

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 31

The Final Vision

Section I

The Simplicity of Salvation

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

This section reasserts that the lesson the Course strives to teach us is “simple”: “what was never true is not true now and never will be.” It then addresses the obvious question: “Why, then, do you persist in learning not such simple things?” It tells us that we have misapplied our powerful learning skills to learn the wrong lessons, lessons that fly in the face of truth. This only shows how great our learning skill is. This realization should encourage us that we *can* learn the lesson the Course seeks to teach us and *will* learn it.

Paragraph 1

How simple is salvation! ²All it says is what was never true is not true now and never will be. ³The impossible has not occurred and can have no effects. ⁴And that is all. ⁵Can this be hard to learn by anyone who *wants* it to be true? ⁶Only unwillingness to learn it could make such an easy lesson difficult. ⁷How hard is it to see that what is false cannot be true, and what is true cannot be false? ⁸You can no longer say that you perceive no differences in false and true. ⁹You have been told exactly how to tell one from the other, and just what to do if you become confused.¹ ¹⁰Why, then, do you persist in learning *not* such simple things?

¹ The Course teaches throughout that you have confused the false and true, which includes confusing the world and reality, the ego and yourself, body and mind, pain and joy, imprisonment and freedom, death and life. It is the Holy Spirit’s role to separate the true from the false in your mind and “teach you to tell them apart” (T-7.IX.4:6). What is true, He teaches, is characterized by love, not fear (T-1.50.2:3-5 (CE), T-1.VI.5:1-5 (FIP));

• **Study Questions** •

1. *(1:1–4). Spend a little time thinking about what you have learned from your study of the Course. Think of various aspects of what it has taught you. Do you see how they can all be boiled down to these few, simple phrases?*
2. *(1:5–10). According to this paragraph, we have been told how to tell false from true, and “just what to do” if we get them confused. See what you have learned so far: Answer these two questions:*
 - A. *How do you tell the false from the true?*
 - B. *What should you do if you become confused? (Think of what was said in the last chapter.)*

There are four times in the Text that the words “how simple” occur, counting this one (1:1). The other three are:

Only appreciation is an appropriate response to your brother. Gratitude is due him for both his loving thoughts and his appeals for help, for both are capable of bringing love into your awareness if you perceive them truly...**How simple**, then, is God's plan for salvation. There is but one response to reality, for reality evokes no conflict at all. (T-12.I.6:1–2,4–5 (FIP), T-12:I.8:2–3,9:1–2 (CE))

The decision whether or not to listen to this course and follow it is but the choice between truth and illusion...**How simple** does this choice become when it is perceived as only what it is. (T-16.V.16:1–3 (FIP), T-16.V.17:1,3 (CE))

All illusions are but one. And in the recognition this is so lies the ability to give up all attempts to choose between them, and to make them different. **How simple** is the choice between two things so clearly unlike. There is no conflict here. No sacrifice is possible in the relinquishment of an illusion recognized as such. Where all reality has been withdrawn from what was never true, can it be hard to give it up, and choose what *must* be true? (T-26.III.7:2–7 (FIP), T-26.III.6:4–8 (CE))

If you compare these four instances, you can see that they are all making the same point: When we see reality clearly, it is not confusing. There is only “one response to reality.” The choice between truth and illusion is self-evident, a no-brainer. What’s real is real, and what isn’t, isn’t; what was never true is not true *now* (1:2). What’s not to understand? “Simple,” however, does not mean that we experience it as easy: “Simplicity is very difficult for twisted minds” (T-14.II.2:3 (FIP), T-14.II.3:3 (CE)). Jesus addressed this seeming paradox back in Chapter 23:

wholeness, not lack (T-1.48.19:1–2 (CE), not in (FIP)); and sharing, not exclusion (T-6.III.8:1–3 (CE), T-6.II.4 closest match in (FIP)). The true and false are told apart through a process of comparing everything “with the higher level of creation” (T-1.50.1:1 (CE), T-1.I.50 (FIP)). The Holy Spirit therefore “teaches you to judge every thought that you allow to enter in the light of what God put there” (T-6.VII.C.1:4 (CE), T-6.V.c.1:4 (FIP)); “to look upon darkness through light” (T-11.V.2:9 (CE), (FIP)).

“This course is easy just because it makes no compromise. Yet it seems difficult to those who still believe that compromise is possible.” (T-23.III.4:1-2 (FIP), (T-23.IV.4:1 (CE))

In T-11.VIII.1:1–3 (FIP), T-11.VIII.6:1–3 (CE) Jesus says almost the same thing: The Course is simple and teaches that “only reality is true.” But then he adds the critical question: “But do you believe it?” Evidently, we do not, or we would not need so much time, study, practice, and experience to become enlightened. That’s why Jesus felt a need to dictate so much material to teach us that truth is true.

“The impossible has not occurred, and can have no effects” (1:3). What an elegant summary of the entire Course! Nothing could be more straightforward or more readily understandable. “Impossible” means that something cannot happen. Something that never happens cannot possibly have any effects. Anyone who wants to can “learn” this; it is an incontestable fact. But if we are unwilling to learn it, we can make *any* lesson seem difficult! I recall trying to teach a particular computer skill to a friend. It was something I’d been doing for her; I figured she would appreciate being able to do it herself and to be free of depending on me. But she wanted *me* to do it; she didn’t want to be bothered (yet didn’t want to admit that). And so, as simple as the task was, she was confused by it. “I’m just hopeless with computers,” she said.

Like my friend, we may not be conscious of our unwillingness to learn. But if we find the Course difficult, if we find the spiritual path in whatever form to be difficult, we *must* be unwilling to learn the lesson. It is *not* a hard lesson (1:7). The *only* thing that can make such a blatantly simple lesson hard to learn is unwillingness (1:6). We can’t even claim that we don’t know how to distinguish truth from falsehood, because “You have been told *exactly* how to tell one from the other, and just what to do if you become confused” (1:9).

Jesus explained this clearly in the last section, which repeated over and over that reality is changeless. One good example is the final paragraph of the preceding chapter.

The previous chapter has other things Jesus may be referring to besides. In T-30.I, for instance, he tells us to make no decisions by ourselves and that if we do, judging things and deciding by ourselves how to react to them (without asking the Holy Spirit), we will become *confused*. Therefore, the additional rules showing how to get back on track constitute “just what to do if you become confused.”

The final sentence, 1:10, raises the obvious question: If the Course is so simple, *why* do we persist in not learning it? The paragraphs that follow attempt to answer this question.

Paragraph 2

2 There *is* a reason. 2But confuse it not with difficulty in the simple things salvation asks you learn. 3It teaches but the very obvious. 4It merely goes from one apparent lesson to the next, in easy steps which lead you gently from one to another with no strain at all. 5This cannot be confusing, yet you *are* confused. 6For somehow you believe that what is totally confused is easier to learn and understand. 7What you have taught yourself is such a giant learning feat it is indeed incredible. 8But you accomplished it because you wanted to, and did not pause in diligence to judge it hard to learn or too complex to grasp.

• Study Question •

3. (2:1–2). *If you are having trouble learning what the Course is teaching, what is one thing that is not the reason?*

4. (2:6–8). *Based on what you know of the Course, what do you think the author is referring to when he speaks of what we have managed to teach ourselves?*

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Jesus is about to tell us why we so strongly resist learning that only the truth is true, but before he answers, he wants us to understand that the existence of a reason does not excuse our failure to learn! What the Course teaches is, according to Jesus, nothing but things that are “very obvious” (2:3). Not simply obvious but *very* obvious, like a brass marching band playing at full volume in a quiet church service. Something that nobody could miss unless they were trying very, very hard. In the case of the marching band, it would mean things like an effective blindfold, extremely expensive noise-canceling earphones, and probably insulating yourself in Styrofoam so you would not feel the vibrations of the music. That, however, is just like what we have done, as we shall see.

The Course, says Jesus, presents its lessons “in easy steps,” gently leading us with common sense logic from one simple lesson to the next, without any strain at all (2:4). It’s *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Enlightenment* or *Enlightenment for Dummies*. (Gee! Maybe it would sell better under those titles.) He declares that the Course “cannot be confusing, yet you *are* confused” (2:5). Such monumental ineptitude, such egregious inability, such intractable ignorance *must* be deliberate. That’s the conclusion to which this discussion leads. How could anyone fail to learn the elementary lessons that the Course is teaching unless they worked very hard to remain uninformed? So, there may be a *reason* that we have not learned, but there is no *excuse*!

Instead of learning the truth, we have *overlearned* what is not true. We have taught ourselves that confusion is easier to learn than simplicity (2:6). What we have done is “incredible,” “a giant learning feat” (2:7). But we accomplished it because we wanted to, and we kept at it without ever doubting we could do it until we had learned it (2:8). Of course, what Jesus is talking about here is the entire ego thought system, which is insane and full of internal contradictions—the drama of sin, guilt, fear, and separation.

He’s saying to us, “Don’t kid yourselves that the Course is too hard for you to learn. You’ve already proven you can master complex and difficult material, even things that make no sense, and can do so perfectly. Compared to that, the Course is a model of simplicity.”

Paragraph 3

3 No one who understands what you have learned, how carefully you learned it, and the pains to which you went to practice and repeat the lessons endlessly, in every form you could conceive of them, could ever doubt the power of your learning skill. ²There is no greater power in the world. ³The world was *made* by it, and even now depends on nothing else. ⁴The lessons you have taught yourself have been so overlearned and fixed they rise like heavy curtains to obscure the simple and the obvious.² ⁵Say not you cannot learn them. ⁶For your power to learn is strong enough to teach you that your will is *not* your own, your thoughts do *not* belong to you, and even you are someone else.

• Study Question •

5. (3:1). *What kind of activities are being described here? If you can, give specific examples from your own life of ways you “practice and repeat the lessons endlessly.”*
6. (3:1–3). *We question our ability to learn the Course. What proves that, far from being weak, our learning power is the greatest power in the world?*
7. (3:5). *What does “them” refer to?*
8. (3:6). *List the three impossible things that our learning power has taught us are true.*

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Whether or not we realize it, we all are extremely diligent spiritual practitioners. We devote endless hours to mental practice. We weave our practice into the very fabric of our lives in every form imaginable. And it has worked! We’ve all become spiritual masters of this particular path. The only problem is: We are practicing the wrong thing! We are practicing the ego thought system. That’s the bad news. The good news is that this demonstrates the incredible power of our learning skill (3:1). It is so great and powerful that by it we made the world and even now we maintain the world (3:2–3). In Chapter 23, Jesus enumerates some of the ego’s premises and proceeds to tell us, in no uncertain detail, that these laws are what makes the ground beneath our feet seem solid; they hold the world in place:

“Never is your possession made complete. And never will your brother cease his own attack on you for what you stole. Nor will God end His vengeance upon both, for in His madness He must have this substitute for love, and kill you both.

“You who believe you walk in sanity, with feet on solid ground and through a world where meaning can be found, consider this: These are the laws on which your “sanity” appears to rest. These are the principles which make the ground beneath your feet seem solid. And it is here you look for meaning. These are the laws you made for your salvation. They hold in place the substitute for Heaven that you prefer. This is their purpose; they were made for this.” (T-23.III.13:6-14:6 (CE), (T-23.II.13:1-9 (FIP))

² To *overlearn* means to continue to study and memorize well past the point of initial mastery, so that one attains automatic recall. The term figures prominently in this section and reappears in the first paragraph of section III of this chapter.

We have overlearned these lessons. The American Heritage Dictionary defines “overlearn” as: “To continue studying or practicing (something) after initial proficiency has been achieved so as to reinforce or ingrain the learned material or skill.” We’ve become proficient egos, and yet we continue to reinforce the ego lessons every day, over and over. These lessons “rise like heavy curtains to obscure the simple and the obvious” (3:4), that is, they obscure what the Course is attempting to teach us. Our power to learn is so incredibly strong that we have taught ourselves to believe utterly impossible things: that our will (which is one with God's) is not our will, but rather that we have a will that is in conflict with God's Will; that our real thoughts (that we think with God, thoughts of love, joy, and perfect happiness) do not belong to us; and even that we are something or someone other than what God created us to be (3:6)—a body, or a separated being. This overlearning of complete falsehoods is what is interfering with our learning of the truth. This is why it seems so difficult for us to learn simply that truth is true. We must reverse the process and unlearn the false lessons so that the truth can shine through.

Paragraph 4

4 Who could maintain that lessons such as these are easy? ²Yet you have learned more than this. ³You have continued, taking every step, however difficult, without complaint, until a world was built that suited you. ⁴And every lesson that makes up the world arises from the first accomplishment of learning; an enormity so great the Holy Spirit's voice seems small and still before its magnitude.³ ⁵The world began with one strange lesson, powerful enough to render God forgotten and His Son an alien to himself, in exile from the home where God Himself established him. ⁶You who have taught yourself the Son of God is guilty, say not that you cannot learn the simple things salvation teaches you.

• Study Question •

9. *What is the “one strange lesson,” the “first accomplishment of learning,” which is at the root of all our false learning?*

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The lessons we’ve taught ourselves cannot be considered easy to learn...and yet, we not only learned them but also *applied* them and made ourselves a world that matches these insane lessons (4:1–3). This world *is* “the delusional system of those made mad by guilt” (T-13.In.2:2 (FIP), T-13.I.2:1 (CE)). The Course asserts that the entire world, including all the laws of time and space, arise from a single seed, a single mad thought in the mind of God’s Son. This one thought, “the first accomplishment of learning” (4:4),

³ 1 Kings 19:12 (KJV): “And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.” In the above reference, the Holy Spirit’s voice is not actually still and small. As explained later, it contains “the power of [God’s] will” (6:3). Yet the “magnitude” of what we taught ourselves is so enormous that it has drowned out His mighty voice, making it *seem* still and small. See 6:1-3 for further discussion of this.

was so egregiously *wrong* that, to this day, it seems to overwhelm the very Voice for God, the Holy Spirit. Even the Bible refers to God's Voice as a "still, small voice" (I Kings 19:12), although the books of Revelation portrays the "Son of Man" who speaks for God as having "a great voice, as of a trumpet," "as of the sound of many waters" (Rev. 1:10,15). What single, mad thought could so dampen the sound of God's voice that a trumpeting voice with a sound as loud as Niagra Falls could end up seeming to be "still" and "small"? If you have ever visited those falls, you will know just how loud that all-pervading, endless roar of the falls can be. How amazing, then, that the Son of God could succeed in teaching himself such a lesson!

This lesson is the lesson with which the world began (4:5). With this lesson learned, we forgot God. We forgot our true Identity. We imagined ourselves to be in exile from "the home where God Himself established [us]" (4:5). *What lesson could possibly do this? What lesson could have such dire and disastrous consequences?*

In a word: *guilt* (4:6). "For it is guilt that has obscured the Father to you, and it is guilt that has driven you insane" (T-13.I.1:7 (CE), T-13.In.1:7 (FIP)). The belief in guilt blanked out our memory of our Loving Father and substituted a Fearful Judge. The belief in guilt smeared our self-image with ugliness and evil. The belief in guilt robbed us of our divine rights and banished us from Heaven. The belief in guilt *launched the world* of suffering and pain as a place of punishment for that guilt.

That belief is an "enormity so great the Holy Spirit's Voice seems small and still before its magnitude" (4:4). It is unimaginably far from the truth! There is not one shred of justification for such a belief. The cornerstone of the Course's message, the mainspring that drives its curriculum, is this: "God's Son is guiltless" (see also T-14.V.2:1 (FIP), T-14.VII.1:1 (CE); M-1.3:1-5; M-10.2:9 (FIP)), 2:11 (CE)). If we can undo this one idea, we will have destroyed the root of every mad idea in the ego's thought system. The truth about us is so very different:

"There is a light in you which cannot die; whose presence is so holy that the world is sanctified because of you. All things that live bring gifts to you, and offer them in gratitude and gladness at your feet ... The light in you is what the universe longs to behold. All living things are still before you, for they recognize Who walks with you. The light you carry is their own. And thus they see in you their holiness, saluting you as savior and as God." (W-pl.156.4:1-5:4)

And yet, the thought of guilt has far-reaching effects. The vast distance between that thought and the truth proves the power of our mind. *We learned the impossible!* How can we *not* learn "the simple things salvation teaches you" (4:6)?

Practice Suggestion: (4:1-5). *Ask yourself, "Have I actually learned what Jesus says I have learned? Have I come to believe my will is not my own, my thoughts are not my own, and I am not who I really am? Have I built a world that suits me? Have I forgotten God, become an alien to myself? Do I see myself as being in exile from the home in which God established me?" Think about each phrase, and see how it really does apply to you. (4:6). If you have learned such things, when in fact you are still in Heaven, still God's Son, still beloved of God, and still totally in control of your will and your mind, how can*

you possibly maintain that you are incapable of learning what the Course is teaching? Spend some time letting yourself become convinced that you really can learn what the course is teaching.

An Affirming Prayer: *Try praying these words from the Workbook several times until you begin to feel their truth:*

“My true Identity is so secure, so lofty, sinless, glorious and great, wholly beneficent and free from guilt, that Heaven looks to It to give it light. It lights the world as well. It is the gift my Father gave to me; the one as well I give the world. There is no gift but This that can be either given or received. This is reality, and only This. This is illusion’s end. It is the truth.”

(W-pII.224.1:1-7)

Paragraph 5

5 Learning is an ability you made, and gave yourself. ²It was not made to do the will of God, but to uphold a wish that it could be opposed, and that a will apart from it was yet more real than it. ³And this has learning sought to demonstrate, and you *have* learned what it was made to teach. ⁴Now does your ancient over-learning stand implacable before the Voice of truth and teach you that Its lessons are not true; too hard to learn, too difficult to see, and too opposed to what is really true. ⁵Yet you *will* learn them, for their learning is the only purpose for your learning skill the Holy Spirit sees in all the world.

• Study Question •

10. *What is it that makes it seem to us that the lessons of the Course are difficult to learn?*

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That our ego made our capacity to learn for its nefarious purposes (5:1) was the subject of an earlier section of the Text. For more details, see T-9.III.8 (FIP), T-9.III.9 (CE);; T-2.II.5 (FIP), T-2.V.4 & 5 (CE). When we are living in changeless eternity, there is nothing to learn. The ability to learn has no purpose. But when the Son of God decided that he *wanted* change, learning became necessary. He taught himself that it was possible to have a will other than God's, oppose God's will, and make that other will more real than God's (5:2).

At first, this may seem like a harsh description of your mind. Yet, if we examine our minds, we *do* believe these things. What is the idea that I can “sin” but a belief that I can have a will other than God's and can express that will in opposition to Him? What is the idea that I am a weak, helpless, vulnerable, and limited being but a belief that this picture of myself is “more real” than the Self that God created as me? We *have* learned the preposterous lessons we made our learning to teach (5:3). And now, confronted with the Course, we declare that we find it too hard to learn; we doubt what it says; we find it too “impractical” because it is out of touch with the way things *really* are (5:4). Those declarations are nothing more than repetitions of the same blind, self-taught lesson of sin and guilt. “I am much too weak and helpless; I am outside the reach of God's Atonement. The world of sin has overcome God's Will.” This “ancient overlearn-

ing stand[s] implacable before the Voice of truth” (5:4); our wrong-mindedness is so deeply ingrained that the truth seemingly cannot break through. The words Jesus uses here, “ancient” and “implacable,” are intriguing. “Ancient” tells us that this overlearning process has been going on for more than our short lifetime in these bodies. And “implacable” is a fascinating choice. Its general meaning is “unmovable,” but it bears the connotation of “pitiless, ruthless, cruel.” We speak of an “implacable enemy” as someone who is beyond reconciliation, someone who will pursue us to the grave and, with his last breath, will curse us and die. Our overlearning is like that toward God's Voice. It is relentless and unyielding. It won't budge. It won't let in God's lessons.

Yet, says Jesus, we *will* learn the lessons of the Voice of truth (5:5). Why? How can that be, given our ancient overlearning? We will learn them because, in the Holy Spirit's sight, learning them is the *only* purpose of our learning ability (5:5). (Note the return of the “only purpose” motif begun in T-30.V.1–11 (FIP), T-30.VI.1–9 (CE) and reprised in T-30.VII.1–5 (FIP), T-30.VIII.1–5 (CE). According to Him, the only purpose of the world is to learn forgiveness. *His* lessons “have a power mightier than yours” because they originate with God and with your “aboriginal Self” (to borrow a phrase from Emerson). Your overlearning may seem implacable, an immovable object, but it is about to encounter the irresistible Force of God.

“If you but recognized how little stands between you and your awareness of your union! Be not deceived by the illusions it presents of size and thickness, weight, solidity, and firmness of foundation. Yes, to the body's eyes it looks like an enormous, solid body, immovable as is a mountain. Yet within you there is a force which no illusions can resist. This body only seems to be immovable; this force is irresistible in truth. What, then, must happen when they come together? Can the illusion of immovability be long defended for what is quietly passed through and gone beyond?

“6 Forget not, when you feel the need arise to be defensive about anything, you have identified your self with an illusion, and therefore feel that you are weak because you are alone. This is the cost of all illusions. Not one but rests on the belief that you are separate. There is not one that does not seem to stand, heavy and solid and unmovable, between you and your brother, and not one that truth cannot pass over lightly, and so easily that you must be convinced, in spite of what you thought it was, that it was nothing.” (T-22.V.5:1–6:6 (FIP), T-30.VI.5:1–6:4 (CE))

Paragraph 6

6 His simple lessons in forgiveness have a power mightier than yours, because they call from God and from your Self to you. ²Is this a *little* Voice, so small and still It cannot rise above the senseless noise of sounds which have no meaning? ³God willed not His Son forget Him, and the power of His will is in the Voice That speaks for Him. ⁴Which lessons will you learn? ⁵Which outcome is inevitable, sure as God, and far beyond all doubt or question? Can it be your little learning, strange in outcome and incredible in difficulty, will withstand the simple lessons being taught to you in every moment of each day since time began and learning had been made?

• Study Question •

11. (6:2–3). *Is God's Voice weak? On what two facts does Jesus base his answer?*
12. (6:6). *How frequently does God's Voice speak His lessons to you, and for how long has He been doing it? How do these facts relate to your “ancient over-learning”?*

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Jesus makes much the same argument I did earlier: This is no “small and still” Voice! It can, and does, drown out the “senseless noise” of ego thinking (6:2). Of course, it can! God's Will is in this Voice (6:3), and God does not will that you forget Him (6:3). He will not allow that to happen. Consider the two sources of information and learning: yourself and God. “Which lesson will you learn” (6:4)? There is simply no chance that you won't learn God's lessons because God is...well, God! No other outcome is possible (6:5). Given the complexity and bizarre nature of your learning contrasted to the stark simplicity of God's lessons, which are “being taught to you in every moment of each day, since time began and learning [was] made,” how could your lessons possibly survive (6:6)? They cannot! Praise God, hallelujah, and amen!

Paragraph 7

7 The lessons to be learned are only two. ²Each has its outcome in a different world. ³And each world follows surely from its source. ⁴The certain outcome of the lesson that God's Son is guilty is the world you see. ⁵It is a world of terror and despair, nor is there hope of happiness in it. ⁶There is no plan for safety you can make that ever will succeed. ⁷There is no joy that you can seek for here and hope to find. ⁸But this is not the only outcome which your learning can produce. ⁹However much you may have overlearned your chosen task, the lesson that reflects the love of God is stronger still. ¹⁰And you will learn God's Son is innocent, and see another world.

• Study Questions •

13. *Just two lessons (7:1). If the false lesson is, “The Son of God is guilty,” what must the other lesson be? Is there a clear clue in this paragraph?*
14. (7:2–8). *Each lesson results in a different world. Why, if we believe God's Son is guilty, must we see a world of terror and despair, and so on?*
15. (7:9–11). *Learning that God's Son is innocent, we will “see another world.” What world is that?*
16. *Bonus question Can you think of a line earlier in the Text that tells us that we will see this world when we have learned forgiveness?*

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Jesus sums up the whole of learning into two sentences, each with four words: “God's Son is guilty” or “God's Son is innocent.” And, since the two sentences have three words in common, “God's Son is,” we could sum up the whole of learning in just one of two words: guilty or innocent.

Each of those root concepts “has its outcome in a different world” (7:2), a world that is the logical outcome of the root concept (7:3). As Jesus pointed out in 3:3, we made the world we see by our learning skill; it is the inevitable outcome of the lesson of guilt (7:4). If all of us (and the term Son of God includes us all) are guilty sinners, then we cannot trust anyone. No wonder “it is a world of terror and despair” (7:5): Terror because of the guilt of others; despair because of our own. How could we be happy if we are guilty? How could we be safe if everyone else is guilty? How could the guilty ever hope to find joy? (7:6–7)

Paragraph 8

8 The outcome of the lesson that God’s Son is guiltless is a world in which there is no fear, and everything is lit with hope and sparkles with a gentle friendliness. ²Nothing but calls to you in soft appeal to be your friend and let it join with you. ³And never does its call remain unheard, misunderstood, or left unanswered in the tongue in which the call itself was made. ⁴And you will understand it is *this* call that everyone and everything within the world has always made, but you had not perceived it as it was. ⁵And now you see you were mistaken. ⁶You had been deceived by forms the call was hidden in, and so you did not hear it and had lost a friend who always wanted to be part of you.

• Study Question •

17. *What do you think is meant by your being “deceived by the forms the call was hidden in” (8:6)? What might some of those forms have been, and how might you have perceived (or be now perceiving) them?*

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But we are not doomed to this outcome. Our overlearning of the lesson of guilt has produced this tragic world. Still, if we apply our learning skill to the lesson of forgiveness, which reflects the Love of God and which is “stronger still” than our overlearning, we can see another world (8:1–2), which the rest of the paragraph describes.

In the words of Lesson 55 in the Workbook:

“The world I see is hardly the representation of loving thoughts. It is a picture of attack on everything by everything. It is anything but a reflection of the Love of God and the love of His Son. It is my own attack thoughts that give rise to this picture. My loving thoughts will save me from this perception of the world, and give me the peace God intended me to have.” (W-pl.r1.55.2:2-6)

Let the description of this other world (8:1–6), the real world, wash over you. Read it aloud to yourself a few times. Consider that such a vision of the world is indeed possible. Consider that you can see the world in this manner if you choose to. This vision is what the Course is trying to teach us; this world is where it is trying to lead us. And it is not an impossible dream! That's what this section has been about so far. It is quashing that mocking voice in our mind, the voice that tells us that while the real world is a beautiful image, it is so far beyond our reach and so inapplicable to the rough and tumble of life in this world that we can only laugh softly at it and

shrug our shoulders. Maybe we shed a wishful tear or two, thinking, “If only it were possible.” No! We can learn this! O my God! We can actually learn this!

No fear. Everything “lit with hope” and sparkling “with a gentle friendliness.” (8:1). Every single thing in the world calls to me to be my friend, reaching out to join with me in ecstatic union (8:2). And me, hearing and responding to every one of those calls for love, hearing the call as it is genuinely meant and not as my ego would have me hear it, answering each call with the same gentle, loving friendliness and desire for union (8:3). As I go through my life, I recognize that “it was this call that everyone and everything within the world has always made” (8:4). And now, I see how I misunderstood these calls in the past and missed so many chances to join with friends who always wanted to be part of me (8:5–6).

O my brothers and sisters, we can actually learn this lesson. We can live in this world.

***Practice Suggestion:** Mentally, apply these thoughts to several specific individuals in your life: “Patrick is calling to me in soft appeal to be my friend, and to let him join with me. I am not deceived by the form of [name your negative perception] that his call is taking; I hear his call, I understand it, and I ask God to answer it through me.”*

Paragraph 9

9 The soft, eternal calling of each part of God’s creation to the whole is heard throughout the world this second lesson brings. ²There is no living thing that does not share the universal will that it be whole, and that you do not leave its call unheard. ³Without your answer is it left to die, as it is saved from death when you have heard its calling as the ancient call to life, and understood that it is but your own. ⁴The Christ in you remembers God with all the certainty with which He knows His love. ⁵But only if His Son is innocent can He *be* love. ⁶For God were fear indeed if he whom He created innocent could be a slave to guilt. ⁷God’s perfect Son remembers his creation, but in guilt he has forgotten what he really is.

• Study Question •

18. What two things does the Christ, God's Perfect Son, remember?

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In this new vision of the world, I can hear “the soft eternal calling of each part of God’s creation to the whole” (9:1). Can we envision looking at the world like this, and seeing every living thing sharing a universal Will to wholeness (9:2), calling out to us for help, help in remembering what its true nature is? “Do you not think the world needs peace as much as you do” (T-8.IV.4:1 (FIP), T-8.III.6:1 (CE))? All around us, everyone and everything is calling for help. Do we want to leave them to die (9:3)? Would we not prefer to become the saviors of the world and allow ourselves to hear the calling “as the ancient call to life,” the same call that echoes in our own hearts (9:3)?

“Everyone is looking for himself and for the power and glory he thinks he has lost. Whenever you are with anyone, you have another opportunity to find them.” (T-8.III.5:3-4 (FIP), T=8.II.7:3-4 (CE))

We have Something within us that remembers “the power and the glory,” something that remembers what our Father God is like and how lovingly He created us in perfect innocence as expressions of His being, meant to give and receive love forever and forever (9:4,7 (CE), 9:3,6 (FIP)). We can draw on that inner knowledge, that inner remembering. We can ask the Christ in us to remind us constantly that every living thing is calling for love and that every living thing is as innocent as the instant in which God created it. How could a loving God create a guilty Son? Creating the guilty would make God a God of fear, not love (9:6).

What this paragraph says, in sum, is, “If all of creation is not innocent, God is not Love” (see especially 9:5). More personally, “If I am not innocent, God is not Love,” or, “If [your worst forgiveness problem] is not innocent, God is not Love.” God is Love; therefore, we all must be innocent. The Christ in you knows this with unshakable certainty and will help us to see the world and interpret it in this light.

Practice Suggestion: *What a powerful affirmation lies in that second sentence (9:2)! Repeat it slowly, in the first person (“I” instead of “you”), and let yourself feel just how powerful, how far-reaching it is. Think of a person, and apply the thought to that person. Following on from the last practice suggestion: “Patrick shares the universal Will that he be whole, and that I do not leave his call unheard. Without my answer he is left to die, as he is saved from death when I have heard his calling as the ancient call to life, and understood his call is but my own.” Repeat this with several individuals, both people near to you and those you only know at a distance. Remind yourself that “The Christ in me remembers.”*

Paragraph 10

10 The fear of God results as surely from the lesson that His Son is guilty as God's love must be remembered when he learns his innocence. ²For hate must father fear, and look upon its father as itself.⁴ ³How wrong are you who fail to hear the call that echoes past each seeming call to death, that sings behind each murderous attack, and pleads that love restore the dying world! ⁴You do not understand Who calls to you beyond each form of hate, each call to war. ⁵But you will recognize Him as you give Him answer in the language that He calls. ⁶He will appear when you have answered Him. ⁷And you will know in Him that God is love.⁵

• Study Question •

19. Try to notice the temporal sequence of things in 10:3–6. Jesus says we will recognize the Christ and that he will appear to us. Which of the following more accurately depicts the temporal sequence?

A.

- i. We perceive hate or attack.
- ii. We ask for a new perception.
- iii. We now see Christ calling for our love.
- iv. We respond with love.

B.

- i. We perceive hate or attack.
- ii. We ask for a new perception.
- iii. We respond with love.
- iv. We now see Christ calling for our love.

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(10:1–2). When we hate, we feel guilty, and when we feel guilty, we feel afraid because, consciously or unconsciously, we are expecting punishment for our “sin.” And ultimately, we fear that punishment is coming from God because we project our mind-set of hatred and attack on God and expect Him to think as we do; we look upon our Father as ourselves. We believe that we offended Him and that naturally, He will want to “get” us for doing so since that's how we would react if someone offended us.

⁴ “Hate must father fear” means that hate gives rise to fear of punishment. “And look upon its [hate's] father as itself” seems to mean that hate makes an image of God in its own likeness. We therefore see a hateful God, Whose anticipated punishment is the source of our fear.

⁵ 1 John 4:8 (ESV): “Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” “He” in the sentence “He will appear when you have answered Him” refers to Christ, the Self Who calls to us “beyond each form of hate.” When He appears, we will finally see that everyone in truth has not been calling for war, but for love. We will realize it is the loving Christ in everyone, not the warlike ego, Who has been calling to us. And seeing His innocence, we will finally realize the nature of His Source. This seems to be the meaning of “And you will know in Him that God is love.”

(10:3–7). In our perception, the world is filled with murderous attacks, calls to death, hate in many forms, and calls to war. These exist at the level of nations and on the individual level, even—perhaps notably—within our own families. We do not know just how very wrong we are! All those terrible things we see are only appearances; in reality, what we are looking at are calls and songs pleading that love would “restore the dying world.” Christ is calling to us behind every form of hate if we could but understand it (10:3–5). Try to imagine, for a moment, that someone gave you magic spectacles that give you a kind of X-ray vision. You can now see right through the surface appearances of hate and war to the poignant calls for love that are constantly arising from every living thing. Think what a sense of hope would arise in you that this call *exists in every living thing*. Think of the compassionate love that rises up in you in response to these calls.

We don't recognize the Christ when He calls to us, but we will recognize Him “as *we* give Him answer in the language that He calls” (10:5). Notice the order of things. You give answer first, and then you recognize Him! Answering first calls for a certain amount of faith, doesn't it? The Bible says that “Faith is being...certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, New International Version). This verse is expanded as follows in the Amplified Bible:

“NOW FAITH is the assurance (the confirmation, the title deed) of the things [we] hope for, being the proof of things [we] do not see and the conviction of their reality [perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses].”

That last phrase makes the point: “perceiving as real fact what is not revealed to the senses.” What our eyes and ears tell us is, “Call to war! Murderous attack!” Faith relies on the fundamental fact that behind that is the Christ, pleading with the love in you to restore the dying world. And that call is what we respond to with the same language of love that Christ is speaking to us. When we have so answered, “He will appear...and you will know in Him that God is Love” (10:6–7). We read a description of this very same process in the last chapter, last section. Read it over now: T-30.VIII.5 (FIP), T-30.IX.5 (CE).

Paragraph 11

11 What is temptation but a wish to make the wrong decision on what you would learn, and have an outcome which you do not want? ²It is the recognition that it is a state of mind unwanted that becomes the means whereby the choice is reassessed; another outcome seen to be preferred. ³You are deceived if you believe you want disaster and disunity and pain. ⁴Hear not the call for this within yourself, but listen, rather, to the deeper call beyond it that appeals for joy and peace. ⁵And all the world will *give* you joy and peace, for as you hear you answer. ⁶And behold! ⁷Your answer is the proof of what you learned. ⁸Its outcome is the world you look upon.

• Study Question •

20. About “the wrong decision on what you would learn,” look back to paragraph 10, the first sentence. If the lessons are only two, guilt or innocence, then we might

say that, “Temptation is a wish to decide to learn the lesson of _____, with an outcome of _____.”

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The first sentence of this paragraph should remind you of a similar sentence in the last section of Chapter 30: “What is temptation but a wish to make illusions real?” (T-30.VIII.3:1 (FIP), T-30.IX.3:1 (CE)). This statement is an unmistakable clue that in this section, Jesus is talking about the same thing: the topic of the previous section. He is still appealing to us to look past appearances to see the Christ; he is still pointing out that we get stuck on appearances *because* we “make the wrong decision on what [we] would learn” (11:1), that is, we want the illusion to be real. We want God's Son to be guilty. We are choosing the idol instead of the Christ, and so that is what we see. The result is “an outcome that you do not want” (11:1): disaster, disunity, and pain (11:3).

Earlier in the Text, Jesus pointed out that a good teacher knows that the most important thing to impart to a student is *motivation* (T-6.V(B).2:1–5 (FIP), T-6.VII.3:1–5 (CE)). Once a student is motivated to learn, he or she *will* learn. In effect, the *only* thing a teacher needs to teach the student is that they *want* to learn the lesson. That's the gist of what he is pointing out here. Once we recognize that following our temptations to grant reality to guilt leads inevitably to disaster, disunity, and pain, we automatically reassess our choice because we want a different outcome (11:2–3). Yes, there *is* an insane part of our mind that calls out for these things in a desperate attempt to prove that the ego exists, but this part *is insane, and we need not listen to it* (11:4). (If you've watched “Dr. Phil” on TV, you are probably hearing him say about now, “How's that working for you?”) The call within us for peace and joy is “deeper”; that is the call we need to listen to (11:4 (CE), 11:5 (FIP)). We must decide that we *want* to learn that God's Son is guiltless. If we listen to that call within ourselves, “the world will give you joy and peace” (11:5 (CE), 11:6 (FIP)).

The last several sentences here seem a bit confusing at first. There is a call within us for peace and joy, and we listen to that call. *We* listen, and *the world* gives us peace and joy! How can that be? “For [that is, *because*] as you hear, you answer” (11:5 (CE), 11:7 (FIP)). In other words, we ourselves answer our own call (“You will awaken to your own call, for the call to awaken is within you.” (T-11.VII.10:2 (CE), T-11.VI.9:1 (FIP)). If we hear our own call for peace and joy, we will hear that call in our brothers and sisters, and that is the call we will answer. We *give* the love that we are calling for, and we give it to ourselves and the world. The gift we give is (always) given to ourselves; as we give, we receive. Our loving response to the calls for love we encounter is “the proof of what you learned” (11:7 (CE), 11:9 (FIP)) (which is the lesson that God's Son is guiltless). The outcome of learning that lesson “is the world you look upon” (11:8 (CE), 11:10 (FIP)), a world that gives us peace and joy.

Answer Key

1. What God creates, which is true, is changeless; and nothing God did not create exists. The separation never happened. Sin has not happened, and therefore sin has no consequences.
2. (a) The false is changeable; the true is changeless and eternal. If it changes, it's not real.

(b) If we become confused, we should remember Who the Creator is and that what God creates cannot change and therefore cannot be guilty. Look without fear at the illusions. Remember, they are not eternal and therefore not what you want. Ask for a miracle, to see as the Holy Spirit sees.
3. The one thing that is not why we have a problem learning the Course is that what the Course is teaching is difficult.
4. We have taught ourselves the separation, the whole drama of sin, guilt, and punishment.
5. "Them" refers to things like the endless repetition of ego thoughts in my mind and the numberless times I have projected my guilt onto others and then, seeing it in them, have believed that what I see confirms my judgment of them. It refers, I believe, to the many lifetimes I have lived, teaching myself I am an ego in a body.
6. Our learning power made the world and even now maintains the world. The Course repeatedly asserts that the world is what we made it and is the result of our deranged thinking. "The world you see is the delusional system of those made mad by guilt" (T-13.Int.2:2). "You maker of a world that is not so ..." (T-25.IV.3:1).
7. "Them" refers to "the simple and the obvious" from the previous sentence: "Do not say you cannot learn the simple and the obvious, because your power to learn is strong...."
8. The three impossible things we have taught ourselves:
 - Your will is not your own.
 - Your thoughts do not belong to you.
 - You are someone else.

Take a moment to realize that what is true is the opposite of each of these three things. Consider how the Course has taught you the opposite of these ego lessons.

9. The one strange lesson that is at the root of all our false learning is that the Son of God is guilty. Compare this thought with T-27.VII.7:1–6, which teaches that guilt is the cause of all of our illusions.
10. What makes learning the Course seem difficult is our “ancient overlearning” of the thought that “the Son of God is guilty.” Because we have overlearned the false, learning that truth alone is true seems to be difficult.
11. First, that God's Will is that His Son not forget Him; second, that the power of His Will is in His Voice.
12. He speaks the lessons of forgiveness in every moment of each day. He has been teaching them to me since time began, and we made the ability to learn. His teaching has been going on just as long as my ancient overlearning; it is just as relentless, and since its Source is God and my Self, these lessons are more powerful and will prevail.
13. The other lesson is, “God's Son is innocent” (7:11).
14. If sin and guilt are real, then we all deserve to suffer punishment, for one thing. We have lost our innocence, changed, and become something God never created—something opposed to God. God is angry with us. How can there be any hope of safety? How can anything ever make us happy since, ultimately, we will lose it all in death? How, having lost Heaven, can we ever escape hell? If sin and guilt are real, these questions must rule our minds, making the world a place of terror.
15. The real world.
16. There are several references you may have remembered:

“The real world is attained simply by the complete forgiveness of the old, the world you see without forgiveness (T-17.II.5:1).

For forgiveness literally transforms vision, and lets you see the real world reaching quietly and gently across chaos” (T-17.II.6:2).

“The real world is the state of mind in which the only purpose of the world is seen to be forgiveness” (T-30.V.1:1).

This understanding is the only change that lets the real world rise to take the place of dreams of terror. Fear cannot arise unless attack is justified, and if it had a real foundation, pardon would have none. “The real world is achieved when you perceive the basis of forgiveness is quite real and fully justified” (T-30.VI.3:1–3).

17. I may have misperceived those calls to be my friend and join with me as attacks. They may have taken the form of a brother betraying me, or lying to me, or stealing from me, or even physically hitting me. As the Course has clearly taught us, even things like these are nothing more than calls for love, calls for help, Remember what was said in the last chapter:

“You are merely asked to see forgiveness as the natural reaction to distress that rests on error, and thus calls for help” (T-30.VI.2:7).

18. A. The Christ remembers God and knows that He is perfect Love, and he remembers his creation at God's hand, in perfect innocence. The Christ in me remembers these things.

B. It is as we give Him answer that we recognize the Christ; He will appear when we have answered Him. The perception of Him seems to come after our answer to the call for love, in response to it. Therefore, we will need to respond as if to a call for love even while we still perceive hatred and attack.

1. “Temptation is a wish to decide to learn the lesson of **guilt**, with an outcome of **the fear of God.**”