

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 31

The Final Vision

Section VII

Focusing on the Good

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 VII

I've highlighted the word "concept(s)" to show its continuing importance in this section.

This section is profoundly pivotal. It zeros in on "the only way" we can alter our self-concept, changing from guilt to innocence, from sin to holiness. It begins by telling us that "changing concepts is salvation's task." It speaks of "the only way" to change our self-concept. It cannot be surprising to any student of the Course that this change entails forgiveness. What stands out in stark relief to me is how the section sums up the entire message of the Course.

Paragraph 1

Learning is change. ²Salvation does not seek to use a means as yet too alien to your thinking to be helpful, nor to make the kinds of change you could not recognize. ³Concepts are needed while perception lasts, and changing concepts is salvation's task. ⁴For it must deal in contrasts, not in truth, which has no opposite and cannot change. ⁵In this world's concepts are the guilty "bad"; the "good" are innocent. ⁶And no one here but holds a concept of himself in which he counts the "good" to pardon him the "bad." ⁷Nor does he trust the "good" in anyone, believing that the "bad" must lurk behind.

• **Study Question** •

1. **(1:2)**. *This sentence repeats a theme found earlier in the chapter, that salvation adapts itself to meet our level of need. See, for instance, T-31.I.2:2-4¹ and T-31.V.8:3-9:1² What means do you think salvation uses? What means would you guess it does not use?*

2. *According to this paragraph, why do we tend to see the bad things about people as the truth about them, the reality underneath their surface goodness?*

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Just a page or two back, the Course told us several things about concepts:

- *that we make our concept of ourselves (T-31.V.2:1 (FIP), T-31.V.1:7 (CE)),*
- *that concepts are not natural, but learned, and don't exist apart from learning (T-31.V.7:1-3 (FIP), T-31.V.6:1-3 (CE)),*
- *that a concept of the self is meaningless (T-31.V.8:1 (FIP), T-31.V.7:1 (CE)),*
- *that salvation is nothing more or less than the escape from concepts (T-31.V.14:3), and*
- *that no concept can stand for what you are. (T-31.V.15:2).*

Yet, now (in 1:3), it tells us that “Concepts are *needed* while perception lasts” (my emphasis).

If this seems inconsistent, it's not. It's wholly consistent with the way the Course presents its message. Over and over, it sets forth the highest, ultimate truth—and then tells us that we are not ready for it yet. It portrays *knowledge* as the ultimate goal and yet says it is not the motivation for this Course, while “*peace* is” (T-8.I.1:1-2 (FIP), T-8.I.1:15-6 (CE)). It portrays us as asleep and dreaming, and obviously, the ultimate goal is awaking, but the Course's *immediate* goal for us is a happy dream, not waking up. In addition, it holds forth one-mindedness as the end yet offers only to take us from wrong-mindedness to right-mindedness in preparation for the transition to one-mindedness that God Himself will execute. The last step is always God's.

The same thing is in play here. The ultimate goal is total freedom from all concepts, particularly concepts of the self. Instead of *concepts* of the self, we will have *self-knowledge*. We will simply *be* what we are and *know* what we are. On the way to that ultimate knowing,

¹ But confuse it not with difficulty in the simple things salvation asks you learn. It teaches but the very obvious. It 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. (T-31.I.2:2-4 (CE))

² Now must the Holy Spirit find a way to help you see this concept of the self must be undone if any peace of mind is to be given you. Nor can it be unlearned except by lessons aimed to teach that you are something else. For otherwise, you would be asked to make exchange of what you now believe for total loss of self, and greater terror would arise in you.

8 Thus are the Holy Spirit's lesson plans arranged in easy steps, that though there be some lack of ease at times and some distress, there is no shattering of what was learned, but just a retranslation of what seems to be the evidence on its behalf. (T-31.V.7:3-8:8 (CE))

however, concepts will play a part. Our existing self-concept is distorted and demeaning, the ego's view of us as "deprived, unloving, and *very* vulnerable" (T-7.VII.3:2 (FIP), (T-7.VI.4:3 (CE)). So, before we can be free of concepts entirely, we need *better* concepts, concepts that are closer to the truth, concepts that represent right-minded thinking about ourselves. Salvation *changes* concepts (1:3) to free us from concepts. It uses words to ready us to go beyond words. It uses the illusion (of forgiveness) to ready us to go beyond illusion.

Salvation uses *learning*, a device made by our ego to teach us lies (see T-9.III.8:4-10 (FIP), (T-9.III.9:2-7 (CE)); T-31.I.5:1-2), but a device with which we are familiar, to give us a more accurate concept of ourselves (1:1-2). As this chapter has repeatedly emphasized, salvation does not try to shock or jolt us into enlightenment. It does not ask for huge leaps of understanding. The learning curve of the Course is not steep. It works gently, with familiar tools. "Learning is living here" (T-14.III.3:2 (FIP), (T-14.III.2:5 (CE)), and "Learning is change" (1:1). We are here to have our concepts changed; that's what the world is for. Learning must deal with contrasts: white against black, love against fear, good against bad. "Truth...has no opposite and cannot change" (1:4), so we cannot learn the truth, only recognize it. The concept we have of ourselves is, in a nutshell, that we are somehow mostly guilty and therefore "bad" (1:5). What we are learning is that we are innocent.

We all believe we have some good in us, some innocence as well as some guilt, and we hope the good outweighs the bad (1:6). Consciously or unconsciously, we hope that the good things we do will erase some of the black marks on our record. We picture God, or Jesus, as holding a scale and weighing us in the balance at the end of our lives. Or, we imagine we are strictly limited by the law of karma, that what we sow we reap, and if we sow good deeds, we will reap good deeds. Thus, the only way to improve our lot is to pile on the good works.

Thinking that our good deeds will atone for our sins is what the Bible calls "salvation by good works" as opposed to "salvation by faith" or "salvation by grace."

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast." (Ephesians 2:8-10 NASB)

The Course would agree; salvation is a gift of God, a gift that God gave to us in creation. We are as God created us, and not what we have made of ourselves: "Salvation requires the acceptance of but one thought; - you are as God created you, not what you made of yourself" (W-pI.93.7:1). The salvation through good works program is just a form of the ego's path of separation laid out in Chapter 2: "You believe that you can create yourself, and that the direction of your own creation is up to you" (T-2.I.1:12 (FIP), T-2.II.10 (CE)). What we are unlearning is guilt; what we are learning is innocence. We don't need to do good works to become "more innocent." You are either innocent or not; there is no more nor less. We *are* innocent, and therefore we do good works.

Paragraph 2

2 This **concept** emphasizes treachery, and trust becomes impossible. ²Nor could it change while you perceive the “bad” in you, nor could your “evil” thoughts be recognized as long as you see value in attack. ³You will perceive them sometimes, but will not see them as meaningless. ⁴And so they come in fearful form with content still concealed,³ to shake your sorry **concept** of yourself and blacken it with still another “crime.” ⁵You cannot give yourself your innocence, for you are too confused about yourself. ⁶But should *one* brother dawn upon your sight as wholly worthy of forgiveness, then your **concept** of yourself is wholly changed.

• Study Question •

3. (2:2-4). *Does this fit your experience of yourself—that every now and then some truly “evil” thought of yours comes to your awareness, seems to you to be truly sinful, shakes your sorry concept of yourself and blackens it with another crime? What is the “content still concealed,” the content you fail to see?*

4. *What prevents us from recognizing that our “evil” thoughts are truly meaningless?*

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As we see ourselves, we see others. Because we believe there is “bad” in us, we are sure it is in everyone else as well. We may see “good” in them, but we can’t trust it because we know that, just like us, there is “bad” lurking behind. As long as we see ourselves as a mixture of good and bad, we won’t be able to trust *anyone* fully (1:7–2:2).

One reason (I think the *primary* reason) that we imagine there is a need to balance our “bad” deeds with “good” ones is because we fail to recognize that our so-called “evil” thoughts are really without any meaning. Our thoughts of anger, jealousy, hatred, greed, and so on simply don’t mean anything. (See Workbook Lesson 4, “These thoughts do not mean anything,” which is an exercise in suspending any judgment of your thoughts as either “good” or “bad.”) Because we imagine that our thoughts of attack are profoundly “bad,” we attribute guilt to them and believe we must counterbalance or atone for them with “good” thoughts and deeds. And we do this—we imagine the “evil” thoughts are “bad”—because we secretly *value* them. In other words, we sometimes think attack is functionally *useful*. As long as that is the case, we cannot recognize our “evil” thoughts as meaningless in truth (2:1–2). If they genuinely *are* “evil thoughts,” then we *must* be guilty. So, when we *do* become aware of them within our minds, we feel fear; we shrink in guilt; we experience it as yet another “crime” we have committed and for which we must pay (2:4). We are afraid to look within ourselves too closely for fear of the awful stuff we will find if we start digging around in the muck.

“Loudly the ego tells you not to look inward, for if you do your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind. This you believe, and so you do not look. Yet this is not the ego’s hidden fear, nor yours who serve it. Loudly indeed the ego claims it is; too loudly and too often. For underneath this constant shout and frantic proclamation, the ego is

³ While you still see value in attack, you will not *really* recognize your “evil” thoughts. When you do see them, you will not perceive their meaningless content, their emptiness of real content. Wrongly believing they have *evil* content, they will appear to you “in fearful form.”

not certain it is so. Beneath your fear to look within because of sin is yet another fear, and one which makes the ego tremble.”

“What if you looked within and saw no sin? This “fearful” question is one the ego never asks.” (T-21.IV.2:3-3:2)

How, then, can we begin to undo this fearful concept of ourselves? We might think that since we see others as “bad” *because* we see ourselves as “bad,” we should start directly with trying to reverse our self-concept. But the Course says flat out that we can’t do that because we are just “too confused” about ourselves (2:5). It means that *you cannot establish in your own mind the conviction that you are entirely innocent*. This understanding goes to the heart of the whole method of the Course. If I try to convince myself that my attack thoughts are just innocent mistakes, there is a critical voice at the back of my mind that whispers in my ear, “Who do you think you are fooling? You’re just making excuses for yourself!” As a result, I end up feeling guilty about trying to feel innocent!

What, then, can I do? “...should *one* brother dawn upon your sight as wholly worthy of forgiveness, then your concept of yourself *is* wholly changed” (2:6). How can I experience forgiveness? By forgiving *someone else*! I allow the Holy Spirit to transform my perception of another person to see them as *deserving* forgiveness. I realize that *their* attack thoughts were just an innocent mistake, not a sin. And, in a kind of reverse projection, I can realize that if *their* attack thoughts were meaningless, then so are *mine*.

Paragraph 3

3 Your “evil” thoughts have been forgiven with his, because you let them all affect you not. 2No longer did you choose that you should be the sign of evil and of guilt in him. 3And as you gave your trust to what is good in him, you gave it to the good in you. 4In terms of concepts, it is thus you see him more than just a body, for the good is never what the body seems to be. 5The actions of the body are perceived as coming from the “baser” part of you, and thus of him as well. 6By focusing upon the good in him, the body grows decreasingly persistent in your sight, and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good.

• Study Question •

5. What does “thus” refer to in 3:4?

6. The last section, “Recognizing the Spirit,” said that we either see the flesh or recognize the spirit. It spoke at some length about seeing our brothers and ourselves as spirit rather than as a body. Now we are told that trusting the good in our brother is how we can see him as more than a body. What is the connection? Why does trusting the good in him lead to seeing beyond his body?

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When I see another person as “wholly worthy of forgiveness,” I see that his “evil” thoughts have had no effect on me, nor have my own “evil” thoughts affected me (3:1). (I didn’t buy into them; I didn’t attack; I forgave.) I have ceased playing victim to prove that he is the attacker

(3:2), which shows my attack thoughts have not affected me. I instead have given my trust to what is good in my brother (not allowing his apparently “evil” thoughts to affect my trust). In so doing, I have given trust to the good in myself as well (3:2–3).

The *Song of Prayer* pamphlet sums it up succinctly like this: “Only in someone else can you forgive yourself, for you have called him guilty of your sins, and in him must your innocence now be found” (S-2.I.4:6).

In practice, our concept of our brother shifts as we learn to trust the good in our brother. My concept of myself shifts accordingly. Because we associate the body with “evil” deeds (3:5), when we trust what is good in him, we begin to see him as more than a body (3:4). We begin to believe that what our eyes do not see (the good in him) is more real than what our eyes *do* see (his body) (3:4–5).

As we learn to *focus* on the good in him (3:6), the body grows less and less “real” to us, “and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good” (3:6). I like this image. It is almost as though the body starts to become translucent so that the light within shines brighter and brighter, almost blotting out our perception of the body.

Practice suggestion: *A whole process has now been sketched. You might want to imagine this process applied to a particular person from your life. First, see her as you do now, as a mixture of good and bad. The bad lurks beneath the superficial good, undermining your trust in her. Then imagine a moment in which you forgive her, seeing the “bad” as an illusion, the good as her only reality. After this moment, your whole perception of her gradually changes. As the “bad” drops away from your sight, see her body also fading in importance, for it and the “bad” seemed to be partners in the picture, partners in crime. As you focus on the good in her, you eventually picture her as an orb of light. She is a sphere of good, with her body being only “a shadow circling round the good.” Finally, realize that this will be precisely how you see yourself once you see her this way. This vision will be your new self-concept. How does that feel?*

Paragraph 4

4 And this will be your **concept** of yourself when you have reached the world beyond the sight your eyes alone can offer you to see. ²For you will not interpret what you see without the Aid that God has given you, and in His sight there is another world. ³You live in that world just as much as this, for **both** are **concepts** of yourself, which can be interchanged but never jointly held. ⁴The contrast is far greater than you think, for you will love this **concept** of yourself because it was not made for you alone. ⁵Born as a gift for someone not perceived to be yourself, it has been given you. ⁶For your forgiveness, offered unto him, has been accepted now for both of you.

• Study Question •

- 7.(4:3). *What is meant by “that world”?*
- 8.(4:3–4). *Earlier, we were told that the Holy Spirit contrasts different concepts to help us change from one to another. What two concepts is He contrasting here?*
- 9.(4:4–6). *These sentences speak of the concept of yourself as being the good, with the body being only a shadow circling round it. Please place the following sentences in their proper order:*
- You love this concept of yourself.*
 - You give this concept as a gift to someone else, as an act of forgiveness.*
 - You make this concept.*
 - You accept this concept as a gift to yourself.*

As this happens with a brother, we will come to see ourselves in the same way. The light within, the core, will be more substantial to us than our bodies. Whatever our eyes show us, we will have learned not to interpret it without the Aid of the Holy Spirit (4:1–2). He *always* sees beyond the body and the physical world (4:2). The real world is not a world seen by our physical eyes: “The body’s eyes are therefore not the means by which the real world can be seen, for the illusions that they look upon must lead to more illusions of reality” (C-4..Int.2:1).

We live in two worlds: the physical world our eyes perceive and the real world seen by the Holy Spirit and the vision of Christ he imparts to us (4:3). Each world arises from a self-concept.

“Concepts maintain the world.” (T-31.V.7:7 (FIP), T-31.V.6:6 (CE))

“Your concept of the world depends upon this concept of the self. And both would go, if either one were ever raised to doubt.” (T-31.V.11:3-4)

“You see the flesh or recognize the spirit. There is no compromise between the two. If one is real the other must be false, for what is real denies its opposite. There is no choice in vision but this one. What you decide in this determines all you see and think is real and hold as true. On this one choice does all your world depend, for here have you established what you are, as flesh or spirit in your own belief.” (T-31.VI.1:1-6)

Yet, although we live in two worlds, the one we see is determined by which self-concept we hold; the two concepts cannot coexist. As it said in the paragraph from Section VI quoted above, there is no compromise between the two.

The “contrast” Jesus speaks of here reminds us of the first paragraph, where the Course said that salvation “must deal in contrasts” (1:4). He is contrasting the two self-concepts. He says the contrast is far greater than we think because we will *love* this concept of ourselves. We *hate* the guilty self we think we are; we *love* the Self revealed by the Holy Spirit. That’s already a considerable contrast. But the reason we will love it isn’t just its innocence; it is that “*it was not made for you alone*” (4:4). I like that that whole phrase is emphasized, showing that it is highly significant. What enables us to love this self-concept so profoundly is that it was first “born as a gift for someone *not* perceived to be yourself,” and only then has it “been given *you*” (4:5). Emphasizing that the self-concept first came as a gift to another underscores the message of the preceding paragraph: that the only way we will come to forgive and love ourselves is to *first* forgive and love another. We offer forgiveness to another, allowing our better nature to act

through us, and then we realize what we've done. We have *experienced* our better self in action and thus receive forgiveness for ourselves (4:6).

Paragraph 5

5 Have faith in him who walks with you, so that your fearful **concept** of yourself may change. ²And look upon the good in him, that you may not be fearful of your “evil” thoughts, because they do not cloud your view of him. ³And all this shift requires is that you be *willing* that this happy change occur. ⁴No more than this is asked. ⁵On its behalf, remember what the **concept** of yourself which now you hold has brought you in its wake, and welcome the glad contrast offered you. ⁶Hold out your hand, that you may have the gift of kind forgiveness that you offer one whose need for it is just the same as yours. ⁷And let your cruel **concept** of yourself be changed to one that brings the peace of God.

• Study Question •

10. (5:3–5). *If all we need is willingness, how can we cultivate that willingness within ourselves?*

11. *In all the work that you did on your self-concept outside of the Course, did you ever suspect that the way to change it would be to give the gift of an innocent self-concept to someone else?*

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This paragraph reads like a preliminary summary of the section up to this point. Most of the sentences have specific parallels to sentences earlier in the section. And several of the sentences are injunctions, asking you to apply the teaching you have received. Notice the parallels between the first two sentences and earlier sentences:

<p>“Have faith in him who walks with you, so that your fearful concept of yourself may change.” (5:1)</p>	<p>“And as you give your trust to what is good in him, you give it to the good in you.” (2:8)</p>
<p>“And look upon the good in him, that you may not be frightened by your ‘evil’ thoughts because they do not cloud your view of him.” (5:2)</p>	<p>“Your ‘evil’ thoughts have been forgiven with his, because you let them all affect you not.” (2:7)</p>

If you want your fearful concept of yourself to change, you need to have faith in your brother (5:1)! That may not be a welcome message to some of us. It may seem to be asking a lot of you. You may think it would be easier to come to see yourself as innocent than to see that other person as innocent. But what the Course is saying is that as long as you continue to see your brother as guilty, you will see yourself that way. The words, “There is no other way,” are often repeated in this sense (*italics below are all mine*):

“Release from guilt as you would be released. *There is no other way* to look within and see the light of love, shining as steadily and as surely as God Himself has always loved His Son.” (T-13.X.9:1-10:1-2 (FIP), T-13.XI.10:1-2 (CE))

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

“Hear a brother call for help and answer him. It will be God to Whom you answer, for you called on Him. *There is no other way* to hear His Voice. *There is no other way* to seek His Son. *There is no other way* to find your Self.” (Psychotherapy-2.V.8:4-8)

In your study of the Course, have you ever noticed how emphatic the Course is on this point? *The only way* to change your concept of your Self is to have faith in one “who walks with you.” To forgive them. To give your trust to what is good in them.

Instructing us to look upon the good in others brings to mind a paragraph from earlier in the Text:

“Dream of your brother’s kindnesses, instead of dwelling in your dreams on his mistakes. Select his thoughtfulness to dream about, instead of counting up the hurts he gave. Forgive him his illusions, and give thanks to him for all the helpfulness he gave. And do not brush aside his many gifts because he is not perfect in your dreams. He represents His Father, Whom you see as offering both life *and* death to you. Brother, He gives but life, yet what you see as gifts your brother offers represents the gifts you dream your Father gives to you. Let all your brother’s gifts be seen in light of charity and kindness offered you. And let no pain disturb your dream of deep appreciation for his gifts to you.” (T-27.IX.8:1-8 (CE), T-27.VII.15:1-16:4 (FIP))

If you look upon the good in your brother, rather than his “sins,” you are refusing to let your “evil” thoughts “cloud your view of him.” When you do that, your “evil” thoughts are deprived of their fearfulness because you see that they are powerless and meaningless, and thus your concept of yourself shifts (5:2). You do not have to *do* anything to make this shift occur; you just have to be *willing* that it happens (5:3-4).

How to become willing? (I have always liked the prayer, “I’m willing to be made willing.”) You can motivate yourself by reminding yourself what the negative self-concept you’ve held has done to you. Remember the pain it has brought you. “Thinking I’m guilty and unworthy has made my life miserable; I want that to change. I want to be able to truly *love* who I am. If forgiving my brother will bring that to me, then I truly want to forgive him.” (5:5). Then, “hold out your hand” (5:6). Reach out to your brother or sister. “Hear a brother call for help and answer him” (P-2.V.8:4). That line, by the way, is the “no other way” in the quote above. *Hear a brother call for help and answer him.*” That is the *only* way to discover your true Self!

Recognize that he or she needs forgiveness as much as you do, and *offer it to him or her* (5:6). Let God’s kind heart flow through you to them. Give forgiveness because *you* want it; because you *need* it. “And let the cruel concept of yourself be changed to one that brings the peace of God” (5:7). Because you offer help to your brother, you can see yourself as “one that brings the peace of God.” As Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

Paragraph 6

6 The **concept** of yourself which now you hold would guarantee your function here remain forever unaccomplished and undone. ²And thus it dooms you to a bitter sense of deep depression and futility. ³Yet it need not be fixed, unless you choose to hold it past the hope of change, and keep it static and concealed within your mind. ⁴Give it instead to Him Who understands the changes that it needs to let it serve the function given you to bring you peace, that you may offer peace to have it yours. ⁵Alternatives are in your mind to use, and you can see yourself another way. ⁶Would you not rather look upon yourself as *needed* for salvation of the world, instead of as salvation's enemy?

• Study Question •

12. *Why does your current self-concept doom you to “a bitter sense of deep depression and futility” (6:2)?*

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Jesus now explains how our self-concept affects our function, a topic intimately tied to our experience of the peace of God. As the Text explained earlier, “To fulfill the Will of God perfectly is the only joy and peace that can be fully known, because it is the only function that can be fully experienced” (T-8.III.2:1 (FIP), T-8.II.4:4 (CE)). So if we are to experience the peace of God, we *must* fulfill the function God has given us. Thus, the key is knowing how the self-concept affects our function.

Perhaps saying we must fulfill our function to know God's peace sounds restrictive. Must we fulfill the Will of God *perfectly* to know joy? Yes, but all this means is that we must discover what we are born to do, the activity that fits our nature perfectly, and that we will be happy and at peace when we align fully with that purpose. It helps, I find, to think of it that way.

The Course points out that thinking of myself as a mixture of good and evil, riddled with guilt, is sure to keep me from accomplishing my function (6:1). It's pretty logical. How can you find the function that perfectly matches your nature when you conceive of your nature as totally out of whack? Our function in heaven, the Course says, is creating; on earth, it is healing and forgiving (T-12.VII.4:7). If you are mired in “a bitter sense of deep depression and futility” (6:2), how can you possibly bring healing and forgiveness to others? You must be *joyful* to heal:

“The light that belongs in you is merely the light of joy. Radiance is not associated with sorrow. Depression is often contagious, but although it may affect those who come in contact with it, they do not yield to its influence wholeheartedly. But joy calls forth an integrated willingness to share in it, and thus promotes the mind's natural impulse to respond as one.”

“**2** Those who attempt to heal without being wholly joyous themselves call forth different kinds of responses at the same time, and thus deprive others of the joy of responding wholeheartedly.” (T-5.I.1:4-2:2 (CE), (T-5.Int.1:4-7 (FIP))

“Our function is to let our minds be healed, that we may carry healing to the world, exchanging curse for blessing, pain for joy, and separation for the peace of God.” (W-pl.137.13:1)

When Jesus says that our self-concept “need not be fixed” (6:3), he does not mean “fixed” in the sense of “put right” or “repaired,” which our self-concept obviously *does* need, but “fixed” in the sense of “permanent” or “unchanging.” Thank God, our self-concept *can* change; it is not permanent—unless we *want* it to be! So, instead of holding on to it, and hiding it within our minds, let us give it over to the Holy Spirit, Who “understands the changes that it needs to let it *serve* the function given you to bring you peace” (6:4); *serve* that function instead of *hindering* it! Notice how, once again, the Course does not recommend that we try to change the self-concept on our own. Instead, we offer it up to a more knowledgeable Teacher. He assists us in changing and healing our self-concept so that we are *able* to fulfill our function, which is to “offer peace to have it yours” (6:4).

The next sentence is crystal clear: “Alternatives are in your mind to use, and you *can* see yourself another way” (6:5). That, to me, is the good news, the gospel message of salvation. And then the marvelous, refreshing, and uplifting alternative is offered: to see ourselves as *needed* for the salvation of the world, instead of as salvation’s enemy (6:6)! Unquestionably, that’s a better alternative.

Answer Key

1. Salvation uses learning, the changing of concepts. It does not use knowledge.
2. We see the bad side of people as their reality because we are projecting our own belief about ourselves onto them.
3. The meaningless content of the “evil” thought. Because you are afraid to really look at the thought, you fail to really see, to realize that it has only meaningless content. You think it has sinful content.
4. We can’t see our own so-called evil thoughts as actually meaningless because we still think they have some value, that they are useful, at least sometimes.
5. “Thus” refers to trusting what is good in your brother.
6. Because we inevitably associate the body with the “bad.” We see its actions as expressing the “baser” part of someone, and we see the good in him as associated with his spirit.
7. “That world” refers to the real world, the “another world” seen by the Holy Spirit.
8. The self-concept we normally hold (as discussed in Section V) and the self-concept in which we are pure goodness, with the body being only a shadow circling round this good.
9. c. You make this concept.
b. You give this concept as a gift to someone else, as an act of forgiveness.
d. You accept this concept as a gift to yourself.
a. You love this concept of yourself.
10. According to Sentence 5, we nurture this willingness by seeing what our old self-concept has brought us in terms of unhappiness. And then we see the contrast between that and a new self-concept that we will truly love.

11. I'm not aware of any other teaching that puts it quite this way.
12. Because it makes your function impossible to fulfill. If the whole reason you are here is to fulfill a function, and you can't do it, what would you feel but depression and futility?