive God as an enemy; He is their Friend.

“God is no enemy to you. He asks no more than that He hear you call Him ‘Friend.’”
(T-30.II.1:11-12 (FIP), T-30.II.1:10–11 (CE))

Answer Key

1. “The real world is *the state of mind* in which the *only* purpose of the world is seen to be forgiveness” (1:1).
2. Before we can understand anyone or anything, we must *forgive* them (1:6).
3. You became angry because *your goal was to feel guilty* about your attack upon the person or thing.
4. In some way, making every heart ready to go with you results in making *you* ready to go. According to 2:8, for our hope to be fully realized, *everyone* must come to share in it. However, other passages in the Course suggest that there is some form of readiness that we can reach individually—which Jesus appears to have done. Yet if “[Heaven] is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within” (T-18.VI.1:6), how could it be possible to “go there” without everyone? I think that, in the real world, we recognize that the salvation we seek *is* a universal awareness of oneness, and thus it *must* include everyone.
5. God takes the step because only God knows how to create a perfect Son who shares God’s Fatherhood, and only God knows how such a thing can be possible. This implies a great deal. It implies that God lifting us into Heaven is somehow the same as God placing us in Heaven in the first place—God’s creation of us. It also implies that to lift someone into Heaven requires the full knowledge of what Heaven is. By both measures, we would be unable to lift ourselves into Heaven: We didn’t create ourselves, and we don’t know what Heaven is (or we would consciously be there now).
6. Answer this for yourself. For me, it is almost unimaginable that I could share so totally in God’s knowledge and understanding. That alone causes me to realize how great a gap exists in my mind between what I think I am and what God knows I am.
7. God’s Son is prepared to be himself through the real world, in which forgiveness has replaced idolatry, allowing fear to be gone. The blocks to love are gone because fear has gone, and I can *be* the love that I *am*.
8. Yes, you will still perceive idols but will no longer want them.
9. To let go of idols easily, you must come to see them as unwanted, as nothing, as nowhere, and as without purpose.
10. This same idea was presented in T-29.VIII, “The Anti-Christ.” See paragraphs 5 through 8.
11. Forgiveness.
12. Two things that are yours are (1) union with your brother and (2) the perfect and complete knowledge of everything that God gave you in creation.
13. False. You get to the Love of God through the love of Christ in your brother.
14. You will step across the boundary into the real world.
15. Idols.
16. He suggests that when we look back at what our idols have given us, we tend not to look back honestly. We tend to deceive ourselves by looking only at the moments of

- content our idols have seemingly given, not at the painful price we paid for those moments.
17. You are merciful to your brother by not going after an idol, since your brother will be paying the price for it also (10:6).
 18. You will get nothing but the “gift” of guilt. You will buy it with pain. Your brother will pay too. He will be delayed in his journey. You will not realize you hold Christ’s hand—which means you will not find it easy to cross the boundary between this world and the real world.
 19. B, E, A, C, D

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.