

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 31

The Final Vision

Section VIII

The Savior's Vision

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.

The Self-concept and Its Importance

“The concept of the self stands like a shield, a silent barricade before the truth, and hides it from your sight.” (T-31.VIII.1:1)

As the opening words of this section make clear, we are continuing the study of our concept of the self begun in Section V. Let's quickly review what we've learned about our self-concept in the last three sections, and concepts in general. It's a lot!

- Self-concept mirrors the world we see, and vice versa
- The world I see is a concept of myself. True of both material and real worlds; we live in both. Concept of self can be interchanged but never jointly held.
- Purpose of world's learning is building a self-concept. We come without one and build it as we go.
- We make our self-concept. We make many of them as learning progresses.
- Self-concept taught by the world isn't what it seems to be.
- Two parts: face of innocence; victim
- The evident self-concept of innocence tolerates attack in self-defense.

- 2nd part, hidden below FOI, is victim, projecting guilt on others, blame for what you are: “I am the thing you made of me.”
- Victim consciousness supports our view of the world.
- Concepts are not natural; they are learned.
- A concept is a thought that is given meaning by its maker.
- Concepts maintain the world.
- Concept of the self is meaningless!
- How we think of our self is just a concept; what we are simply IS.
- The sole aim of the world’s learning is to teach us the self-concept that we are egos, trapped in a physical world.
- Self-concept is the great preoccupation of the world.
- Aim of Holy Spirit is to help us see that this self-concept must be undone to obtain peace of mind.
- No concept of self can stand against the truth of what we are. Undoing concepts is not difficult. Undoing truth is impossible.
- The innocent/“victim” consciousness is foolish. If one part is caused by your brother, who made the other? If you are hiding the victimhood, who are you hiding it FROM? What or who are you defending?
- Concepts of world and self are mutually dependent. If one is raised to doubt, the other goes as well.
- Maybe your concept of your brother is a reflection of your self-concept! This “makes way for active choice.”
- Who you are really must have learned these concepts; therefore, it pre-dates them.
- Salvation is escape from concepts.
- What’s important is that mind thinks. It has the power to choose different concepts that have different outcomes.

- Self-concept determines perception
- While perception lasts concepts are needed. Changing concept is what salvation does, moving them towards a true reflection of the truth.
- Only when concepts of self are done away with, truth is revealed as it has always been. It “enters” of itself.
- Greatest fear of the world is our statement that we don’t know what we are or what the world is.
- No concept can stand for what you are.
- Your concept of yourself is basically meaningless because you think you are a self that interacts with evil and reacts. You always interact only with yourself!
- Concepts of persons are full of judgments, and deal in opposites like “good” and “bad”.
- Ego concept emphasizes perception of the “bad,” generates fear, blackens self-concept.
- Focusing on the good enables us to see past the body.
- Focusing on the good, body fades to become “a shadow circling round the good.”
- As we see others this way, it becomes our concept of ourselves.
- The real world is shared; we will love this self-concept of others because it belongs to us as well.
- Forgiveness offered to another has been accepted for yourself as well.
- Faith in a brother, seeing the good in him, changes your fearful concept of yourself.
- Clinging to ego as self-concept traps us in futility and depression. It stands as a shield against the truth.

To sum it all up: Our self-concept and our perception of the world are intimately linked and mutually interdependent. How we see ourselves determines how we see the world. Our concept of ourselves as individual egos in bodies results in the perception of an evil, dangerous world of which we

are the innocent victims. In the Course, salvation consists in first changing our self-concept and eventually escaping from concepts entirely, since no concept can adequately stand for the truth of what we are.

We must be willing to let go of our concept of ourselves and affirm, “I do not know the thing I am.”

We can shift our self-concept toward the truth if we choose to focus on the good in others rather than focusing on their “sins.” In other words, *forgiveness*. Forgiveness enables us to see past their bodies (since all “sins” are actions of the body) to their original, pure, innocent self. Offering forgiveness to another changes our self-concept, and the forgiveness we offer to others becomes our own. As a result, our perception of the world will also change, and we will see the real world.

Overview of Section VIII

In the FIP edition, this section was originally part of Section VII. Take a moment to review what’s gone before:

Summary of the preceding section: Salvation promotes learning, changing concepts through contrast. You have a self-concept with mixed “good” and “evil,” projecting the “bad” onto others. You rarely see your own “evil” thoughts, and when you do, they seem to prove you a sinner. You cannot grant yourself innocence, but you *can* transform your self-concept through genuinely forgiving another.

You associate the “bad” in your brother with his body. Therefore, you can see him s more than a body by focusing on the good in him. Eventually, you will see the body as a mere shadow circling around the good in him. See the world that way, and you will see yourself that way. The world and the real world stem from these two self-concepts. Because you shared the new self-concept as a gift to another, who then gave it back to you, you will love it.

Trust the good in your brother; give him the gift of forgiveness because you need it as much as he does.

That is how to change your fearful self-concept. You only need to be willing to let it happen. If you contrast the pain brought by the old self-concept with the peace brought by the new one, you can motivate yourself to make the change. Your current self-concept brings a sense of depression and the futility of an unfulfilled function, but it is not unchangeable. Give it to the Holy Spirit, Who understands the changes it needs so that you can fulfill your function: offering peace to have it for yourself. Isn’t “needed for the world’s salvation” a better self-concept than “salvation’s enemy”?

“Executive Summary”: *The way to change your self-concept from guilt to innocence is by being willing to ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in overlooking your brother’s faults and trusting the good that is within him.*

The main topic of *this* section is the vision of the savior. “Savior” refers, not *only* to Jesus, but to anyone who functions as a savior in this world. Any one of us can be and is meant to be a savior. “The savior’s vision” refers not to what a savior looks with but *what* they see and what effect such vision has. The section addresses several aspects of the savior’s vision, which you should look for as you read:

- What blocks the vision?
- Who is functioning as savior?
- With whom does the savior interact?
- What does this vision see?
- What is the relation between this vision and our self-concept?

- How is our body related to this vision?
- What is the result in someone seen through a savior's vision?
- What is the result for the savior when he or she sees someone with this vision?
- What has vision got to do with temptations?
- How is vision related to time?
- How do we obtain this vision?

Paragraph 1

The **concept** of the self stands like a shield, a silent barricade before the truth, and hides it from your sight. ²All things you see are images because you look on them as through a barrier which dims your sight and warps your vision, so that you behold nothing with clarity. ³The light is kept from everything you see. ⁴At most, you glimpse a shadow of what lies beyond. ⁵At least, you merely look on darkness and perceive the terrified imaginings that come from guilty thoughts and **concepts** born of fear. ⁶And what you see is hell, for fear *is* hell. ⁷All that is given you is for release: the sight, the vision, and the inner Guide all lead you *out* of hell, with those you love beside you, and the universe with them.

The first sentence of this section adds to our understanding of why the ego has us build this two-layered self-concept. Our self-concept acts as a “shield” or “barricade” against the truth. It blocks the truth from our sight. We cannot see anything below the surface veneer that we have constructed (1:1). What lies beneath it, we shall see, is not only the raw ego, but our right mind, and ultimately the Christ mind. While we are preoccupied with our face of innocence or as a victim of the world, we cannot see past it.

As I read this paragraph, I realize that everything I see gets filtered through my self-concept somehow. If I see myself as weak and vulnerable, for instance, strong and powerful people or things may appear to be threatening or dangerous. If I consider myself unworthy, I will not trust people who appear to trust and love me (because I think I don't deserve it). In this way, my concept of myself acts as a barricade to the truth (1:1). I do not see anything as it is; I see only a blurred *image* that has been dimmed and warped by my self-concept (1:2). It blocks the shining light of Christ in everything (1:3). If any light gets through at all, it is merely a faint shadow of the magnificence that hides behind the image I see, but often no light gets through at all, and I perceive darkness that I populate with my terrified imaginings that grow out of my guilt and fear (1:4–5). I see *hell*, “for fear *is* hell” (1:6). All this is the effect of my grossly distorted self-concept!

There is hope! God has given us a new kind of sight that can perceive a completely different vision, with an inner Guide Who can show us how to use it and lead us out of the hell we have made up, and not only *us*, but with those we love beside us, and the whole universe with them (1:7)! The remainder of this section will focus on our holy function as saviors of the world, seeing with a savior's vision and recognizing the light of God within ourselves and everyone we meet or look upon.

Practice Suggestion (a visualization exercise):

Imagine yourself holding up your self-concept (you might, in particular, think of your face of innocence) like a shield before the blazing light of truth so that you are blocking the truth from your sight.

Now, imagine that this shield is made of a thick, semi-transparent substance that lets only a small amount of light through. You thus cannot clearly see what is on the other side of it. You only see the dim, blurry, distorted images that pass through it. These are little more than vague shadows. And that is the best that you can see. Mostly, you see only the projection of your own “terrified imaginings that come from guilty thoughts” and fearful concepts. You see these reflected on the shield held up before you.

Now, look around the space you are sitting in and realize that the preceding description is true of what you see right now. You mostly see the reflection of your terrified imaginings on the shield of your self-concept. Here and there, where you have let a little more vision into your mind, your shield has allowed through a dim, shadowy, blurry image of what is really there.

Still looking around you, try to get in touch with the fear associated with the things you see. See if you can sense fear about what might happen with this or that thing you see. Then say to yourself, “And what I see is hell, for fear is hell.”

All that is given you (by God) is for your release. “The sight” is the Holy Spirit’s sight, mentioned in 3:6. “The vision” is what will later in this section be called the savior’s vision. And “the inner Guide,” of course, is the Holy Spirit. Picture them leading you out of hell, out of the fearful perception you currently have, through the dark, blurry shield, and out to the other side, where all is crystal clear and bright. Picture those you love being beside you, walking out of hell with you. And then picture the entire Sonship beside them.

Paragraph 2

2 Behold your role within the universe! 2 To every part of true creation has the Lord of love and life entrusted all salvation from the misery of hell. 3 And to each one has He allowed the grace to be a savior to the holy ones especially entrusted to his care. 4 And this he learns when first he looks upon one brother as he looks upon himself, and sees the mirror of himself in him. 5 Thus is the **concept** of himself laid by, for nothing stands between his sight and what he looks upon, to judge what he beholds. 6 And in this single vision does he see the face of Christ, and understands he looks on everyone as he beholds this one. 7 For there is light where darkness was before, and now the veil is lifted from his sight.

• Study Question •

1. Based on T-31.VII.6:6, 1:7, and 2:1–3, what is “your role within the universe”?
2. How do you learn what your function on earth really is?
3. (2:6). “Face of Christ.” The phrase last occurred in Chapters 29 and 30 (once each chapter). Now, it will appear, starting with this sentence, five times in this

- section and the next (T-31.VIII.2:6; T-31.VIII.3:1; T-31.VIII.7:6; T-31.IX.4.;; T-31.XI.12:). If you can, recall what this phrase, "face of Christ," means.*
4. (2:7). Recall from Section VI where the word "veil" was last mentioned (31.VI.3:7), and read over that paragraph. Do you see a connection to anything that is being said here?



In the preceding paragraph, Jesus has pointed out that we gain a new self-concept through seeing ourselves differently:

- as one who gives the gift of salvation, forgiveness, and an innocent Self to our brothers;
- as one who brings the peace of God;
- as one who offers peace to have it for ourselves;
- as a savior of the world;
- as one who follows the Inner Guide to lead us, those we love, and the entire universe out of hell.

Then he exclaims, "Behold your role!" (2:1) Let your mind stop and dwell for a few minutes on *your* role. Has it begun to dawn upon you that Jesus actually means it when he says you (and everyone) are "entrusted with *all* salvation from hell" (2:2)? The Workbook hammers this home:

"I am entrusted with the gifts of God." (W-pl.166.title)

"I am among the ministers of God." (W-pl.154.title)

"Let us but learn this lesson for today: We will not recognize what we receive until we give it" (W-pl.154.12:1).

"The light of the world brings peace to every mind through my forgiveness. I am the means God has appointed for the salvation of the world". (W-pl.63.3:4-5)

"You are in charge of your salvation. You are in charge of the salvation of the world." (W-pl.70.10:3-4)

"...you are essential to God's plan for the salvation of the world." (W-pl.100.10:7)

"Salvation of the world depends on me." (W-pl.186.title)

That is just a small sample of the many times the Course expresses this thought. We need the frequent repetitions because, oddly, we resist this message. Jesus asked us in T-31.VII.6:6: "Would you not rather look upon yourself as needed for salvation of the world, instead of as salvation's enemy?" The answer seems like a no-brainer, and yet we *seem* to prefer to be salvation's enemy instead of salvation's messenger. Part of our resistance is to the apparent responsibility; we resist the responsibility because we don't trust ourselves to fulfill it. We don't want to know that the world's salvation depends on us, that our part is essential, that we are in charge of the salvation of the world, entrusted with it, and necessary to it—we don't *want* it because we don't think we can carry out the task. Something in us thinks, "If the world's salvation depends on me, then God help the world!" That's precisely what this part of the Course is dealing with: that miserable self-concept.

In asking us to "behold" our role in the universe, Jesus is drawing us into lifting our heads and recognizing that we *are* magnificent beings with a high, noble purpose. The Lord of Love and Life, the Infinite Presence, has allowed each one of us "the grace to be a savior to the holy ones especially

entrusted to his care” (2:3). He says it is a “grace”! It isn’t a burden or arduous task; it is a favor, a generous gift, a blessing. God has given us the gift of participating in the most important and significant thing in all creation: saving all creation from the misery of hell.

What are you living for? What am I living for? Do we recognize it is for this holy purpose? We have a mission, you and I. We are here to guide our brothers home:

“You do not know how to look within yourself, for you do not believe your home is there. Yet the Holy Spirit knows it for you, and He will guide you to your home because that is His mission. As He fulfills His mission, He will teach you *yours*, for your mission is the same as His. By guiding your *brothers* home, you are but following Him.” (T-12.VI.5:4–7 (CE), T-12.IV.5:4–7 (FIP))

That realization can genuinely transform your life. It can color every encounter and fill every moment with miracles. We can meet each new situation with the thought, “I am here only to be truly helpful” (T-2.XI.18:2 (CE), T-2.V.18:2 (FIP)). Each person we interact with evokes the question, “What should I do for him, Your holy Son?” (S-2.III.5:1). Seeing yourself as one who guides your brothers home, and seeing them as people God has entrusted to your care, brings a whole new quality to your life.

The Buddhist scripture known as the *Metta Sutra* contains a similar description of the mind of a *bodhisattva*:

“As a mother, even at the risk of her own life, protects her son, her only son, so let there be goodwill without measure between all beings. Let goodwill without measure prevail in the whole world, above, below, around, unstinted, unmixed with any feeling of differing or opposing interests. If a man remains steadfastly in this state of mind all the time he is awake, then is come to pass the saying, ‘Even in this world holiness has been found.’”

We should notice here that Jesus speaks of “ones especially entrusted to [your] care” (2:3). That implies that each of us is the beneficiary of divine wisdom, wisdom that stands behind the plan of our individualized curriculum. Perhaps this seems too much like a simplistic view that God somehow intervenes in events of the world. Ken Wapnick used to say that God does not know what’s going on in our dream. I think he based it on his reasoning that whatever God knows is *real*, and since our life in this world is an illusion, God can’t know anything about it. Thus, Ken discounted the notion that the Holy Spirit would give us detailed guidance in the world. In my opinion, the instructions in Workbook Lesson 71 contradict Ken’s view:

“Ask Him very specifically: What would You have me do? Where would You have me go? What would You have me say, and to whom?” (W-71.9:2–5)

The way I see it is this: God does have specific plans for each of us. So if we consciously place our lives in His hands, we can trust that whatever happens is supposed to happen. The people we meet we are supposed to meet. And so on. But we can choose not to do that. So I can give each day to God as it begins and trust that whatever happens and whoever I meet is part of God’s plan.

If we choose to accept our role as a teacher of God, a savior, this kind of divine guidance kicks in:

“Certain pupils have been assigned to each of God’s teachers, and they will begin to look for him as soon as he has answered the Call. They were chosen for him because the form of the universal curriculum that he will teach is best for them in view of their level of understanding. His pupils have been waiting for him, for his coming is certain. Again, it is only a matter of time. Once he has chosen to fulfill his role, they are ready to fulfill theirs. Time waits on his choice,

but not on whom he will serve. When he is ready to learn, the opportunities to teach will be provided for him.” (M-2.1)

Note the preconditions to having “pupils” (people you are assigned to forgive) show up. First, you have to answer the Call to savior-hood. It’s “only” a matter of time till that happens. You must first choose to fulfill your role before others begin to fulfill theirs. When you are ready to learn, “the opportunities to teach will be provided.”

Another thing that stands out to me is what Paragraph 4 says about the make-up of those who are entrusted to you: “The holy ones whom God has given each of you to save are everyone you meet or look upon, not knowing who they are; all those you saw an instant and forgot, and those you knew a long while since, and those you will yet meet; the unremembered and the not yet born” (4:5). It’s not very selective, is it? “Everyone you meet or look upon”! People whose identity is unknown to you. People whom you’ve met in the past and forgotten (“the unremembered”), people who haven’t been born yet. The list of those “entrusted to your care” is apparently a very long and diverse list!

When do we awake to an awareness of our role as saviors? When we first come to see just “*one* brother” (emphasis is from Jesus) as a mirror of ourselves, a vision of mutual forgiveness. In that moment of recognition of the Christ in one other person, we drop our self-concept! The self-concept was the shield that was blocking our vision (1:1; 2:5; 3:1). It no longer exists to block our vision of the truth. We can now see without judgment (2:4–5). In that one revelatory moment, we “see the face of Christ” and realize that what we are seeing in this one person is in *every* person. Not just the same *kind* of something in every person, but *the same thing*, Christ. Looking at this one person, we are looking at everyone—including ourselves (2:6). The veil (our self-concept) has lifted. The light has dawned (2:7).

How many people do we have to forgive? Just one! Because there *is* only one. In forgiving one, you have forgiven everyone.

Paragraph 3

3 The veil across the face of Christ, the fear of God and of salvation, and the love of guilt and death¹—they all are different names for just *one* error: that there is a space between you and your brother, kept apart by an illusion of yourself which holds him off from you and you away from him.² The sword of judgment is the weapon which you give to the illusion of yourself, that it may fight to keep the space that holds your brother off unoccupied by love.² Yet while you hold this sword you must perceive the body as yourself, for you are bound to separation from the sight of him who holds the mirror to another view of what he is, and thus what *you* must be.

• Study Question •

5. (3:1): *What is the “one error” he pinpoints here and identifies as the same central error all these things are referring to??*
-

(9:1). Jesus has just talked about the veil. He has spoken of the fear of God several times in the last three chapters. The love of guilt and death goes back many chapters. It seems he is trying to sum things up and tie together many “names” or ways of talking about things. A veil across the face of Christ, the fear of God and salvation, the love of guilt and death, are all different names for one error: that there is a space between you and your brother. The infamous “gap” appears again. When we read about the veil across the face of Christ, we should realize it refers to our belief in a separation between our self and that of others. Fear of God? Same thing, separation. Fear of salvation? Same. Love for guilt, attraction to death? Same thing. All of them refer to this space between us, the space that isn’t there.

An illusion of yourself, your self-concept, guards this space that keeps you apart. This self-image wields the sword of judgment to keep the gap empty of love (3:2).

Try to picture this for a moment. See yourself and your brother or sister with a wide gap between you. You stand with a massive sword in your hand, threatening anyone or anything that would dare to enter the gap. The sword symbolizes the judgments you make about the sins of your brothers and sisters. The judgments keep them at bay, well-separated from your judging presence.

¹ These are references to “The Obstacles to Peace” (T-19.IV). “The veil across the face of Christ” and “the fear of God” refer to the fourth obstacle, the fear of God. “The love of guilt” features heavily in the first obstacle (“The attraction of guilt produces fear of love”—T-19.IV.A.11:1—which makes us want to get rid of peace) and “the love of...death” is the third obstacle, the attraction of death. So Jesus seems to be referencing the obstacles here, and saying that they are in essence the same error: “that there is a space between you and your brother.”

² The sword of judgment is an image drawn from the Bible. See, for instance, Deuteronomy 32:41: “If I [God] whet [sharpen] my glittering sword, and my hand takes hold on judgment, I will take vengeance on my adversaries, and will requite those who hate me.” In the above passage, it is not God Who wields this sword in order to carry out His righteous judgment; rather, we are the ones wielding it, in order to insanely keep the space between us and others “unoccupied by love.”

Notice that to picture this you *have to* picture one another as bodies. To hold this sword of judgment, you *must* perceive the body as *yourself* because you must keep your self-concept apart from your brother (3:3). Why? Because if you were to perceive your brother or sister as they *are in reality*, you would see them as a mirror to another view of what *you* are in reality. The ego is actually “protecting” you from that vision of your True Self. Your fear is seeing your Self, which if seen would sound the death knell for the ego. The body is just a symbol of the ego, a symbol of separateness. To identify with the body is the same as identifying with the ego.

The reason the body “exists,” why the face of innocence “exists,” and why the “victim consciousness” “exists,” is the same reason. They all come into their illusory existence as layers of an elaborate camouflage operation of our egos, trying to hide, but even more, trying to hide the Christ mind that lies beneath all the masks and beneath the ego itself.

Paragraph 4

4 What is temptation but the wish to stay in hell and misery? And what could this give rise to but an image of yourself that *can* be miserable and remain in hell and torment? Who has learned to see his brother not as this has saved himself, and thus is he a savior to the rest. To everyone has God entrusted all, because a partial savior would be one who is but partly saved. The holy ones whom God has given each of you to save are everyone you meet or look upon, not knowing who they are; all those you saw an instant and forgot, and those you knew a long while since, and those you will yet meet; the unremembered and the not yet born. For God has given you His Son to save from every concept that he ever held.

• Study Question •

6. *It's worth noting that the phrase “holy ones” (referring to our brothers) occurs three times in these last two sections (2:3, 4:5, and IX.10:1), and nowhere else in the Course. What does this imply about who our brothers are?*

•

Three times the Course has asked the rhetorical question beginning with, “What is temptation but...” The first was in the final section of Chapter 30. Here is a list:

“What is temptation but a wish to make illusions real?” (T-30.IX.3:1 (CE), T-30.VIII.3:1 (FIP))

“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?” (T-31.I.11:1)

And this instance: “What is temptation but the wish to stay in hell and misery?” (T-31.VIII.4:1 (CE), T-31.VII.10:1 (FIP))

We can combine the three to arrive at a kind of Course definition of temptation: Temptation is a wish to make the wrong decision about what to learn. That wrong decision is that our illusions are real, which results in our remaining in hell and misery--a very undesirable outcome (4:1). Notice that all three

definitions say that temptation is *a wish*. The Course uses the word *wish* to represent a fruitless desire for something impossible. Our fatal wish is to hold on to our separation, to hold on to the separated self that can only be miserable and in hell (4:2). We foolishly choose hell and misery because it implies separateness, which is our wish for the impossible. If we are willing to look at our insane wish fearlessly, we will realize how insane it is, and we will recognize that it truly is *not* an outcome that we want! The escape from hell lies in the willingness to abandon the wish to be separate and the willingness to recognize each brother and sister as part of ourselves, one with us.

Jesus then repeats the pattern he outlined in 2:4–6. When someone is willing “to see his brother as *not* this” (4:3), not a separate self that “*can* be miserable and remain in hell” (4:2), he has just “saved himself” (4:3)! That’s the pattern. See a sister or brother as not a separate self but instead an aspect of the One Self and, in doing so, you save yourself. “Thus is he a savior to the rest” (4:3). Ending your separation from one person ends *your* separation, and that makes you into someone who can bring salvation to everyone. You have gained a new self-concept that you can extend to the world. If you are a savior to one, you have become a savior to all; a partial savior (if such were possible) would be someone only partially saved. The idea seems to be that certain ones are entrusted to each of us (mentioned in 2:3). In forgiving those particular persons, we become *world* saviors, able to extend salvation to “everyone you meet or look upon, not knowing who they are; all those you saw an instant and forgot, and those you knew a long while since, and those you will yet meet; the unremembered and the not yet born” (4:5).

I should point out a slight but intriguing difference in 4:5 between the CE and FIP editions. FIP says, “The holy ones whom God has given **you** to save...” The CE makes a slight change: “The holy ones whom God has given **each of you** to save...” (my emphasis). Adding “each of” seems to underscore that *every one of us* has certain people assigned to us. Spoken to Helen and Bill, it made it clear that he was speaking to both of them.

A savior’s vision *sees* Christ, God’s Son, in all persons and things. The apostle Paul seems to have had the same thing in mind in his epistle to the Colossians:

“You have clothed yourselves with the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of its creator. In that renewal there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free; but Christ is all and in all!” (Colossians 3:10–11 NRSV)

When we “clothed [ourselves] with the new self,” we left behind our old self-concept. We accepted that we remain as God created us, “according to the image of [our] creator.” In doing so, we have entered a renewed state in which divisions no longer exist, “but Christ is all and in all.” The mission of a savior is to save everyone from every concept they ever held, restoring them to their true Identity in Christ.

This same idea is presented clearly by Jim Marion in his excellent book, *Putting on the Mind of Christ: The Inner Work of Christian Spirituality*: (page 166)

“In all one’s dealings with others, from now on, one is always aware that one is dealing with God’s Son, and that, whatever one does to others, one does to God’s Son (Matt. 25:35-40); in fact, not only to God’s Son but to oneself (since we too are one in substance with that Son). One sees that in this world there are no ‘others,’ there is only Christ. One sees that this has always been the case but up until now, we had been blind to this truth. With St. Paul we can now declare that we have come ‘to that oneness in our faith and in our knowledge of the Son of

God' as to become 'a mature person, reaching to the very height of Christ's full stature'" (Eph. 4:13)

Paragraph 5

5 Yet while you wish to stay in hell, how *could* you be the savior of the Son of God? How would you know his holiness, while you see him apart from yours? For holiness is seen through holy eyes that look upon the innocence within, and thus expect to see it everywhere. And so they call it forth in everyone they look upon, that he may be what they expect of him. This is the savior's vision: that he see *his* innocence in all he looks upon, and see his own salvation everywhere. He holds no concept of himself between his calm and open eyes and what he sees. He brings the light to what he looks upon, that he may see it as it really is.

• Study Question •

7. *The "wish to stay in hell" equates with the choice to remain separate from our brother, judging him for his sin. Becoming "savior of the Son of God" is the extension of forgiveness that follows when we have forgiven our brother and have accepted a new self-concept of ourselves as a result. Try restating this sentence in your own words.*

•

Recall that a wish to stay in hell refers to "all temptation," which you are doing when choosing to remain separate from your brother. If you are not willing to "save" (i.e., forgive) this one person, how *could* you possibly "be the savior to" the entire Sonship (5:1)? You are seeing this person as separate from yourself. We find true holiness only in identity with the One Son of God. You have to see your brother's innocence to see your own, so you cannot possibly be seeing yourself as identified with Christ if you are not seeing your brother that way, and vice versa (5:2). As you see one, you must see the other. We come to see the Son of God in everyone.

The only way to see holiness is to see it within yourself and *because of that* "expect to see it everywhere" (5:3). Because you expect to see it in everyone, you "call it forth in everyone" (5:4). Your expectation draws out of them what you expect.

That's the definition of "the savior's vision" (5:5). The savior's vision is holy eyes that see the innocence in yourself, expect to see it everywhere, and therefore call forth that innocence in everyone you "look upon." Looking upon, apparently, can be mental as well as physical; it includes people you merely think about (4:5), such as people no longer alive or not yet born, even people you've forgotten. Your "eyes" are calm and open. You no longer have a concept of yourself that obscures and distorts what you see (5:6). Instead, you bring the light to what you look at, and you see it "as it really is" (5:7).

• Study Question •

8. *Try to place these steps in the appropriate sequence, according to what you've read up to now:*
- a. You, as savior of the Son of God, call forth innocence in everyone you look upon. This is your function.
 - b. You choose to let go of the judgment and separation that keep you and your brother apart.

- c. You look upon the innocence within yourself.
 - d. You believe yourself and your brother are separate, your holiness separate from his, so that you can condemn him for his sins and still be innocent yourself.
 - e. You expect to see innocence everywhere you look and thus you see it and call it forth.
 - f. You recognize the innocence and holiness of your brother.
-

Paragraph 6

6 Whatever form temptation seems to take it always but reflects a wish to be a self that you are not. And from that wish a concept rises, teaching you you *are* the thing you wish to be. It will remain your concept of yourself until the wish that fathered it no longer is held dear. And while you cherish it, you will behold your brother in the likeness of the self whose image has the wish begot of you. For vision can but represent a wish, because it has no power to create. Yet it can look with love or look with hate, depending only on the simple choice of whether you would join with what you see or keep yourself apart and separate.

• Study Question •

- 9. **(6:1).** Again back to temptation, this time seen as “a wish to be a self that you are not.” What word seems to come up a lot in the definitions given of “temptation”?
 - 10. **(6:1–4).** How are these three things related:
 - 1. Your wish to be separate;
 - 2. your self-concept or image of yourself;
 - 3. your perception of your brother?
-

As you read the first four sentences, notice how *your* self-concept distorts your perception by coming *between* your mind and the reality of your brother. You see him as sinful because you expect him to be sinful, and you expect that of him because that is your image of yourself. Notice how this relates to the places in this section and the last that refer to the savior’s vision as being free from the interference of a self-concept that “comes between.” (See (VII.5:2 (CE), VII.5:2 (FIP)); (VIII.1:1–2 (CE), VII.7:1–2 (FIP)); (VIII.2:5 (CE), VII.8:5 (FIP)); (VII. 11:6 (FIP), VIII.5:6 (CE)). It’s a recurring idea that we should pay attention to. It’s one reason why changing our self-concept is so central to forgiveness (perhaps *eliminating* the self-concept might be a better way to put it). Seeing myself sinful or less than whole *prevents me* from seeing anyone else as sinless. My view of myself as “sinful” arises because of my wish to be something other than what I am in truth: God’s perfect creation. Until I abandon that wish, that erroneous way of seeing myself will continue, and I will continue to see my brother in the same mistaken way (6:4).

Once again, notice the use of the word “wish.” Wishes and vision have no power to create (6:5). My flawed vision is just a representation of my wish for a separate self. Vision can show me hate, or it can show me love. Which I see depends *only* on one simple choice: Do I want to *join* with what I see, or do I

want to keep myself apart and separate (6:6)? If I want to be separate, I will see my brother as something I need to separate from; I will see with hatred. If I want to join, I will see my brother as something I want to join with; I will see with love.

Paragraph 7

7 The savior's vision is as innocent of what your brother is as it is free of any judgment made upon yourself. ¶It sees no past in anyone at all. ¶And thus it serves a wholly open mind, unclouded by old concepts and prepared to look on only what the present holds. ¶It cannot judge because it does not know. ¶And recognizing this, it merely asks, "What is the meaning of what I behold?" ¶Then is the answer given, and the door held open for the face of Christ to shine upon the one who asks in innocence to see beyond the veil of old ideas and ancient concepts held so long and dear against the vision of the Christ in you.

In 7:1, the Course uses the phrase "innocent of" in the sense of "unaware of" or "lacking." It says that when I see a brother with a savior's vision, I am unaware of or lacking in any judgment about what he is *to the extent* that I am free of any judgment on *myself*. My mind is "wholly open." There are no twisted self-concepts in the way of vision, enabling me to "look on only what the present holds" (7:3). I no longer see my brother's past at all (7:2).

"When you have learned to look upon everyone with *no reference at all* to the past, either his or yours as you perceived it, you will be able to learn from what you see now." (T-13.VI.2:1-3 (CE), T-13.VI.2:3 (FIP))

To see someone with "no reference at all to the past" is a very high standard. Or so it seems. I don't think this is something anyone can just do by simple choice, even though one Workbook lesson asks us to repeat, "Let me forget my brother's past today," and, "The past is over. It can touch me not" (Lessons 288 and 289). Read all of what Lesson 289 has to say, confirming what is said here:

"The past is over. It can touch me not."

"1. I Unless the past is over in my mind, the real world must escape my sight. 2 For I am really looking nowhere; seeing but what is not there. 3 How can I then perceive the world forgiveness offers? 4 This the past was made to hide, for this the world that can be looked on only now. 5 It has no past. 6 For what can be forgiven but the past, and if it is forgiven, it is gone."

"2. I Father, let me not look upon a past that is not there. 2 For You have offered me Your Own replacement, in a present world the past has left untouched and free of sin. 3 Here is the end of guilt. 4 And here am I made ready for Your final step. 5 Shall I demand that You wait longer for Your Son to find the loveliness You planned to be the end of all his dreams and all his pain?"

If the past is forgiven, it is gone. If it isn't gone, I cannot see the real world. I can see the world of truth only *now*. Now is the only time I can see my brother's reality. So how do I get beyond seeing the past?

This section tells us that we can free our minds of the past by abandoning our wish to remain separate from one another. The reason we see the past and focus on another's past misdeeds is that we

believe in our *own* misdeeds (our self-concept). That concept that arises because of our wish to be separate. It blocks our vision of the truth.

The savior's vision is free of judgment. It does not know what anyone is, and so it cannot judge (7:4); Instead, this vision *asks*, "What is the meaning of what I behold?" (7:5). It waits for the Holy Spirit to tell it the meaning of what it sees. The Holy Spirit, we know, always sees either love or a call for love. When that answer comes to us, a door opens in our minds, and the face of Christ shines out. We see Christ in our brother. We can do so because we have asked "to see beyond the veil of old ideas and ancient concepts" that we have clung to for so long, blocking the vision of the Christ in us (7:6). Recall that "the face of Christ" is the vision of the innocence of God's Son.

A door opens in my mind! I love this image. It's what Jean Huston reports of her experience as a six-year-old when "suddenly the key turned and the door to the universe opened." "Everything...became part of a single Unity, a glorious symphonic resonance in which every part of the universe was a part of and illuminated every other part." This is what seeing the real world is like. There was a chorus I used to sing in my Christian days that never failed moved me because, I think, it hinted at an experience like this:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in His wonderful face,
And the things of earth will grow strangely dim
In the light of his glory and grace.

Paragraph 8

8 Be vigilant against temptation, then, remembering that it is but a wish, insane and meaningless, to make yourself a thing which you are not. **¶**And think as well upon the thing which you would be instead. **¶**It is a thing of madness, pain, and death; a thing of treachery and black despair, of failing dreams and no remaining hope except to die and end the dream of fear. **¶***This* is temptation; nothing more than this. **¶**Can this be difficult to choose *against*? **¶**Consider what temptation is, and see the real alternatives you choose between. **¶**There are but two. **¶**Be not deceived by what appears as many choices. **¶**There is hell or Heaven. **¶**And of these you choose but one.

• Study Question •

11. (14:1). *What is your understanding, now, of what "be vigilant against temptation" means?*

•

In most traditional religions, being vigilant against temptation means things like abstinence or close moderation of alcohol, resisting greedy impulses, refraining from telling lies, avoiding sexual misconduct, trying not to over-eat, and perhaps even resisting thoughts along such lines. That is not at all what the Course has in mind. It asks us to be vigilant, "remembering that [temptation] is but a wish, insane and meaningless, to make yourself a thing which you are not" (8:1). That "thing" is an independent, autonomous being separate from other beings and God. Remember then: That's temptation. What might it mean to be vigilant against it?

In light of what the Course has said so far, I think vigilance against temptation means watching my mind and resisting or countering the tendency to glom on to some demeaning concept of my brother or myself. Instead, I must try to live from an “I don’t know what this means” state of mind, asking the Holy Spirit to judge for me. Vigilance is a choice to banish the past from my mind. I refuse to hold the past against anyone, including myself. Vigilance means to watch for every wish to see anyone as anything less than a holy child of God.

As we work at such vigilance, Jesus asks us to think about what we would be if we are not the holy child of God (8:2). He says:

“It is a thing of madness, pain, and death; a thing of treachery and black despair, of failing dreams and no remaining hope except to die and end the dream of fear.” (8:3)

That’s all that temptation to be a separate self is (8:4)! When I see myself as less than a holy child of God, I choose madness, pain, death, despair, and broken dreams. I am choosing hopelessness. I can see only one exit from the madness: death. “Think about that,” he urges. Chew on that, and you’ll want to spit it out! “Can this be difficult to choose against?” (8:5). When we choose for our egos, we don’t realize the horror we are choosing. Jesus wants us to be aware of the true nature of our choice. He wants us to clearly see “the real alternatives” (8:6) because if we do, there is no way we’ll choose the ego. Counting the cost of our choice is what motivates us to make a different choice.

“All good teachers realize that only fundamental change will last, but they do not begin at this level. Strengthening motivation for change is their first and foremost goal. It is also their last and final one. Increasing motivation for change in the learner is all that a teacher need do to guarantee change. This is because a change in motivation is a change of mind, and this will inevitably produce fundamental change because mind is fundamental.” (T-6.VII.3:1–5 (CE))

There are just two alternatives: hell, or heaven. Don’t think you have any other alternative (8:7–9). Ego or spirit. Hell or heaven. Choosing both is impossible; it’s one or the other.

Paragraph 9

9 Let not the world’s light, given unto you, be hidden from the world. **It needs the light, for it is dark indeed, and men despair because the savior’s vision is withheld, and what they see is death. Their savior stands, unknowing and unknown, beholding them with eyes unopened. And they cannot see until he looks on them with seeing eyes, and offers them forgiveness with his own. Can you to whom God says “Release My Son” be tempted not to listen, when you learn that it is you for whom He asks release? And what but this is what this course would teach? And what but this is there for you to learn?**

• **Study Question** •

12. (9:2–4). *What would it mean to withhold the savior's vision? Read all three sentences before answering. (#17)*
13. *What result does Jesus say comes from our withholding of vision? (#18)?*

In the Gospels, Jesus once said, “I am the light of the world.” (John 8:12). Most Christians are familiar with that saying. But many do not realize that he also said, “*You* are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid...let your light shine before others” (Matthew 5:14, 16, my emphasis). Here he repeats that idea. He says “the world’s light” has been given to us and appeals to us not to hide it from the world (9:1). If you and I have that light, and we are supposed to make sure the world sees it, how do you suppose he means us to do that? We are all here, as we’ve seen in these sections, as saviors to the world. Our mission is to forgive the world, to see it with a savior’s vision. We are to focus on the good in everyone and see them as sinless, holy children of God, imparting to them the ability to see themselves that way.

“I am the light of the world. That is my only function. That is why I am here” W-pl.61.5:3-5 (FIP).

People around us despair when we withhold the savior’s vision (9:1); we need to let that sink in. Being saviors of the world is our function:

“Forgiveness is my function as the light of the world.”

“It is your forgiveness that will bring the world of darkness to the light. It is your forgiveness that lets you recognize the light in which you see. Forgiveness is the demonstration that you are the light of the world. Through your forgiveness does the truth about yourself return to your memory. Therefore, in your forgiveness lies your salvation” (W-pl.62.1:1-5 (FIP)).

The world is dark; its inhabitants see death all around. It needs the light you have within you (9:2). But here you are, “unknowing and unknown, beholding them with eyes unopened” (9:3). To fail our function has dreadful consequences. Those still in the dark cannot see until you or I look on them “with seeing eyes,” with a savior’s vision, and offer forgiveness to them and ourselves in the process (9:4). That is the whole purpose of *A Course in Miracles* (9:6). If we are tempted not to listen when God calls us to be saviors, saying to us, “Release My Son,” we are saying “No” to the lesson the Course has come to teach us (9:7). We need to realize that “it is *you* for whom He asks release” (9:4). We deny forgiveness to ourselves. How can we refuse?

In words from the Workbook:

“You understand that you are healed when you give healing. You accept forgiveness as accomplished in yourself when you forgive. You recognize your brother as yourself, and thus do you perceive that you are whole” (W-pl.159.2:1–3).

We’ve just read that God is asking us to take up forgiveness as our function as the light of the world. That is the one lesson the Course wants to teach us. This thought flows right into the next and final section, “Choose Once Again,” which begins by contrasting this one lesson with the one lesson *temptation* wants to teach. It then asks us if we would choose our separated identity “if Christ appeared to you in all His glory, asking you but this: ‘Choose once again if you would take your place among the saviors of the world, or would remain in hell, and hold your brothers there.’ For He *has* come, and He *is* asking this” (T-31.IX.1:4–5). That will be the closing appeal of the Course.

Answer Key

1. You are the savior of the world, whose task is to release yourself, those you love, and the entire universe from the misery of hell, beginning with those especially entrusted to you.
2. You learn your function as savior to the ones entrusted to you when you first forgive *just one person*, and come to look on him or her as yourself.
3. “Face of Christ”: The vision of the innocence of God’s Son.

For when forgiveness rests upon the world and peace has come to every Son of God, what could there be to keep things separate, for what remains to see except Christ’s face?

And how long will this holy face be seen, when it is but the symbol that the time for learning now is over, and the goal of the Atonement has been reached at last? So therefore let us seek to find Christ’s face and look on nothing else (W-p11.6.4:3–5:2).

Further information from Robert’s A Course Glossary:

face of Christ

What is seen with Christ’s vision, with true perception. The final perception in which you “see” the Christ. Since the Christ is the true Self in all things, seeing the Christ means seeing Christ in all things. This is an inner experiencing of the innocence and holiness in all things, rather than a seeing of the face of Jesus or any other kind of visual image. Seeing His face means that, since you are still in the realm of perception, you are still looking upon the Christ in all things slightly from the outside, and thus seeing a facade, a surface, a symbol. However, soon after seeing His face you will transcend all perception and, in direct, unmediated awareness, will again know His being. See veil. See W-p11.6.4-5, C-3.

4. Here is Robert’s definition of “veil”:

veil

1. Anything that blocks our awareness of reality, or our awareness of the real world. The Course mentions the veil of time, of guilt, of fantasies. Veils seem dark and heavy but are thin and easily lifted by our desire to see past them. 2. Specifically, the veil across the face of Christ (the image here is of a facial veil). This veil is the fear of God, the final obstacle to peace. It is also said to be specialness, idols, the attraction of guilt and death, the gap between us and our brother. We reach the place before the veil by joining with our holy relationship partner. In order to look on the veil without terror, we must first be willing to look on our partner with forgiveness. Then together we will lift the veil and look on the face of Christ. Then we will rise in resurrection past the veil and disappear into the Presence beyond the veil: God. See T-19.IV(D).

5. That there is a space between you and your brother, an illusion you perpetuate every time you choose to learn temptation's lesson instead of Christ's.
6. Christ, as is made clear in the next sentence (4:6). It emphasizes their holiness, their innocence and sinlessness as the Son of God..
7. If you don't forgive your brother, how can you become a savior to the whole Sonship?
8. d, b, f, c, e, a
9. Wish.
10. The wish (to be a separate self) begets an image or self-concept; the image begets perception of our brother.
11. "Be vigilant against temptation" means to be watchful for every thought in our minds that is an expression of the wish to be separate and apart from our brothers, to see them as sinful and different; to be watchful of every wish within ourselves to be anything other than the holy child of God, or to think of ourselves as anything less than that.
12. It seems to mean that we—the potential saviors—are standing around with our eyes closed. We are holding on to our grievances, waving that sword of judgment around to keep our brothers away from us, choosing to separate instead of join.
13. The result of our withholding the savior's vision, refusing to offer them forgiveness, is that "men despair" and what they see is death. They desperately need the light we have to share with them.