

# Study Guide and Commentary ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 10, Section V

## The Denial of God

### Paragraphs 8 to 14

This is part two of the commentary on Chapter 10, Section V, "The Denial of God."

#### Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>Do not look to the god of sickness for healing but only to the God of love, for healing is the acknowledgment of Him. <sup>2</sup>When you acknowledge Him you will **know** that He has never ceased to acknowledge you, and that in His acknowledgment of you lies your being. <sup>3</sup>You are not sick and you cannot die. <sup>4</sup>But you **can** confuse yourself with things that do. <sup>5</sup>Remember, though, that to do this **is** blasphemy, for it means that you are looking without love on God and His creation, from which He cannot be separated.

#### • Study Question •

1. *Spend a few minutes mentally repeating, "I am not sick. I cannot die." Let related thoughts come.*

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Acknowledging God is, of course, the opposite of denying God. Taking into account what is said in 8:5 about denying God (that you are looking on God and His creation without love), acknowledging God, being denial's opposite, must mean loving God and His creation. This includes our own self; thus, acknowledging God includes recognizing ourselves as God's perfect creations who cannot be sick or die (8:3). Acknowledging God *in His creation* is what heals us (8:1), because as we give this recognition to others, it becomes apparent that we, too, are God's own creations. We would not even exist if God were not extending His Being to us (8:2). We are eternal, immutable beings, not bodies subject to illness and death, although that identity seems terribly real to us (8:3–4).

Again we see how the Course maintains a dual picture: on the one hand, things as they really are; on the other hand, things as we perceive them. We have confused ourselves with an ego and a body, with things that can be sick and can die. But that is not what we are. What we are in truth cannot be sick and cannot die. But we do have the ability to confuse ourselves with the body and ego, and therefore we can *believe* that we are sick and that we can die. We cannot really do those things. We are only fooling ourselves; we have not made the invulnerable vulnerable. "No one can really do this [replace our true identity as God's Son with a transient, flawed identity as an ego in a body], but that you can think you can and believe you have is beyond dispute" (1:7). We have not sinned, but we have made huge mistakes (6:1).

I call these two pictures of things *absolute reality* and *relative reality*. Absolute reality consists only of what God created, as God created it; it exists in eternity or in Heaven. Relative reality is everything as we perceive it, all that seems to us to be real and to exist in this world and in time. In absolute reality, we can't be sick or die. In relative reality, no one can deny that we get sick and die. These things are not real, yet they are real *to us*.

What the Course is clearly teaching is that things such as sickness and death, as real as they seem to be, are not real in the absolute sense. In relative reality, it matters a lot when somebody dies. In absolute reality death does not matter at all, or, more accurately, death simply never occurs. When a body "dies," therefore, in absolute reality nothing has really happened! (T-6.V(A).1:2). No life has ended because the body is not really alive; it is an illusion (T-6.V(A).1:4).

It would not be skillful to try to press this information on a person who is deeply mourning the loss of a loved one ("Oh, get over it! Nothing really happened here!") or someone gravely ill ("Your illness doesn't mean anything; it's all an illusion in your mind."). Nevertheless, this truth is what will free us from grief and sickness to the extent to which we can accept it. Mistakenly identifying with a body that sickens and dies is blasphemy (8:5), because you could not do it unless you rejected God as Creator and perceived His creation as fatally flawed.

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Only the eternal can be loved, for love does not die. <sup>2</sup>What is of God is His forever, and you **are** of God. <sup>3</sup>Would He allow Himself to suffer? <sup>4</sup>And would He offer His Son anything that is not acceptable to Him? <sup>5</sup>If you will accept yourself as God created you, you will be incapable of suffering. <sup>6</sup>Yet to do this you must acknowledge Him as your Creator. <sup>7</sup>This is not because you will be punished otherwise. <sup>8</sup>It is merely because your acknowledgment of your Father **is** the acknowledgment of yourself as you **are**. <sup>9</sup>Your Father created you wholly without sin, wholly without pain and wholly without suffering of any kind. <sup>10</sup>If you deny Him you bring sin, pain and suffering into your **own** mind because of the power He gave it. <sup>11</sup>Your mind is capable of creating worlds, but it can also **deny** what it creates because it is free.

### • Study Question •

2. *Why is acknowledging God as our Creator our salvation?*

The Course here makes another of those arguments that seem to be backwards: Love is eternal. If something that is loved could die, love would end. Therefore, love's objects must be eternal. Since love *is* eternal, its objects must be eternal as well (9:1).

If a loving God created beings who flashed into existence for a few years and then flashed into oblivion, would that not create suffering in God's heart due to the experience of constant, repeated loss of what He loves? Would God be that foolish? (9:3). Of course not! And, being unwilling to inflict such suffering on Himself, would He then turn around and inflict it on His Son? (9:4). Of course not! Therefore, the truth about us must of necessity be that we are eternal, incapable of dying, and incapable of being sick (9:5). A wise God could create nothing less.

When we acknowledge that we can and do think we have denied God, we will discover that “no one can really do this” (1:7). We can deny the fact of our creation but we cannot change it, because it is eternal. “What is of God is His forever, and you are of God” (9:2).

Thus, to recognize our denial is to rediscover what we have been denying: namely, that God is our Creator. We *must* acknowledge Him as Creator, Jesus says. The necessity is not an arbitrary demand by a jealous God; it is simply the recognition of our own reality as His perfect creations (9:6–8). We can’t change the facts, but we do *try* to change them. We have cut off our nose to spite our face, for in denying Him we have denied our Self. In giving up God as Creator, we opened the door to “sin, pain and suffering” (9:10), because freedom from such things is the mark of His handiwork (9:9). All of this demonstrates the incredible power of our mind. We are capable of creating entire worlds, and equally capable of convincing ourselves that we have not done so (9:11).

That last sentence is one instance where the Course does not seem to use the words *create* and *worlds* in the restrictive sense it usually accords to those words. As the Course normally uses these words, they don’t belong together! We either make the world or create the eternal. We don’t create worlds. So, very likely, one or the other of these two words is used in a nontypical sense.

We might assume that the Course is using the word *create*, here, in the common, loose sense of the word: manifesting or bringing into existence. If this is so, the sentence could be paraphrased like this: We cause worlds to manifest (though they are only illusions), and then deny that we have done so.

Alternatively, we might assume that *create* is used in its proper sense, but that *worlds* is being used in a more common way, a way not usual for the Course. Typically, in the Course the word *worlds* seems to refer to the unreal manifestations of the ego. But perhaps, in this instance, it refers more generally to realms or spheres of being that may be quite real. The second part of the sentence speaks of our denying what we create, which very likely refers to real creations, so this second way of interpreting the sentence seems more appropriate. If this alternative is accepted, then the sentence could be paraphrased like this: Your mind can create entire spheres of existence filled with life, but that power can be turned against you to deny the existence of everything you have created. This line of thought seems to be followed in the opening lines of the next paragraph, which would support this interpretation of sentence 11.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>You do not realize how much you have denied yourself, and how much God, in His Love, would not have it so. <sup>2</sup>Yet He would not interfere with you, because He would not know His Son if he were not free. <sup>3</sup>To interfere with you would be to attack **Himself**, and God is not insane. <sup>4</sup>When you deny Him you are insane [**When you denied Him, you were insane**]. <sup>5</sup>Would you have Him **share** your insanity? <sup>6</sup>God will never cease to love His Son, and His Son will never cease to love Him. <sup>7</sup>That was the condition of His Son’s creation, fixed forever in the Mind of God. <sup>8</sup>To know that is sanity. <sup>9</sup>To deny it is insanity. <sup>10</sup>God gave **Himself** to you in your creation, and His gifts **are** eternal. <sup>11</sup>Would you deny yourself to Him?

• Study Question •

3. *Three times in this chapter, two of them in this section, we are told we do not realize something. What are the things we do not realize?*

The general idea being put forth is that our mind is incredibly powerful, capable of creating worlds. That power, however, when appropriated by the ego, can produce extremely realistic experiences of terrible deprivation and suffering. Identifying the mind as the source of our suffering is therefore the key step in freeing ourselves from suffering. Doing so, however, requires us to cease locating the cause of suffering in anything outside of ourselves.

“You do not realize...”; Jesus keeps on saying that, doesn’t he? We grossly underestimate our mind’s power to hide God’s blessings from us (10:1). Perhaps it seems like a cruel joke to proclaim that every one of us is an invulnerable, immortal, and guiltless being. It hardly seems possible that it could be true, or if it were true, that our minds could somehow manage to adroitly conceal those facts from us.

The Course is calling us to just that realization—the realization of how much we have denied ourselves by denying our Creator. We can fully achieve it only through a lifelong process of learning to look at the ego in all its rebellion and denial, yet without giving in to fear and guilt.

We also “do not realize...how much God...would not have it so” (10:1). He does not want us to be sick, miserable, and afraid. He does not retaliate for our rebellion; He only wants it to end. The misery we encounter in this world is not God’s punishment of sin; it is merely the inevitable consequence of our continued self-deception and self-denial. Our suffering is not His Will (see W-pI.99.5:4–5).

Why, then, we may ask, does He allow it to continue? Why doesn’t He swoop down from Heaven and put an end to our madness? The answer is yet another of those unexpected logical arguments: God created His Son endowed with freedom; therefore, if God contravened that freedom, His Son would no longer be His Son and God would no longer know him (10:2). Our only true hope lies in rediscovering and reaffirming the fundamental facts of our creation by God. We are saved (made whole) precisely because nothing God creates can be changed; our wholeness has always existed inviolate. If God were to interfere with our freedom to choose to experience ourselves as not whole, that would be a change, and would destroy our unchangeable nature. Furthermore, it would attack His own integrity. It would declare that His creation is flawed, and that is not the truth.

That is an extremely important principle: *God does not interfere with us*. He does not intervene in the world, not because He does not care, but because He *does* care. He created us free, and to interfere with that freedom would be to attack His own creation. This world and all it contains—all our fear, anxiety, depression, hatred, jealousy, attack, sickness, pain, and death—is no more than the effect of our insane thoughts. God won’t interfere with that. “Your holy mind establishes everything that happens to you” (T-10.Int.2.6). Nothing can reach us from beyond mind (T-10.In.3:7). What we experience in this world is up to us and not up to God (T-10.In.3:8).

“God is not insane” (10:3), yet to ask Him to interfere to fix our insanity would be asking Him to share our insanity (10:5). Sanity is knowing that “God will never cease to love His Son, and His Son will never cease to love Him” (10:6). Insanity is denying this.

Any thought or any experience that seems to contradict either God's Love for us, or our love for Him, is insanity (10:4, 6–9). It is a denial of Love and therefore a denial of God, which is blasphemy. *Blasphemy* is defined as either an utterance or act that is contemptuous of God, or as falsely taking on oneself the powers of God. When we deny God's Love for us or ours for Him, we are showing contempt for Him and appropriating His power to create us. Anything that denies God's Love for us, or our love for Him, is blasphemous.

There is a certain sense, then, in which asking God for help is blasphemous! For instance, if my body is sick and I ask God to heal my body, there is an unspoken assumption being made that the sickness is real, and needs a real response from God. But, for a sick body to really exist, God's original creation of me as incapable of sickness would have to be overthrown. I must have created myself and must have destroyed God's creation. In asking God to heal my body, I am asking Him to acknowledge all that. I am asking Him, therefore, to become as insane as I am. If sickness is just an illusion, it does not require any action from God.

This is why the Course instructs us not to ask that the body be healed, but instead ask that our *perception* of the body be healed (T-8.IX.1:5–6).

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>Out of your gifts to Him the Kingdom will be restored to His Son. <sup>2</sup>His Son removed himself from His gift by refusing to accept what had been created **for** him, and what he had created in the Name of his Father. <sup>3</sup>Heaven waits for his return, for it was created as the dwelling place of God's Son. <sup>4</sup>You are not at home anywhere else, or in any other condition. <sup>5</sup>Do not deny yourself the joy that was created **for** you for the misery you have made for yourself. <sup>6</sup>God has given you the means for undoing what you have made. <sup>7</sup>Listen, and you **will** learn ~~how to remember~~ what you are.

### • Study Question •

4. *We have made this world; why, then, do we so often not feel at home here?*

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In creating us, God gave us everything. He created us capable of creating, and with Him, we created great and wonderful creations. But that wasn't good enough for us. We wanted to create what God had created, and in fact we wanted to create ourselves! We did not want what He had created *for us* (11:2). It always reminds me of the old TV commercial: "Mother! I'd rather do it myself!" By refusing the gifts of God in creation, we removed ourselves from the gift (11:2), and God is waiting patiently for us to come back and claim it (11:3). God did not kick us out of the Garden of Eden; we took off of our own accord. The Garden is still there, however. We didn't put out the sun; we just closed our eyes. Nobody has to rekindle the sun. Heaven is waiting (11:3), not interfering with our insane dream.

It is all up to us. The choice is ours, now and every moment. Each time we choose to acknowledge God's creation somewhere—in some thing, in some other person, or in ourselves—a little bit of the Kingdom of God is restored to us (11:1). We lost it through our denial, and we regain it through our acknowledgment, though the losing and regaining are both only illusions, since we have never lost the Kingdom in reality.

Why is it we so often don't feel at home here? Because *here* is not our home! Heaven is where we belong, and nothing less can satisfy us (11:3–4). The fact that we do not *feel* at home in this world should tell us that this world of separation and attack *is not* our home. We cannot be comfortable anywhere but in a condition of perfect love. I remember the first time I encountered a group of people who had begun to acknowledge God's creation in themselves and in one another (and no, they were not Course students; this predated the Course, actually). With them, I had an overwhelming sense of coming home. The home I felt was not a place or a time; it was a shared state of mind in which we recognized God in one another. *That* is the condition in which we are at home.

In denying God's Love, we are denying ourselves our God-created joy in favor of our self-made misery (11:5). We are actively choosing the misery because we made it and God did not. In reality, we are not independent of God and not separate from Him, but we cling to the insane illusion of that misery out of this foolish wish for independence, this wish for something that simply does not exist.

The Course is presenting us with the way out of our misery. Let us pay attention to what it says, particularly in the final paragraphs of this section, where that way out is spelled out one more time (11:6–7).

## Paragraph 12

12. <sup>1</sup>If God knows His children as wholly sinless, it is blasphemous to perceive them as guilty. <sup>2</sup>If God knows His children as wholly without pain, it is blasphemous to perceive suffering anywhere. <sup>3</sup>If God knows His children to be wholly joyous, it is blasphemous to feel depressed. <sup>4</sup>All of these illusions, and the many other forms that blasphemy may take, are **refusals to accept creation as it is**. <sup>5</sup>If God created His Son perfect, that is how you must learn to see him to learn of his reality. <sup>6</sup>And as part of the Sonship, **that is how you must see yourself to learn of yours**.

### • Study Question •

5. *Think, one at a time, of several instances in which you perceive someone as sinful, or in which you perceive suffering as real, or in which you experience depression. As you recall each one, remind yourself that your perception is blasphemous because it denies the perfection of God's creation, and ask to be given the vision that sees that perfection everywhere.*

As Jesus has said several times in this chapter, we do not realize how extensive our denial of love is, nor how completely dominated by this insane pattern we are. None of us have done more than *begin* to grasp it. That is why we still find it shocking to read statements like the first three sentences of this paragraph.

Remember, blasphemy is any form that denies God's love for us or ours for Him; anything that makes *me* the creator rather than God; anything that attributes truth to the opposite of what God knows in certainty to be truth. Since God did not create sin, suffering, or depression, someone else must have done so. Therefore, to perceive or experience these things, or to believe they are real, means that I must believe there is a creator other than God: the ego, or myself, or the devil. Or, perhaps, I am suffering from

the delusion that God is actually the cruel source of sin, suffering, and depression. In either case I am believing in a false god. And to assert the existence of another god in place of the real God is blasphemy.

Sin, pain, and depression are by no means the only things that are blasphemous in the sense being discussed here; the designation belongs to anything that consists of a refusal “to accept creation as it is” (12:4). This means that any perception of imperfection in myself or in any part of the Sonship is blasphemy (12:5). The Course sets forth the way out of our misery: learning to see God’s creation as perfect. *A Course in Miracles* could just as well be called, “A Course in Learning to See Everyone as Perfect.” Of course, that title is nowhere near as catchy as the original!

“Everyone,” naturally, includes you and me. The reality of the Sonship is that it *is* perfect; therefore, the way to learn of my own reality is through seeing *myself* as perfect (12:5–6). I find this at least as challenging as seeing the perfection of others, if not more so. I am far more cognizant of the long list of my own “imperfections” than I am of yours, so it seems harder for me to accept myself as perfect. With you, I just brush the surface of your flaws; with myself, I plumb the depths—and the depths seem pretty deep at times. I know myself all too well; how can I pretend to perfection? Fortunately, the Course offers a solution to this problem as well. It says that learning to see perfection in others is the way I will learn to see it in myself, because the light of gratitude returned to me by those I see in this way will reveal my own perfection to me. (For one example of this oft-repeated message, see T-9.VI.5:1–4. It was also mentioned earlier in the section we are now studying, in 7:7.)

Try making an exercise of this paragraph by applying it to yourself:

Think of something you feel guilty over and say, *If God knows me as wholly sinless, it is blasphemous to perceive myself as guilty.*

Think of some kind of pain you may be experiencing and say, *If God knows me as wholly without pain, it is blasphemous to see myself as suffering.*

Think of something you are feeling depressed about and say, *If God knows me as wholly joyous, it is blasphemous to feel depressed.*

Try, too, applying the same exercises to someone else.

## Paragraph 13

13. <sup>1</sup>Do not perceive **anything** God did not create or you **are** denying Him. <sup>2</sup>His is the **only** Fatherhood, and it is yours only because **He** has given it to you. <sup>3</sup>Your gifts to **yourself** are meaningless, but your gifts to **your** creations are like His, because they are given in His Name. <sup>4</sup>That is why your creations are as real as His. <sup>5</sup>Yet the real Fatherhood must be acknowledged if the real Son is to be known. <sup>6</sup>You believe that the sick things you have made are your real creations, because you believe that the sick images you perceive are the sons of God. <sup>7</sup>Only if you **accept** the Fatherhood of God will you have anything, because His Fatherhood **gave** you everything. <sup>8</sup>That is why to deny Him **is** to deny yourself.

• Study Question •

6. *Why is it a denial of your true Self to believe that you have done real harm in the universe through your unloving actions or words?*

When we see sin, suffering, or depression, we are in that moment actively choosing to refuse to accept creation as it is. What we are learning, as we study the Course, is to reverse that: to refuse to accept our perceptions as reality, and to accept the perfection of God's creation instead. The first sentence says it in a nutshell: "Do not perceive anything God did not create or you are denying Him" (13:1). That is the general message of this and the next paragraph.

To say that God's Fatherhood is the only Fatherhood means that He is the Source of all that is; there is no other Source. Therefore, nothing exists except what He created, or what we created using His power of creation that He shared with us (13:2). If we are seeing something that does not stem from God's creative power, it is not real and does not exist. What the Course mockingly calls "your gifts to yourself" (13:3) refers to the dismal gifts of sickness, depression, and death, which are the ego's gifts. They are not true gifts, which is why they are called meaningless. They are not real and do not exist. As things that God did not create, they are part of what we are told not to perceive.

This does not mean we literally do not see them with our physical eyes; rather, I think, it means that we do not see them *as real*. It may be helpful to read how the Holy Spirit perceives these ego gifts, which is the same way the Course is teaching us to see them—or better, to see *through* them:

Unshaken does the Holy Spirit look on what you see; on sin and pain and death, on grief and separation and on loss. Yet does He know one thing must still be true; God is still Love, and this is not His Will.

This is the Thought that brings illusions to the truth, and sees them as appearances behind which is the changeless and the sure (W-pI.99.5:4-6:1).

Forgiveness is the only thing that stands for truth in the illusions of the world. It sees their nothingness, and looks straight through the thousand forms in which they may appear. It looks on lies, but it is not deceived. It does not heed the self-accusing shrieks of sinners mad with guilt. It looks on them with quiet eyes, and merely says to them, "My brother, what you think is not the truth."  
(W-pI.134.7:1-5).

When we perceive with the Holy Spirit, we do not accept what our eyes are showing us. The Course explains elsewhere that we made our physical eyes with the express intent of showing us things that do not exist, and preventing us from seeing what is true:

The body's eyes see only form. They cannot see beyond what they were made to see. And they were made to look on error and not see past it. (T-22.III.5:3-5)

When our minds are healed, our *eyes* will still see sickness and death. The difference is that our minds will not accept what our eyes show us as real. We will realize that sickness and death are only illusions. We will see as the Holy Spirit sees; we will be blessed with a vision that both looks on illusions *and* sees past them to the truth beyond:

Awareness of dreaming is the real function of God's teachers. They watch the dream figures come and go, shift and change, suffer and die. Yet they are not deceived by what they see. They recognize that to behold a dream figure as sick



and separate is no more real than to regard it as healthy and beautiful. Unity alone is not a thing of dreams. And it is this God's teachers acknowledge as behind the dream, beyond all seeming and yet surely theirs (M-12.6:6-11).

When I offer a gift in God's Name, I am making use of God's creative power; such gifts, and such creations, are real (13:3-4). When I extend a blessing to you, rather than attacking you, I am extending the nature of God. The only way I can do that, however, is by recognizing my connection with God: He, my Creator; I, His creation (13:5). I cannot recognize the Son unless I recognize the Father. I don't understand this to mean that everyone must accept some particular doctrine about a personal God in order to become enlightened; what I do think it means is that unless we acknowledge that we all have a common, perfect, and eternal Source we cannot fully know the perfection of our own nature. For instance, I know some Buddhists who fit these criteria, as I understand them, and yet they do not believe in a personal God. They *do* believe in a universal, eternal source. They just don't call it "God." They don't personalize it. They do not call It "Father." Some call it "the Self." I think the recognition that we all derive from and still are joined to the same eternal source is all that the Course is asking for here, although in its form of expression, God is most definitely personal.

We mistake our brothers as we see them now—sick, sinful, depressed—as the sons of God. Thus, we see *sick sons of God*, which is an impossibility. We want to see them in this way because it supports the ego's blind belief in independent, separate existence. That belief, however, results in our believing that *our* sins are equally real. If we "damage" a brother's ego or body, and his ego or body is his real self, then we have done real damage. The "sick thing" we have made seems to be real (13:6).

When I accept God as the only Creator, I will realize that egos and bodies cannot be the sons of God because God would not have created such insane and impermanent things. Instead, knowing the Source, my own real creations will increasingly become apparent to me as I acknowledge God in my brothers (13:7). Thus, "to deny Him is to deny yourself" (13:8), and to acknowledge Him is to acknowledge your Self. As I "give" God to others by acknowledging His Life in them, I will become aware of how much of God I possess.

## Paragraph 14

14. <sup>1</sup>Arrogance is the denial of love, because love shares and arrogance withholds. <sup>2</sup>As long as both appear to you to be desirable the concept of choice, which is not of God, will remain with you. <sup>3</sup>While this is not true in eternity it *is* true in time, so that while time lasts in **your** mind there **will** be choices. <sup>4</sup>Time itself is [*was*] your choice. <sup>5</sup>If you would remember eternity, you must [*learn to*] look only on the eternal. <sup>6</sup>If you allow yourself to become preoccupied with the temporal, you are **living in time**. <sup>7</sup>As always, your choice is determined by what you value. <sup>8</sup>Time and eternity cannot both be real, because they contradict each other. <sup>9</sup>If you will accept only what is timeless as real, you will begin to understand eternity and make it yours.

### • Study Question •

7. a) *There are several injunctions given to us in paragraphs 12 through 14, injunctions we can take as instructions in the way out of our misery. One*

*example is 13:1. Write a list of the injunctions you can find in these three paragraphs, and then summarize them in a single sentence.  
b) How will you, personally, carry out these instructions?*

The message of 13:1 is restated in different words, twice, in the final paragraph:

If you would remember eternity, you must look only on the eternal. (14.:5)

If you will accept only what is timeless as real, you will begin to understand eternity and make it yours. (14:9).

Our own way out of misery, the Course keeps telling us, is to see “only...the eternal,” only what God created. When you *think* you see something else—something not eternal, something God did not create—remind yourself that it is an illusion that is being projected from your own mind. Do not accept it as real. You see the illusion because, in some way, you still value it (14:7); you still think it will give you something you want.

It isn't arrogant to lay claim to what God declares to be ours. The real arrogance lies in *denying* what God says *is* ours. How arrogant to deny the Love of God (14:1)! Whether we are denying it in ourselves or in others, we are withholding from someone what is rightfully theirs. Our mind is divided in its desire for both love and arrogance. We believe that our illusions will grant us specialness. We believe that the things we made will somehow take the place that only God can fill.

The illusions we project make the possibility of choice seem real to us. The Course is quite clear in this paragraph that God did not create choice (14:2). He created what is true and eternal, and there is nothing besides that to offer any real choice. Our illusions are all that appear alongside the truth. They, of course, are not real; therefore, there is no real choice. However, while we experience ourselves as functioning in time, it will seem that we have real choices because the illusions appear to be real (14:3).

Once again we see the contrast made by the Course between absolute and relative truth (see my discussion under Paragraph 8). No real choices exist, but while we believe in illusions we must learn to choose reality over the illusions. We must exercise choice in order to come to the place where we recognize that there is no choice, only the truth. “Nothing unreal exists” (T-In.2:3).

The choice of what you see is up to you. Because you still believe in the value of being independent of God, you see the results of being independent of God. But they are not real. You can choose to see them or not. Choice itself is of your own making. The only reason there appears to be a choice is because your mind insists there must be an alternative to God's creation. In reality, in eternity, there is no choice. There is only the One Thing, created by God as part of Itself. As we experience ourselves as being in time, however, choice exists, and we can use choice to undo choice itself. We can choose to see only the eternal as real (14:5). We focus on the eternal, and we overlook or disregard the temporal. We keep on doing that until the illusions give up and disappear.

The Buddhist *Dhammapada* (an anthology of sayings of the Buddha found in the Pali Canon) says a similar thing concerning our investment in the temporal:

Know that the body is a fragile jar,  
And make a castle of your mind.

...

For soon the body is discarded.  
Then what does it feel?

A useless log of wood, it lies on the ground.  
Then what does it know?

...

Understand that the body  
Is merely the foam of a wave,  
The shadow of a shadow.  
Snap the flower arrows of desire  
And then, unseen,  
Escape the king of death,  
And travel on.

This is an integral part of forgiveness as the Course defines it. Workbook Lesson 122 is primarily about forgiveness. It addresses the problem we confront when we have, for a time, entered into a holy instant of experiencing eternity, and then must “return again to meet a world of shifting change and bleak appearances” (W-pI.122.13:3). After our high spiritual experience, we might be inclined to completely ignore the world because, in comparison to what we have seen, it is nothing. The Course, while advising us to keep a firm hold on the vision, advises us not to ignore the world, but rather to see the eternal in every part of it: “the changeless in the heart of change, the light of truth behind appearances” (W-pI.122.13:4).

That’s what forgiveness is. Forgiveness is looking past short-lived bodies and shifting egos to see the changeless spirit behind them all. It is looking on the ephemeral and transient things of this world, such as the situations of our lives, and remembering that the appearance is not the truth, and that what is real is the unchanging light of truth *behind* the appearances. Sometimes we look at a brother or sister and see an angel; other times we look and see a devil. Only one of those can be true (14:8). The Course is asking us to make a choice, to decide that we are going to believe that the angel (being God’s eternal creation) is the truth, and the devil (only a time-bound image of our projection) is unreal. As we begin to accept that only what is eternal is real, we will begin to claim our own eternal inheritance (14:9).

## Answer Key

1. No written answer is expected.
2. When we acknowledge God as Creator, we are acknowledging our true Self, which is sinless, and free of pain and suffering (9:8–10). When we deny God as Creator, our mind's power brings sin, pain, and suffering into our lives. Thus, acknowledging Him saves us from the effects of our denial of Him.
3. See T-10.III.10:4; T-10.V.1:5; T-10.V.10:1. We do not realize:
  - a. • how much we listen to our gods
  - b. • that denying God is denying our own Identity
  - c. • how much we have denied ourselves
  - d. • how much God would not have it so.
4. We are at home only in Heaven, i.e., in a state that fully acknowledges God's perfect creation. When we feel "not at home" we are denying Heaven and accepting our illusions instead (11:3–5).
5. No written answer is expected.
6. If we think we have done real harm, we are denying God's Fatherhood. We are asserting that we have created some evil or awful thing apart from God, and that means there must be a "fatherhood" that is not God's. The truth about us is that we cannot create except in God's likeness, because the only power of creation that has been given to us is God's own power of creation. There is no other. When we think our sick "creations" are real (which is what we think when we think we have done real harm), we must be denying that truth about ourselves. To assert that there is such a power in us constitutes a denial of what we are.
7. Two parts:
  - a. The injunctions in the final three paragraphs are found in: 12:5–6; 13:1; 14:5; 14:9. Taken together, they tell us to refuse to accord reality to anything except eternal and timeless perfection.
  - b. Your answer may differ from mine in particulars. To me, not according reality to anything except eternal and timeless perfection means not making errors real. It means not trusting in idols or seeing myself as at the mercy of anything outside of my own mind. It means not acknowledging sin in others, or myself, but acknowledging as real only our eternal nature as Sons of God. It means forgiving, overlooking errors, and looking with love on everyone.