

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 5, Section IV

Teaching and Healing

Overview of the Section

This section is really about love, about holding it and sharing it. It is about letting our thoughts be purified so we have a truly loving impulse behind our behavior. And it is about extending that loving impulse to others in order to reinforce its strength within us.

Note:

A three-paragraph section of discussion directed specifically to Helen and Bill appears here in the Urtext, but is omitted in the published version. (I include it as an Appendix at the end if you want to read it; it has some lovely lines.) The main thrust of it was that Helen and Bill used different ways of defending their egos; Helen dissociated; Bill repressed. Because they were different they were able, when they joined together, to help one another, since each could look on the other's defenses without fear. That led into what is now sentence 2 of Paragraph 1, "Joining in Atonement is the way out of fear." Sentence 1 of the paragraph appears to have been composed by the editors to provide some kind of bridge from the paragraphs that precede the omitted section.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹What fear has hidden still is part of you. ²Joining the [Ur: *Joining in*] Atonement [Ur: *which I have repeatedly asked you to do*] is the way [Ur: *is always a way*] out of fear. [Ur: *This does not mean that you can safely fail to acknowledge anything that is true, but*] ³The Holy Spirit will [Ur: *not fail to*] help you reinterpret *everything* that you perceive as fearful, and teach you that *only* what is loving is *true*. ⁴Truth [Ur: *It {apparently, "what is loving"}*] is beyond your ability to destroy, but entirely within your ability to accept [Ur: *within your grasp*]. ⁵It belongs to you because, as an extension of God, you created it with Him [Ur: *It belongs to you because you created it*]. ⁶It is yours because it is part of you, just as you are part of God because He created you. ⁷Nothing that is good can be lost because it comes from the Holy Spirit, the Voice for creation. ⁸Nothing that is not good was ever created, and therefore cannot be protected. ⁹The Atonement is the *guarantee* of the safety of the Kingdom [what follows was spliced in

from later in the section], and the union of the Sonship is its protection. ¹⁰The ego cannot prevail against the Kingdom because the Sonship is united. ¹¹In the presence of those who hear the Holy Spirit's call to be as one, the ego fades away and is undone [Ur: the ego fades away and is undone in the presence of the attraction of the parts of the Sonship which hear the call of the Holy Spirit to be as One].

• Study Question •

1. *Read over the Introduction to the Text (just two paragraphs). What two sentences in the Introduction are echoed by sentences 7 and 8 of this paragraph?*

The first sentence refers to “what fear has hidden.” The last reference to hiding or concealing something was only two paragraphs earlier, in T-5.III.10:3-4. In that reference, what was hidden was the part of the mind that is still for God, the part that is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit and your own true home. This is our “right mind” (T-5.I.3:3). This part of the mind is wholly loving, and only the loving in us is true (1:3).

In listening to our ego, we have attempted to conceal the existence of our right mind, which for obvious reasons is a threat to our egos. Our ego's fear has hidden the right mind. We have succeeded in concealing it, but not in abolishing it, because destroying it is beyond our ability (1:4). Our right mind remains part of us (1:1). The truth about us, which is what is good, can never be lost or assailed, and our ego, or what seems not good, was never created and cannot be protected (1:7–8).

The subtle difference between “joining the Atonement” and “joining *in* Atonement” is, to me, an important one that the rest of the paragraph underscores. When we join together with others in our acceptance of the Atonement, giving it as well as receiving it, we are reinforcing one another, as Helen and Bill did. The Holy Spirit in each of us and through each of us helps those with whom we join to reinterpret themselves on behalf of God. We help one another to see that what seems fearful in themselves can be perceived differently, and that only what is loving in them is true (1:3).

The task of the Holy Spirit is to lead us out of fear, to reinterpret what we have deemed fearful (1:3), and thus to lead us, once again, to accept this holy part of ourselves which is still linked with God (1:2-6). This part of ourselves cannot be lost (1:7). It is protected and safe because it is shared; “the union of the Sonship is its protection” (1:9-11).

Paragraph 2

2. [Ur: Nothing that is not good was ever created, and therefore *cannot* be protected. {This was the original end of the previous paragraph.}] ¹What the ego makes it **keeps to itself**, and so it is without strength. ²Its existence is unshared. ³It does not die; it was merely never born. ⁴Physical [Ur: Real] birth is

not a beginning; it is a continuing. ⁵Everything that continues [Ur: *can* continue] has already been born. ⁶It will [Ur: But it can] increase as you are willing to return the unhealed part of your mind to the higher part, returning it undivided to creation [Ur: and thus render your creating undivided. You yourself always told your patients that the real difference between neurotic and 'healthy' guilt feelings was that neurotic guilt feelings *do not help anyone*. This distinction was very wise, though incomplete. Let us make the distinction a little sharper now. Neurotic guilt feelings are a device of the ego for "atoning" without sharing, and for asking for pardon without change. The ego *never* calls for real atonement, and cannot tolerate real forgiveness, which *is* change. Your concept of "healthy guilt feelings" has great merit, but without the concept of the Atonement it lacked the healing potential it held. You make the distinction in terms of feelings which led to a decision not to *repeat* the error, which is only *part* of healing. Your concept therefore lacked the idea of *undoing* it. What you were really advocating, then, was adopting a policy of sharing without a real *foundation*.] ⁷I have come to give you the foundation, so your own thoughts can make you really free. ⁸You have carried the burden of unshared ideas [the ideas you did *not* share] that are [therefore] too weak to increase, but having made them you did not realize [*not* recognize] how to undo them [*undo* their existence because you *had* made them]. ⁹You cannot cancel out your past errors alone. ¹⁰They will not disappear from your mind without the Atonement [Ur: remedy.], a remedy not of your making [Ur: The remedy is *not* of your making, anymore than *you* are.] ¹¹The Atonement must be understood [Ur: cannot be understood except] as a pure act of sharing. ¹²That is what I meant when I said it is possible even in this world to listen to one Voice. ¹³If you are part of God and the Sonship is one, you cannot be limited to the self the ego sees.

• Study Question •

2. Sentences 11 and 12 are closely related, but the connection between them ("this is what I meant") is difficult to see at first. How are the two sentences related, and what do they mean, taken together? (It will help if you consult paragraph 4.)

This paragraph says that the ego's unshared ideas are too weak to be real or to increase, Yet, despite their weakness, you by yourself are unable to undo the ideas that you made. You need the help of the Atonement, a shared remedy that you did *not* make.

What God created is eternal and is protected by sharing (1:7, 10). By contrast, "what the ego makes" is kept "unshared" (2:1-2); therefore, because it stands apart and alone, it "is without strength" (2:1). Since sentence 4 mentions "physical birth," I believe that "what the ego makes" refers to the physical body. Jesus says, "It does not die; it was merely never born" (2:3). This must refer to the body. He is saying that the body is not

truly alive, which may seem like a startling thought, but he says as much straight out in T-6.V(A).1:4: “The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life.”

So, when we are born into a body, what is going on? Is that the beginning of life? Positively not! “Physical birth is not a beginning; it is a continuing” (2:4). We are spirits (W-pI.97.2). When a body is conceived in a mother’s body and born into the world, spirit takes on and animates that body, but the body is not “alive” any more than a marionette is alive when the puppeteer animates it.

The body begins at birth, but *something* “continues” (2:5)—the spirit. It exists before the body is born and will continue to exist after the body withers and turns back to dust. One aspect of our spirit is the right mind, which thinks the thoughts of spirit. The right mind is the only part of mind that has reality, according to T-14.V.1:1. The right mind is that which continues, the same thing spoken of in paragraph 1. It is the truth about us, hidden by the ego, but restored to our awareness by the Holy Spirit. He is working to shift our center of identity from body to spirit, as we were told back in Chapter 1:

Miracles transcend the body. They are sudden shifts into invisibility, away from the bodily level. That is why they heal. (T-1.I.17:1–3)

Miracles reawaken the awareness that the spirit, not the body, is the altar of truth. This is the recognition that leads to the healing power of the miracle. (T-1.I.20:1–2)

By recognizing spirit, miracles adjust the levels of perception and show them in proper alignment. This places spirit at the center, where it can communicate directly. (T-1.I.30:1–2)

This part of ourselves “will increase” in the sense that our recognition of it and appreciation for it grows as we “return the unhealed part of [our] mind to the higher part” (2:6). We gradually win back the mental real estate taken over by the ego, and return it to its rightful “owner,” the spirit. The ego has preempted the mind’s power and misused it for projection; when given back to spirit, the mind will once again be used as it was intended, for creation that is like God’s.

The Holy Spirit is God’s Answer to the separation; the means by which the Atonement heals until the whole mind returns to creating. (T-5.II.2:5)

Since the Holy Spirit is in your mind, your mind can also believe only what is true. The Holy Spirit can speak only for this, because He speaks for God. He tells you to return your whole mind to God, because it has never left Him. If it has never left Him, you need only perceive it as it is to be returned. The full awareness of the Atonement, then, is the recognition that *the separation never occurred*. The ego cannot prevail against this because it is an explicit statement that the ego never occurred. (T-6.II.10:3–8)

One thought about the word “increase”: The Course says that the “already born” or real part of us will *increase* as we return our unhealed mind to the higher part (2:6). There

was a recent reference to the idea of increase at the end of the preceding section, last paragraph: “He holds this gladness gently in your mind, asking only that you increase it in His Name by sharing it to increase His joy in you” (T-5.III.11:10). Once again, “increase” is tied in with “sharing.” To return our minds to their true function of creating always means returning them to oneness and to the shared awareness of the Sonship. We “increase” spirit by sharing spirit, by giving away our awareness and sharing it with others, becoming aware of spirit in them as well as in ourselves, and in so doing, fostering that awareness in other minds.

Jesus says he gives me “the foundation,” and then, by sharing (which *is* creating), my thoughts build on that foundation to make me truly free (2:7). The progression pictured here is that I begin isolated, weak, and alone, trapped in my own un-shared ideas of fear (2:8), guilt, and death. Alone, I cannot break the cycle of guilt over my past mistakes (2:9). Jesus brings the Atonement to me, releasing me from guilt and enabling me to transcend my abortive thoughts (2:10). The Atonement, however, by its very nature transcends my individuality (2:11, 13). If I don’t *share* it, I don’t *have* it. If I truly grasp the grounds of my own forgiveness, I *must* extend forgiveness to others. If I do not extend it, it proves I have not grasped it for myself. That which I judge and condemn as “other” than myself *is part of me*. I am not “limited to the self the ego sees” (2:13).

The reference to listening to one Voice even in this world (2:12) doesn’t make much sense, given the context so far. It will be clearer when we reach paragraph 4, and I will return to the thought then.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Every loving thought held in **any** part of the Sonship belongs to every part. ²It is shared *because* it is loving. ³Sharing is God’s way of creating, and also **yours**. ⁴The ego can keep you in exile **from** the Kingdom, but in the Kingdom itself it has no power. [A few sentences seem to be skipped over here, although perhaps they are inserted elsewhere. I’ve added them as a second Appendix.] ⁵Ideas of the spirit do not leave the mind that thinks them, nor can they conflict with each other [Ur: Ideas do not *leave* the mind which thought them in order to have separate being. Nor do separate thoughts conflict with one another in space, because they do not occupy space at all.]. ⁶However, ideas of the ego [Ur: *Human* ideas] can conflict [Ur: *in content*] because they occur at different levels and also include opposite thoughts at the **same** level. ⁷*It is impossible to share opposing thoughts.* [Ur: The Holy Spirit does not *let* you forsake your brothers. Therefore.] ⁸You can share only the [parts of your] thoughts that are of God [Ur: Him] and that He [Ur: which He also] keeps for **you**. ⁹And of such is the Kingdom of Heaven. ¹⁰The rest remains with you until the Holy Spirit has reinterpreted them in the light of the Kingdom, making them, too, worthy of being shared. ¹¹When they have been sufficiently purified He lets you give them away. ¹²The decision to share them *is* their purification.

• Study Question •

3. *Spend five to ten minutes meditating on Workbook Lesson 315, "All gifts my brothers give belong to me."*

Paragraph 1 has told us that "only what is loving is true" (1:3). The ego has taught us to fear looking within our minds, telling us that what we find will be ugly. Our "unshared ideas" (2:8) have burdened us, but the Atonement can release us from them. It can transform them. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we can look within our minds and find all the loving thoughts that are there. They are the only reality of our minds. All loving thoughts, of every mind everywhere, belong to all of us (3:1). A loving thought, by its very nature *as* loving, is a shared thought (3:2); it reaches out to others.

Sharing *is* creating; God creates by sharing, and so do we (3:3). Returning to our function as creators means returning to sharing, or returning to love, which is our true nature. Sharing the thoughts of God *is* the Kingdom of Heaven (3:8–9). The ego can prevent us from engaging in that sharing (3:4), but ideas of the spirit never leave our minds (3:5); they are there, shared with others and kept for us by God (3:8). Any other ideas (ideas of attack or conflict, or "unloving" ideas) cannot be shared (3:7), but remain within us, awaiting reinterpretation by the Holy Spirit (3:10). His new interpretation of these ideas will so transform them that they will become "worthy of being shared" (3:10); that is, we will see them, not as attack thoughts, but as our own calls for love. As such they are pure enough to be given away. When we have been sufficiently freed from our guilt over such thoughts that we can decide to share them with others, acknowledging our connection with one another in love, our thoughts *have been* purified (3:12). What is removed from them is the taint of guilt and condemnation; without that, they are pure enough to share. (We will see clearly in Section V that "Every disordered thought is attended by guilt at its inception, and maintained by guilt in its continuance" (T-5.V.7:5).)

Paragraph 4

4. [Ur: You cannot learn *except* by teaching.] ¹I heard one Voice because I understood that I could not atone for myself alone. [I heard one voice because I had learned that learning is attained *by* teaching. I understood that *I could not atone for myself alone.*] ²Listening to one Voice implies [*means*] the decision to share It in order to hear It yourself. ³The Mind that was in me is still irresistibly drawn to every mind created by God, because God's Wholeness **is** the wholeness of His Son. [Ur: Turning the other cheek does *not* mean that you should submit to violence without protest. It means that] ⁴You cannot be hurt, and do not want to show your brother anything except your wholeness. ⁵Show him that he **cannot** hurt you and hold nothing against him, or you hold it against yourself. ⁶This is the meaning of "turning the other cheek."

• Study Question •

4. *Jesus here gives a new interpretation of the biblical admonition to “turn the other cheek.” Give one possible false interpretation of this phrase, and give its true meaning, according to this paragraph.*

We return here to the thought about hearing one Voice that was last mentioned in 2:12. I said in regard to that sentence that we'd have a better chance of understanding it after we read the fourth paragraph. In 4:1, Jesus says that the reason he heard one Voice was “because I understood that I could not atone for myself alone.” The Urtext adds that he “understood that learning is attained *by* teaching.” That's pretty much the same idea he expressed in 2:11–12: that understanding the Atonement as “a pure act of sharing” is what he meant by hearing only one Voice.

The connection between sharing the Atonement and hearing one Voice will become clearer as we go through the paragraph. As Jesus explains, we share God's Wholeness. Therefore, the Mind of God's Voice is “irresistibly drawn to every mind created by God” (4:3). That is why our decision *to share* is what enables us *to hear* the one Voice (4:2). If you are unwilling to open up to your brothers and sisters in jointly receiving a shared salvation, you can't hear the Holy Spirit, because what He's talking about *is* that shared salvation. Listening to the Holy Spirit is the same thing as deciding to share the Holy Spirit with everyone. He is the “shared Inspiration of the Sonship” (T-5.I.7:1). You can't hear Him without sharing Him.

How does that look in practice? Like “turning the other cheek” (4:6). It means *demonstrating* our wholeness to one another by showing our brothers and sisters that, because we are whole, they cannot hurt us, and therefore they, too, are whole. Instead of holding their ego-driven acts against them, we forgive. We manifest that despite their actions, we are still whole and unhurt (4:4); therefore, there is no blame to be attached to them (4:5). They share in the Atonement as we do. Such a lofty response to perceived attacks may sound difficult or impossible, but that's why it is called a *miracle*. It is exactly what Jesus demonstrated to us in his crucifixion. (I think this may be why he begins the next paragraph talking about teaching by example.)

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Teaching is done in many ways, [Ur: by formal means, by guidance, and] above all by example. [Ur: If you will to learn, you *must* will to teach.]
²Teaching should be healing [Ur: Teaching is therapy], because it is the sharing of ideas and the recognition that to share ideas is to strengthen them. *[The union of the Sonship *is* its protection. The ego cannot prevail against the Kingdom *because* it is united, and the ego fades away and is undone in the presence of the attraction of the parts of the Sonship which hear the call of the Holy Spirit to be as One.]
³I cannot forget my need to teach what I have learned, which arose in me *because* I learned it. ⁴I call

upon you to teach what you have learned, because by so doing you can depend on it. ⁵Make it dependable in my name because my name is the Name of God's Son. ⁶What I learned I give you freely, and the Mind that was in me rejoices as you choose to hear it.

* These are the two sentences that the editors relocated to Paragraph 1; they also fit well in their original context!

• **Study Question** •

5. *Read this paragraph as if it were addressed to you personally. What are some of the ways you can begin to extend healing in your life, sharing the lessons you have learned so as to strengthen them, or make them dependable, for yourself?*

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Jesus now moves from talking about sharing in general to urging us specifically to “teach what [we] have learned” (5:4). The kind of teaching he is talking about is “above all” teaching “by example” (5:1), as in, for instance, demonstrating our wholeness and lack of hurt in the face of attack. When we teach by example we are still sharing ideas. Ideas do not need to be put into words in order to be shared; in fact, more often than not, an example can communicate an idea far more powerfully than mere words. Sharing ideas strengthens the ideas being shared (5:2). The sharing and the union are the strength of the Sonship and the undoing of the ego (Urtext).

The lessons the Holy Spirit is teaching to us, when learned, generate in us a *need* to share them; we *must* teach what we have learned. If we do not feel the need to share these ideas, we haven't really learned them! (5:3). Sharing the lessons we have learned is what solidifies them for us; it strengthens them in us and makes them dependable (5:4-5). We follow the example of Jesus, who has freely shared, and is sharing now, with us. As we hear it, the lesson produces the same effect in us as it did in him. It has to be extended to others.

This paragraph calls to mind some words written by Charles Wesley, the brother of John Wesley, who founded the Methodist Church:

Oh, that the world might taste and see
The wonders of His grace!
These loving arms that compass me
Would all mankind embrace!

To me, that is the sense being conveyed here. First, my heart opens to accept the Love of God. I receive the amazing grace that, despite all the terrible things I imagine that I have thought, said and done, God's Love for me is undiminished. Every thought I would label as “sin” the Holy Spirit reinterprets as my cry for help, and offers only Love in response. When I accept the truth of this for myself, the inevitable outcome is that the

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Love I have accepted overflows to the world. What is true for me is true for everyone. God's Love "would all mankind embrace."

Paragraph 6

6. ¹The Holy Spirit atones in all of us by **undoing**, and thus lifts the burden you have placed in your mind. ²By following Him you are led back to God where you belong, and how can you find the way except by taking your brother with you? ³My part in the Atonement is not complete until **you** join it and give it away. ⁴As you teach so shall you learn. ⁵I will never leave you or forsake you, because to forsake you would be to forsake myself and God Who created me. ⁶You forsake yourself and God if you forsake any [Ur: *any*] of **your** brothers. [Ur: *You are more than your brother's keeper. In fact, you do {should} not want to keep him.*] ⁷You must learn to see them as they are, and understand [*know*] they belong to God as you do. ⁸How could you treat your brother better than by rendering unto God the things that are God's?

• Study Question •

6. *In the Bible, the phrase, "rendering unto God the things that are God's," referred to giving our deepest devotion to God rather than to civil authority (Mark 12:17). What unusual meaning is given to this phrase here (6:7-8)?*

The way the Holy Spirit "atones" in us is "by undoing"—not by paying the price for our misdeeds, but by undoing all the unloving thoughts that led to our mistaken actions. When my mind is thus healed, I realize how inextricably joined I am with all my brothers and sisters. I can't find the way back to God without taking my brother with me (6:1-2). I deeply love this aspect of the Course's teaching! There is something so incredibly *wholesome* about it. Anyone who understands and accepts the message of the Course cannot be self-righteous or spiritually smug. "The Holy Spirit atones *in all of us*" (6:1, my emphasis). Everyone is equally free from condemnation. No one is guilty; no one suffers blame; everyone is accepted and loved, equally, because that is the basis on which I am accepted and loved. If I am free, you are free also.

We can all say to each brother and sister exactly what Jesus says here to us:

My part in the Atonement is not complete until you join it and give it away....I will never leave you or forsake you, because to forsake you would be to forsake myself and God Who created me. (6:3,5)

• Study Question •

7. *As an exercise, think of one person who has presented you with serious problems in forgiveness, and mentally repeat to him or her the words from 6:3 and 6:5 quoted above. Do this several times, trying to mean what you say. Repeat the exercise with other people who come to mind.*

Jesus tells us that he can never leave us or forsake us, because he knows that to do so would be a betrayal of himself and of God (6:5). He is using himself as an illustration of the effect Atonement has on one's mind: It brings a realization of our union with one another. The mind healed by the Holy Spirit knows that forsaking *any brother* means forsaking itself and forsaking God (6:6).

"As you teach so shall you learn" (6:4) means that giving salvation to everyone is the only way to have it for yourself. The Atonement brings me a perception in which I see my brothers and sisters as they are (holy children of God) and I understand that they belong to God just as I do (6:7). If I see you as something less than a holy child of God, or perhaps as less than me, my mind is not healed. If I do not see *you* as belonging to God, *I* have not returned to God. The best gift we can give to one another is to see one another as belonging to God (6:8).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The Atonement gives you the power of a healed mind, but the power to create is of God. ²Therefore, those who have been forgiven must devote themselves first to healing [others] because, having received the idea of healing, they must give it to hold it. ³The full power of creation cannot be expressed as long as any of God's ideas [Sons] is withheld [Ur: are withholding it {the power of creation}] from the Kingdom. ⁴The joint will of [all] the Sonship is the only creator that can create like the Father, because only the complete can think completely, and the thinking of God lacks nothing. ⁵Everything you think that is not through the Holy Spirit is lacking.

• Study Question •

8. *According to this paragraph, what holds back the full power of creation, and how is this related to the idea of the preceding paragraph, that we cannot forsake any of our brothers?*

Having been forgiven, our minds may be healed, but "the power of a healed mind" is not identical to "the power to create" (7:1). The power to create does not belong to individual minds at all, but to the minds of the Sonship united as one (7:4). God's creation is complete; to create like Him we, too, must be complete. Only the complete mind of the united Sonship can think completely (7:4). This is why each of us who has been forgiven needs to devote ourselves, not to trying to create, but "first to healing" (7:2). To return to creation, we must first return to unity. To return to unity, we must extend the healing power of forgiveness to every aspect of the Sonship. To establish healing for ourselves, it must be given to everyone (7:2). If we withhold forgiveness from a brother, we are excluding him from God's Kingdom. As long as we exclude anyone, "the full power of creation cannot be expressed" (7:3).

The Buddhists have a traditional teaching about what is called a *bodhisattva*, an enlightened being who, out of compassion, forgoes nirvana in order to save others. A Buddhist teacher whose meetings I have attended ends every session with the words, “May all beings share in the merits of our practice.” In other words, may everything I do as spiritual practice be for the benefit of everyone, and not just for me.

As followers of the Course, we are taught that being a *bodhisattva* is the *only* way to save ourselves. The only way to hold on to the idea of healing is to share it with everyone. When we condemn a sister or brother in our minds, we set ourselves apart from the Sonship. To think in a way that is independent from the joint mind of the Sonship is to think “not through the Holy Spirit” (7:5). Everything that comes from such a state of mind is lacking, and cannot be creative. A mind that is not *giving* healing *needs* healing.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹How can you who are so holy suffer? ²All your past except its beauty is gone, and nothing is left but a blessing. ³I have saved all your kindnesses and every loving thought you ever had [Ur: and I assure you, you have had many]. ⁴I have purified them of the errors that hid their light, and kept them for you in their own perfect [error-free] radiance. ⁵They are beyond destruction and beyond guilt. ⁶They came from the Holy Spirit within you [Ur: you], and we know what God creates is eternal [so they are eternal]. ⁷You can indeed depart in peace because I have loved you as I loved myself. ⁸You go with my blessing and for my blessing. ⁹Hold it and share it, that it may always be ours. ¹⁰I place the peace of God in your heart and in your hands, to hold and share. ¹¹The heart is pure to hold it, and the hands are strong to give it. ¹²We cannot lose. ¹³My judgment is as strong as the wisdom of God, in Whose Heart and Hands we have our being. ¹⁴His quiet children are His blessed Sons. ¹⁵The Thoughts of God are with you.

• Study Question •

9. *Paragraph 8 is a beautiful blessing from Jesus, which also contains some important teaching. Imagine that when you were five years old you had a thought that was somewhat loving, yet still contained impurity. What has happened to that thought since then in light of sentences 3-6?*

If the first sentence seems somehow out of place—What’s this reference to “suffer” doing here in the midst of all this talk about sharing?—consider what causes the deepest sense of suffering? Isn’t it *guilt*? Our guilt lays the heaviest burden on our minds, and guilt is what is lifted by the Atonement (6:1). Atonement re-establishes our holiness, and if we are holy, we cannot suffer because we are free from guilt.

The message of the Course, in four words, is “God’s Son is guiltless” (T-14.V.2:1, see also W-pII.276.1:1–2). That is its message to each one of us, and that is the message we share with those around us. Everyone carries baggage from their past, baggage containing

dirty laundry we'd rather no one ever sees. Imagine how you would feel if your worst moments of the past were suddenly replayed on a giant TV screen in front of all your friends! Imagine even worse; imagine that your worst *thoughts* were pictured on that screen! But Jesus here assures us *that will never happen*, because all of your past is gone "except its beauty...and nothing is left but a blessing" (8:2). *That* is the effect of Atonement!

Jesus has carefully preserved "all your kindnesses and every loving thought you ever had" (8:3), meanwhile cleansing away all your errors that besmirched them, much like a gold miner sifts the gold nuggets out from among the pebbles in a mountain stream. The loving thoughts came from the Holy Spirit in you; therefore they are eternal, and can never be destroyed or befouled with guilt (8:5–6).

These sentences (3 to 6) were originally found in the paragraphs preceding this section (see the Appendix). though they fit perfectly here. The original context was that Helen had learned to be a loving and wise therapist for everyone except herself, which diluted the power of her loving thoughts. But then these lines follow. Read them again in that light. Then, read them again as applying to *your* slightly flawed loving thoughts.

In the Gospels there is a story about a man named Simon, who had been told by God that he would not die before he saw the coming of the Christ. When Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the temple to be circumcised, he saw the baby, took it in his arms, and said:

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people....
(Luke 2:29–31)

I think the words in 8:7, "You can indeed depart in peace," may be an oblique reference to that story. We can "depart in peace," that is, we can be at peace as we sum up our lives, because all the ugliness and failure we think lies there in our past is *gone*. Jesus tells us that our innocence is so complete and perfect that he has loved us as he loved himself (8:7). We are as holy, as worthy of love—as *lovely*—as he is!

These words seem spoken very much as a benediction, a blessing, in the spirit of sending us forth into the world to bring blessing and healing to all beings. We both *have* the blessing of Jesus and we *bring* the blessing of Jesus (8:8). We both *hold* it and *share* it (8:10); we share it *in order to* hold it (8:9). Notice the repetition of "hold" and "share" in 9, 10 and 11 ("give" instead of "share"). These are such encouraging words! Jesus tells us, "We cannot lose" (8:12), and we can trust his words because his judgment is as reliable as God's wisdom (8:13). We have our being in God's Heart and Hands, loved and protected by God; we are "His quiet children" because we are so safe and secure (8:14).

The final sentence, "The Thoughts of God are with you" (8:15), is one of my favorite sayings. I was drawn to it even before I quite knew what it meant; there was something profoundly comforting to me about it. God's Thoughts are the agents of God's creation. Another mention of the Thoughts of God made it clearer to me why this seems so comforting:

Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

Forever unopposed by opposites of any kind, the Thoughts of God remain forever changeless, with the power to extend forever changelessly, but yet within themselves, for they are everywhere. (W-pI.167.8:4)

To have such potent, powerful and energetic forces with us all the time guarantees our serenity and security. These dynamic energies surround us, protect us, and empower us. What really brought it home was the realization that “Thoughts of God” is the Course’s term for what has been known historically as the *angels* of God:

Watch with me, angels, watch with me today. Let all God's holy Thoughts surround me, and be still with me while Heaven's Son is born. (W-pII.303.1:1–2)

In one of her inspired poems in *The Gifts of God*, “Benediction,” Helen Schucman beautifully captures the sense of comfort that comes from knowing that the Thoughts of God are with us:

Angels are Thoughts that come from God to you.
Secure in their protection may you rest;
Quiet in certainty that comes from them,
At peace in mind and heart and holiness;
Unmindful of the world, and sure that they
Are with you, watching over you, and fixed
In their determination to maintain
Your mind at rest within the peace of God.

Answer Key

1. “Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists.” (T-In.2:2–3)
2. Taken together, the two sentences mean that Jesus’ decision to share the Atonement—to accept Atonement for everyone—is what enabled him to hear only one Voice.
Sentence 10: “The Atonement must be understood as a pure act of sharing” means “I understood that accepting Atonement for myself meant accepting it for everyone.”
Sentence 11: “That is what I meant when I said it is possible even in this world to listen to one Voice” means: “I became able to hear only that one Voice when I came to understand that the Atonement can be accepted only by sharing it.” *Sharing is what makes hearing possible.*
3. No written answer is expected.
4. True meaning of “Turn the other cheek”: Show your brother that he did not really hurt you.
False meaning: Hit me again.
False meaning: Play the martyr.
False meaning: I’m too chicken to fight.
5. No written answer is expected, or rather, each person’s answer will be different.
6. “Rendering unto God the things that are God’s” means to realize your brothers belong to God and to take them with you to God.
7. No written answer is expected.
8. The full power of creation is blocked “as long as any of God’s ideas is withheld from the Kingdom” (7:3). Each of us is an idea of God. Withholding God’s ideas from the Kingdom, then, refers to excluding a brother or sister from our forgiveness, or seeing them as unworthy of the Kingdom. Only “the joint will of the Sonship” can create like God (7:4); therefore, that kind of creation cannot happen until we are all united in a single will.
9. Jesus has saved that thought, purified it of its error, and kept it for you in its own perfect radiance. It is beyond destruction and guilt. It is eternal; it will last forever.

Appendix: Omitted paragraphs preceding T-5.IV

You must have noticed how often I have used your own ideas to help YOU. B. is right in saying that you have learned to be a loving, wise, and very understanding therapist, except for yourself. That exception has given you more than perception for others because of what you saw in them, but less than knowledge of your real relationships TO them because you did NOT make them part OF you. Understanding IS beyond perception, because it introduces meaning. But it is below knowledge, even though it can grow TOWARDS it. It is possible, with great effort, to understand someone else and to be helpful to him, but the effort is misdirected. The misdirection is quite apparent. It is directed AWAY from you.

This does NOT mean that it is lost to you, but it DOES mean that you are not aware of it. I have saved all of your kindnesses and every loving thought you have had, and I assure you, you have had many. I have purified them of errors which hid their light, and have kept them for you in their own perfect radiance. They are beyond destruction and beyond guilt. They came from the Holy Spirit within YOU, and we know that what God creates is eternal.

Bill once spoke of the Kingdom in this way, because he yearns for what he has repressed. You are much more afraid of it, because dissociation is more fearful. B's better contact has allowed him the strength to retain the fear in awareness, and to resort to displacement, which he is learning to overcome with YOUR help. That is because you do not perceive HIM as dissociated, and can help him with his repression, which does not frighten you. He, on the other hand, has no difficulty in seeing YOU dissociate, and does not have to deal with repression in you, which WOULD produce fear in him.

Appendix 2: Sentences originally in the middle of what is now Paragraph 3.

You have become willing to receive my messages as I give them, without interference by the ego, so we can clarify an earlier point which was mentioned before. We said that you will one day teach as much as you learn, and that will keep you in balance. The time is now, because you have let it be now.