

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 20, Section V

### *Heralds of Eternity*

#### Overview of the Section

This section elevates the holy relationship to new heights, designating them as “heralds of eternity.” The word “herald” means a thing viewed as the sign something is about to happen, so what this title denotes is that every holy relationship is a sign that Eternity is about to dawn. They announce, as Jesus did 2000 years ago, “The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” The section reviews the unimportance of the body in such a relationship, the connection of the holy instant to the holy relationship, and encourages us to be confident that the Holy Spirit is certain to bring it all to pass.

#### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship. <sup>2</sup>There he begins to find the certainty his Father has in him. <sup>3</sup>And there he finds his function of restoring his Father's laws to what was held *outside* them, and finding what was lost. <sup>4</sup>Only in time can anything *be* lost, and **[but]** never lost forever. <sup>5</sup>So do the parts of God's Son gradually join in time, and with each joining is the end of time brought nearer. <sup>6</sup>Each miracle of joining is a mighty herald of eternity. <sup>7</sup>No one who has a single purpose, unified and sure, can *be* afraid. <sup>8</sup>No one who *shares* his purpose with him can *not* be one with him.

#### • Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 1* opens with a dramatic statement, that we come closest to ourselves in a holy relationship. Which of the following statements accurately reflect the meaning of this first sentence?
  - A. *We come closest to our true Self when we are in a holy relationship with ourselves. We must be in a holy relationship with ourselves before we can be in one with anyone else.*
  - B. *We come closest to our ego selves when we are in relationship with others, since our egos get flushed to the surface more so than when we are alone. In essence, in relationship we learn more about how our illusory self is constructed.*
  - C. *We come closest to ourselves when we join with other parts of God's Son, for each part carries our own Self with it.*
  - D. *We come closest to ourselves in any relationship in which we see another through forgiveness; we do not have to experience a*

*mutual joining with that person.*

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I have quoted 1:1 several times in earlier commentaries, since it is such a great summary, and a startling one, of the centrality of the holy relationship in the Course's teaching. For instance, when discussing Section VIII of Chapter 18, I wrote:

The emphasis on *mutuality*, though, which runs all through the Course, is exceedingly clear here. What could be clearer than this: "You could no more know God alone than He knows you without your brother" (12:4). God does not know me alone; he only knows me *with* my brothers and sisters. I am a part of a Whole, not a separate "thing" at all. And knowing God by myself is impossible; I can only know God in conjunction with the rest of the cosmic Me. It must be a together-knowing. And when we *are* together, "you could no more be *unaware* of love than love could know you not, or fail to recognize *itself* in you" (12:5). For me, when the Course tells us that "love is what you are" (T-6.I.13:2), it *must* be referring to the corporate me, not me as an individual, because how can I express love *by myself*? Love requires a meeting of minds. Until my individual lovingness finds an object to love, it is unexpressed. Of course, "In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship" (T-20.V.1:1).

Reflect for a moment on how *unlikely* this statement is. Suppose that, prior to reading the Course, you had been asked by someone to give your opinion of the best way to awaken to our divine nature in this world. Would "in our relationships" have even come to mind? Most people consider relationships to be problems, not solutions! And even if you *had* thought that relationships might have something to do with it, would you have described the nature of a relationship that promotes spiritual growth as one in which two or more people have joined in a common purpose, one where people are committed to one another's awakening?

What is it that a holy relationship can do for us? It teaches us that God has perfect faith in us to learn what we need to learn (1:2). We begin to realize that our true Self is one in which God has total confidence, because it is the Self as He created It. But even more, the holy relationship presents us with our *function* in the world: "restoring his Father's laws to what was held *outside* them, and finding what was lost" (1:3). We can say with joy, "I have a function God would have me fill" (W-pI.192.title). By joining with another, and by forgiving and being forgiven, we recover the truth about one another and about God. We realize that *nothing* is outside the laws of God. We restore what seemingly was lost in time (1:4). And we learn from one another what must be done in regard to the entire world: joining "the parts of God's Son gradually" together, one by one, and "with each joining is the end of time brought nearer" (1:5).

"Each miracle of joining is a mighty herald of eternity" (1:6). The Course says, "The holiest of all the spots on earth is where an ancient hatred has become a present love" (T-26.IX.6:1). That's what a "miracle of joining" is; "an ancient hatred has become a present love." Each time that happens it sounds a trumpet announcing the coming of the Kingdom of God, the end of time, the onset of Eternity. I know from personal experience

that perhaps the most powerful indication to me that the Course was true was seeing an impossible relationship healed before my eyes. I watched someone who once said that she dreamed of stabbing a certain person to death come to forgive, love, and accept them as whole. I watched hatred dissolve into love through application of the Course's teaching. It was, quite literally, miraculous; a "miracle of joining." And I knew that day that the Kingdom of God was at hand.

Each one of us is responsible for recognizing that our lives are here for this purpose, "a single purpose, unified and sure"; if we do so we cannot be afraid. If we unite our being in God's purpose, then anyone else who comes along *sharing* that same purpose cannot "not be one with" us (1:7). That is how holy relationships get formed, as two people sharing the same purpose join together in its fulfillment.

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>Each herald of eternity sings of the end of sin and fear. <sup>2</sup>Each speaks in time of what is far *beyond* it. <sup>3</sup>Two voices raised together call to the hearts of everyone, to let them beat as one. <sup>4</sup>And in that single heartbeat is the unity of love proclaimed and given welcome. <sup>5</sup>Peace to your holy relationship, which has the power to hold the unity of the Son of God together. <sup>6</sup>You give to ~~your brother~~ **[each other]** for *everyone*, and in your gift is everyone made glad. <sup>7</sup>Forget not Who has given *you* the gifts you give, and through your *not* forgetting this, will you remember Who gave the gifts to Him to give to you.

### • Study Question •

2. *Paragraph 2 is a very uplifting paragraph about the saving power of two who have joined. In your own words, please define the term, "herald of eternity," based on this paragraph and based on the meaning of the words "herald" (you might want to look up "herald") and "eternity."*

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When two people experience such a "miracle of joining" it can be like a great performance of the "Hallelujah Chorus," singing the end of sin and fear (2:1). The message it conveys to the world is that God is real, Heaven is real, love is real (2:2). The two voices singing in perfect harmony reach out and touch the hearts of everyone, drawing those hearts to synchronize their beating to the song of love (2:3). There is no more powerful witness to the unity of love than the demonstration of a truly loving relationship, the "single heartbeat" of love (2:4).

Holy relationships have "the power to hold the unity of the Son of God together" (2:5). This is a high calling! This is getting at the core purpose of the entire universe! It's not just about you and your partner; "you give to each other for *everyone*, and in your give is everyone made glad" (2:6).

The rather obscure last sentence (2:7) might read more clearly if we replaced the pronouns with nouns and indicated who the "Whos" refer to:

Forget not Who [the Holy Spirit] has given *you* the gifts you give [to each other], and through your *not* forgetting this [the source of your gifts], will you remember Who [God the Father] gave the gifts to Him [the Holy Spirit] to give to you.

One way the Course often refers to our ultimate goal is “the memory of God.” Remembering God means, to me, the full mystical experience, the direct knowing of Divinity and our union with It. Thus, Jesus is telling us that through the “gift exchange” of the holy relationship, we will be led to the bliss of eternal conscious union with God. This leads directly to the first line of the next paragraph.

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>It is impossible to overestimate your brother's value. <sup>2</sup>Only the ego does this [“This person's special love will be my total salvation”], but all it means is that it *wants* the other for *itself*, and therefore values him too little [he becomes a pawn, a toy]. <sup>3</sup>What is inestimable clearly cannot *be* evaluated. <sup>4</sup>Do you recognize the fear that rises from the meaningless attempt to judge what lies so far *beyond* your judgment you cannot even see it? <sup>5</sup>Judge not what is invisible to you or you will *never* see it, but wait in patience for its coming. <sup>6</sup>It will be *given* you to see your brother's worth when all you *want* for him is peace. <sup>7</sup>And what you want for *him* you will receive.

#### • Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 3* says that trying to judge our brother's worth causes us fear and that we will see his worth when we want only peace for him. If it is impossible to overestimate your brother's value, how can the ego do it? What does it mean for the ego to overestimate his value? Pay careful attention to the sentence in which this statement is made.
- A. *The ego overestimates what this brother can do for your happiness, thinking that he can make all of your problems go away without you having to change your mind one bit.*
  - B. *The ego estimates his value as being higher than that of other brothers.*
  - C. *The ego overestimates his value by thinking that he is an immensely valuable Son of God when in fact he is only a sinner.*

Given that a holy relationship can lead us into full, direct union with God, “It is impossible to overestimate your brother's value” to you (3:1). Actually, his value is “inestimable” and “cannot *be* evaluated” (3:3). You can't *overestimate* it because it is beyond estimation, it is too great to calculate. The ego overestimates the value of other people but that's because it sees only the limited aspects of a person that it wants to

possess (3:2)—their body, their personality (ego), their money—which actually have *no* true value, so placing *any* value on it is an overestimation.

Imagine trying to make a judgment about something that is entirely beyond the scope of your knowledge and experience. Say, for instance, that without any warning or preparation, you were suddenly President of the United States faced with the immanent threat of war, and you had to make a decision about what to do about it. Imagine the fear that would arise within you, fear of making the wrong decision because you have no idea of what you are doing. That's about how we *ought* to feel about judging the worth of our brothers and sisters! We have no idea! Your worth, and mine, “lies so far *beyond* your judgment you cannot even *see* it” (3:4).

Therefore, here is another reason not to judge: if you do, you won't ever *see* your brother's invisible, spiritual value. Instead, you'll be wasting your time waiting for its coming when it is already present. That's one way of understanding the latter half of 3:5. Another way might be: Stop trying to judge something you cannot see; instead, wait patiently for sight of it to be given to you. This second interpretation seems more likely when you read the following sentence: “It will be *given* you to see your brother's worth when...” (3:6). Let go of your efforts to try to figure it out or reason it out logically, or to estimate it based on your brother's actions and interactions with you. *Know* that it is there, that the value is *so much greater* than any of your uninformed judgments that it must be *revealed* to you by God. That will happen “when all you *want* for him is peace” (3:6).

Think for a moment of someone, or several someones, that you know. Ask yourself, is peace *all* that I want for them? Do I perhaps want someone to “learn their lesson” first? To admit their wrong? To pay for their sins? To be more like you? Only when all other wants fade away, when peace is the only wish we have for them, will their glorious, inestimable value shine forth in our spiritual eyes.

And—always a corollary in the Course—what I want for *him* is what *I* will receive (3:7). Lesson 205 in the Workbook states this goal for myself. It must become the desire we hold for everyone, especially for our partners in a holy relationship:

The peace of God is everything I want.  
The peace of God is my one goal;  
the aim of all my living here,  
the end I seek,  
my purpose and my function and my life,  
while I abide where I am not at home. (W-pII.1:2-3).

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>How can you estimate the worth of him who offers peace to you? <sup>2</sup>What would you want *except* his offering [ peace ]? <sup>3</sup>His worth has been established by his Father, and you will *recognize* it as you receive his Father's gift through him. <sup>4</sup>What is in him will shine so brightly in your grateful vision that you will merely love him and be glad. <sup>5</sup>You will not think to judge him. ~~for who~~ **Who** would see the face of Christ and yet insist that judgment still has meaning? <sup>6</sup>For this insistence is of those who do *not* see. <sup>7</sup>Vision *or* judgment is your choice, but never *both* of these.

### • Study Question •

4. **Paragraph 4.** *Someone has hurt you for years, has robbed you of your peace. You feel unable to see this person in the way this paragraph describes, as someone who is able to give you peace, as someone who you see with a grateful, loving vision. What is going on here?*
- A. *You do not yet want only peace for him.*
  - B. *You have insisted on judging his worth, on trying to estimate his worth, instead of simply seeing it.*
  - C. *You have been hurt so badly by this person's behavior that this paragraph does not apply.*
  - D. *This paragraph only really applies when he has awakened to the Father's gift in him and is ready to give it.*
  - E. *A and B.*
  - F. *C and D.*

“How can you estimate the worth of him who offers peace to you?” (4:1). We return here to the thought expressed in the last paragraph: “What is inestimable clearly cannot be evaluated” (3:1). While you want only peace for your partner, you will receive peace. Thus, in a holy relationship, your partner is *the means through which peace will come to you*. That gives them incredible value to you. And what *could* you want except peace (4:2)? So your partner is the avenue through which you receive everything that you truly want! Joining with another mind is how you obtain peace. This is clearly stated in Lesson 185.

Lesson 185 is, “I want the peace of God.” It's not surprising that there are clear references to the holy relationship in this lesson, to the “miracle of joining”:

Two minds with one intent become so strong that what they will becomes the Will of God. For minds can only join in truth (W-pI.185.3:1-2).

The mind which means that all it wants is peace *must join with other minds* [my emphasis], for *that is how peace is obtained* [my emphasis]. And when the wish for peace is genuine, the means for finding it is given, in a form each mind that seeks for it in honesty can understand (W-pI.185.6:1-2).

I think I see another promise there of how one finds a partner for a holy relationship: “When the wish for peace is genuine, the means for finding it [by joining with another mind] is given.” The partner you need will show up when you are truly ready, when you want peace and only peace, or at least you are ready to *learn* to want only peace.

So, your partner’s worth has been established by God (4:3), and that must be the only criteria we have for judgment. We set our judgments aside and take God’s in their place, receiving the gift God would give you through your brother:

Yet you must learn to doubt [your senses’] evidence will clear the way to recognize yourself, and let the Voice for God alone be Judge of what is worthy of your own belief. He will not tell you that your brother should be judged by what your eyes behold in him, nor what his body’s mouth says to your ears, nor what your fingers’ touch reports of him. He passes by such idle witnesses, which merely bear false witness to God’s Son. He recognizes only what God loves, and in the holy light of what He sees do all the ego’s dreams of what you are vanish before the splendor He beholds.

Let Him be Judge of what you are, for He has certainty in which there is no doubt, because it rests on Certainty so great that doubt is meaningless before Its face (W-pI.pI.151.7:1-8:1).

When you open to seeing your partner as a gift from God to you, the Truth in her or him will dazzle you; “you will merely love him and be glad” (4:4). The notion of judging her or him won’t even occur to you; it will be the farthest thing from your mind (4:5). You have just seen the *face of Christ* in her or him! How can you judge *that*? Don’t be silly. Only people who *do not* see Christ in others insist on judging them (4:6). You can have vision, or you can choose to judge, but you cannot *ever* do both (4:7).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>Your brother’s body is as little use to you as it is to him. <sup>2</sup>When it is used *only* as the Holy Spirit teaches, it has no function. <sup>3</sup>For minds *need* not the body to communicate. <sup>4</sup>The sight that *sees* the body has no use which serves the purpose of a holy relationship. <sup>5</sup>And while you look upon your brother thus, the means and end [of the holy relationship] have *not* been brought in line. <sup>6</sup>Why should it take so many holy instants to let this be accomplished, when one would do? <sup>7</sup>There *is* but one. <sup>8</sup>The little breath of eternity that runs through time like golden light is all the same; nothing before it, nothing afterwards.

• **Study Question** •

5. *Paragraph 5 makes a very puzzling statement. Sentence two says that when the body “is used only as the Holy Spirit teaches, it has no function.” This does not seem to make sense, for it seems to amount to saying that when the body is used properly it has no use. Which of the following two statements best reflects the meaning of this sentence?*
- A. *The Holy Spirit teaches that the body is of no use. It must merely be disregarded. So using it only as He teaches means not using it—disregarding it and focusing instead on changing the mind.*
  - B. *The proper use of the body is communication. When it is used only for that, it is no longer needed, for minds can communicate without the body.*

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In the fully matured vision of Christ, what we seem to be externally simply does not matter. We come to see that the body has no real value at all. What Jesus says here (5:1–3) seems to contradict what he said earlier. Here, he says the body “has no function,” and is not needed for minds to communicate with one another. Earlier, he said: “The Holy Spirit sees the body only as a means of communication” (T-6.V.5:5). Section VII of Chapter 8 is titled, “The Body as a Means of Communication,” and the whole section is about using the body “only to reach the minds of those who believe they are bodies, and teach them *through* the body that this is not so” (T-8.VII.3:1-2). So how can he say here that the body has no function and is not needed for communication?

The Course actually teaches a progression, a gradually shifting understanding of the need for and purpose of the body. It begins with relinquishing all of the ego’s uses of the body as a tool for separation and, instead, seeing it only as a means of communication:

How can the Holy Spirit bring His interpretation of the body as a means of communication into relationships whose only purpose is separation from reality? (T-17.III.5:1).

As this shift in perception of the body begins to take hold, we eventually come to see we really do not need bodies at all!

When the body ceases to attract you, and when you place no value on it as a means of getting anything, then there will be no interference in communication and your thoughts will be as free as God's. As you let the Holy Spirit teach you how to use the body only for purposes of communication, and renounce its use for separation and attack which the ego sees in it, you will learn you have no need of a body at all (T-15.IX.7:1-2).

We finally arrive at (or really, we *return to*) a “state of direct communication,” mind to mind, into which the body does not enter at all:

The miracle is much like the body in that both are learning aids for facilitating a state in which they become unnecessary. When spirit's original state of direct communication is reached, neither the body nor the miracle serves any purpose. (T-1.V.1:1-2).

Here, in T-20.V, he is referring to this final state of direct communication:

Your brother's body is as little use to you as it is to him. When it is used only as the Holy Spirit teaches, it has no function. For minds need not the body to communicate (T-20.V.5:1-3).

So then, “the sight that *sees* the body,” cannot contribute to the purpose of a holy relationship (5:4). I’m not certain if this refers to physical sight per se, or if he means the way we *focus* on the body and see one another *as* bodies. Ultimately, I think they are the same thing:

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. Theirs is indeed a strange perception, for they can see only illusions, unable to look beyond the granite block of sin, and stopping at the outside form of nothing. To this distorted form of vision the outside of everything, the wall that stands between you and the truth, is wholly true. Yet how can sight that stops at nothingness, as if it were a solid wall, see truly? It is held back by form, having been made to guarantee that nothing else but form will be perceived.

These eyes, made not to see, will never see (T-22.III.5:3-6:1).

Our eyes were “made not to see.” They are never going to *help* further the purpose of a holy relationship. As long as we continue to see one another as physical beings, the “means and end” of the holy relationship “have *not* been brought in line” (5:5). This seems to refer to our use of the body as a “means” of communication, with the goal or “end” of the union of minds. I think what this line is saying is, “As long as you continue to see your brother as a body, you have not yet reached the state of direct communication that is the goal of the holy relationship.”

For some reason, it seems that a single holy instant isn’t enough to make this transition occur. It takes holy instant after holy instant, over a long period of time (5:6). That need not be necessary, because each of those seemingly discrete holy instants is actually the same holy instant being repeatedly experienced (5:8). “There *is* but one” (5:7). We just tap into it over and over, until we finally decide to just *stay* there. These holy instant experiences always involve a freedom from the body and a recognition of union with another or others:

In the holy instant the condition of love is met, for minds are joined without the body's interference, and where there is communication there is peace (T-15.XI.7:1).

In the holy instant, where the Great Rays replace the body in awareness, the recognition of relationships without limits is given you (T-15.IX.3:1).

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>You look upon each holy instant as a *different* point in time. <sup>2</sup>*It never changes.* <sup>3</sup>All that it ever held or will ever hold is here right now. <sup>4</sup>The past takes nothing *from* it, and the future will *add* no more. <sup>5</sup>Here, then, is *everything*. <sup>6</sup>Here is the loveliness of your relationship, with means and end in perfect harmony *already*. <sup>7</sup>Here is the perfect faith that you will one day offer to your brother *already* offered you; and here the limitless forgiveness you will give him *already* given, the face of Christ you yet will look upon *already* seen.

### • Study Question •

6. **Paragraph 6.** *Each holy instant is really the same holy instant, the one holy instant that runs through each present moment. The latter part of the paragraph says several times that some wonderful thing that seems to be in the future is already “here.” Where is this “here”?*

Every experience of the holy instant is really the same thing; they are not *different* points in time (6:1). There is only one unchanging holy instant (6:2). When we first experience it, as when we experience it for the hundredth time, “all that it ever held or will ever hold is here right now” (6:3). This is why the Course says that enlightenment is only a *recognition* (of that unchanging holy instant), and not a change at all (W-pI.188.1:4). Our journey is without distance. All minds are *already* joined and capable of direct communication, but our foreshortened vision inhibits our ability to experience it.

The truth that we unite with in the holy instant is unchanging. It does not matter what has happened previously in your life, nor does it matter what may happen in the future; none of it can affect the holy instant. Nothing can be lost, and there is nothing that need be added (6:4). It contains *everything right now* (6:5–7):

- the loveliness of your relationship:
  - ◇ its means and end in perfect harmony *already*
  - ◇ perfect **faith** being offered to you *now* that one day you will offer your brother
  - ◇ limitless **forgiveness** *already* given to you, that one day you will give your brother
  - ◇ the **face** of Christ *already* seen, although you have yet to look upon it.

I want to reflect a little about just one of those things: limitless forgiveness. *Limitless!* Let that sink in: limitless. You can find and obtain limitless forgiveness. You will, one day, offer limitless forgiveness to another person and in so doing recognize they are not “other” at all. *Limitless!* In the Bible, we read:

“Then Peter came to him and asked, ‘Lord, how often am I to forgive my brother if he goes on wronging me? As many as seven times?’ Jesus replied, ‘I do not say seven times but seventy times seven.’” (Matthew 18:21–22 REB)

The meaning of seventy times seven is exactly what is promised here: forgiveness without keeping count, unlimited.

All this is contained in the holy instant offered you through your relationship with your brother or sister.

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>Can you *evaluate* the giver of a gift like this? <sup>2</sup>Would you *exchange* this gift for *any* other? <sup>3</sup>This gift returns the laws of God to your remembrance. <sup>4</sup>And merely *by* remembering them, the laws that held you prisoner to pain and death *must* be forgotten. <sup>5</sup>This is no gift your brother's *body* offers you. <sup>6</sup>The veil [the body] that hides the gift hides him as well. <sup>7</sup>He *is* the gift, and yet he knows it not. <sup>8</sup>No more do you. <sup>9</sup>And yet, have faith that He Who sees the gift in you and your brother [**in both of you**] will offer and receive it for you *both*. <sup>10</sup>And through His vision will you see it, and through His understanding *recognize* it and love it as your own.

### • Study Question •

7. **7. Paragraph 7.** *This paragraph keeps talking about a gift. What is this gift (there may be more than one correct answer)?*
- A. *His body.*
  - B. *The veil.*
  - C. *Him.*
  - D. *The face of Christ.*

All of this (“everything” in the holy instant) is the gift given to you by your relationship partner. How can you put a value on something that offers you *everything*? (7:1) What other gift could you possibly want? What could possibly be “other” to “everything”? (7:2) There is nothing comparable, nothing even worth considering in trade for this gift. The value of this gift is the very definition of “inestimable.” It brings back the laws of God you had forgotten, and more than that, you are freed from pain and death, because simply by *remembering* God’s laws, you simultaneously *forget* the laws of the world (7:4). It’s as though, having been “bound” all your life by the law of gravity, you have suddenly remembered the law of aerodynamics and discovered you can fly, no longer bound by gravity.

Could a body—any body, no matter how beautiful, how perfect—offer *this*? (7:5) The body, remember, is the veil that hides the gift from you, the Christ that is behind the veil, the perfection that is your brother. “He *is* the gift” (7:6-7). He is the gift even though he doesn’t know he is, and in the same way, so are you (7:7-8). You do not know he or she is the gift to you, and you do not realize that you are the gift to her or to him. But the Holy Spirit sees the gift “in both of you,” and will offer it to each of you, and within you, as you, will receive the gift being offered “for you *both*” (7:9). You need to have faith in Him to do that. You need to have faith that there exists, in you and in your brother, the willingness and the strength to offer this gift of holiness to one another: perfect *faith*,

limitless *forgiveness*, and the vision of the *face* of Christ. You *will* see it; you will *recognize* it; you will *love* it as your own (7:10).

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>Be comforted, and feel the Holy Spirit watching over you in love and perfect confidence in what He sees. <sup>2</sup>He knows the Son of God, and shares his Father's certainty the universe rests in his gentle hands in safety and in peace. <sup>3</sup>Let us consider now what he must learn, to *share* his Father's confidence in him. <sup>4</sup>What *is* he, that the Creator of the universe should offer it [the universe, i.e., the Sonship] to him and *know* it rests in safety? <sup>5</sup>He looks upon himself not as his Father knows him. <sup>6</sup>And yet it is impossible the confidence of God should be misplaced.

### • Study Question •

8. **8. Paragraph 8** speaks several times of God's confidence and certainty in the Son of God, confidence that the universe rests in his hands in safety and peace. What does this mean (you may want to look at the final lines of "Entering the Ark," as well paragraph 6 of that section).
- A. God is confident that the universe of time and space is whatever we choose it to be and He trusts our choices.
  - B. God has placed the salvation of the universe—of the Sonship—in our hands and He is confident that it is in good hands, that we will indeed carry out His plan for salvation.
  - C. God is confident that His Son, the Christ, will save the universe. This does not really refer to our separated minds, but to our true Self.

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The Course sets a high standard, as did Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew. Limitless forgiveness is wonderful if you are the recipient; it is daunting if you are the one called on to offer it. Having perfect faith in another person—in *anybody*—does not come without effort or struggle. Seeing the Christ in my brother or sister, seeing him or her as the express image of God, God's gift to me,—that seems like a stretch to me. Doesn't it seem so to you? But we have help. Or should I say, "Help"? Within us, with us, and around us, we have the Holy Spirit, "watching over you in love and perfect confidence in what He sees" (8:1). *Feel* that, Jesus advises us. "Be comforted, and feel the Holy Spirit" (8:1). Get calm, get quiet, and get a sense of the divine Presence looking upon *you* with love and perfect confidence in you. He has faith in you, even though you have doubts. He loves you, even though you are not so sure you are always lovable. That divine, loving Presence serves as our perfect example. If God can be confident in me, surely I can extend the same to my brother or sister? If God trusts *me*, God must also love and trust *her*. How can I *not* trust what *God* trusts?

God has placed the entire universe in our hands (8:2)! We are the Son of God in whose “gentle hands” “the universe rests...in safety and in peace.” God *knows* us, and still He has done this.

This is the mirror opposite of the usual picture of God’s creation of the world. In the Genesis accounts, God sets things in motion and almost immediately things go south. He seems to get caught off guard, and to over-react to what was a mistake in judgment by two people who didn’t even know the difference between good and evil! In *Remedial Christianity*, Paul Alan Laughlin writes:

Indeed, by the end of the story...God appears to be scrambling to protect the last remaining divine prerogative, immortality. Shouldn’t we expect a deity with normal foresight to have posted a guard or constructed a high wall around both trees in the first place? This is a God of afterthought, not foreknowledge.

God creates, things get fouled up, and (in traditional theology) most of the human race ends up in hell, which surely cannot have been God’s intention! By contrast in the Course, God creates, the Son mistakenly *thinks* he has fouled up, but God knows very well that the Son cannot continue the charade indefinitely but will eventually wake up and take up where he left off, fulfilling God’s original plan perfectly. He put the universe in our hands *because* He knows we are deserving of His trust and confidence.

Well, then; what do we have to learn in order to *share* our Father’s confidence in us (8:3)? What *are* we, to be the recipients of such unshakeable divine confidence and faith (8:4)? We do not see ourselves as God does (8:5). But God’s confidence cannot possibly be misplaced (8:6)! What we think about ourselves *must* be wrong. How can that be corrected?

That is what Jesus intends to reveal in the next section. Stay tuned.

9. *Summary: Please summarize the main themes of this section in a paragraph or less. You may focus on those themes that were most personally meaningful to you.*

## Answer Key

1. C
2. A herald of eternity is two people who join together, lift their voices together, and herald eternity. They sing or announce to everyone the coming of eternity. They are official criers, announcers, harbingers, forerunners of eternity.
3. A, possibly B
4. E
5. B
6. the holy instant
7. C and D
8. B
9. **My summary:** When you join in purpose with someone, you and he become a herald of eternity. And he becomes the bringer of peace to you, whose value cannot be judged.