

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 30

A New Beginning

Section IV

The Thought God Holds of You

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview of Section IV

The last paragraph of Section III told us that God always gives us what we are asking for, what we *will*, not by giving us the forms we think we want or need, but instead giving us “the...lovely Thought God holds of you.” We think we want some form, but what we really want is the reality behind it. This paragraph now begins to discuss God’s Thoughts, because we need to see just how those Thoughts can be the answer to our requests, the fulfillment of our will. Explaining that will be the subject of the rest of the section.

Paragraph 1

Nothing that God knows not exists. ²And what He knows exists forever, changelessly. ³For thoughts endure as long as does the mind that thought of them, and in the Mind of God there is no ending, nor a time in which His thoughts were absent or could suffer change. ⁴Thoughts are not born and cannot die. ⁵They share the attributes of their creator, nor have they a separate life apart from him. ⁶The thoughts you think are in your mind, as you are in the Mind which thought of you. ⁷And so there are no separate parts in what exists within God’s Mind. ⁸It is forever one, eternally united and at peace.

• Study Questions •

1. *God’s Thoughts of you are changeless. Meditate on this in connection with the idea that “the whole completely lovely Thought God holds of you” is, somehow, the answer to all of your questions and seeming needs. It is not some specific thing or concrete form that you actually want; you want*

God's Thought of you. How does realizing that only God's Thought of you is real, and that it is changeless, fulfill your will, or comprise the answer to all your asking?

2. **(6:1).** Compare the statement here, "Nothing that God knows not exists," with 4:5, "God knows not form." If these two statements are both true, what must be our conclusion about form?



Double negatives, such as those in 1:1, can be confusing. We could paraphrase 1:1 like this: "What God does not know does not exist." But what He *knows* is eternal and changeless (1:2). To the Course, the opposite of "real," "eternal," and "changeless" is "non-existent." As the Introduction to the Text says, "Nothing unreal exists" (T-In.2:3). The emphasis here, however, isn't on the changeless nature and reality of God's creations. Instead, it seems to be on what God does and does not *know*. Only what He knows has any existence.

If I know something, my mind holds a thought of it. If my mind has no thought of a thing, I don't know that thing. The central point here is that only what the mind of God holds — only what He *knows* — exists, and it exists eternally and changelessly because "thoughts endure as long as does the mind that thought of them" (1:3). If God is eternal, then His thoughts are eternal; they are also changeless and endless. Once a thought is in God's Mind, it is there always and forever (1:3).

Thoughts exist in the mind of their thinker and share their creator's attributes (1:5). God's Thoughts have no life, no existence, apart from His Mind. They are not born; they do not die (1:4–5). Wonderfully, all this applies to us because *we* are Thoughts of God. We exist in the Mind that thought of us (1:6); therefore, we are eternally united and at peace, forever one in God's Mind (1:7–8). Whatever we may think we are, our reality is that we are eternal, we share all of God's attributes, and we have no life apart from God.

Wrap your mind around the idea that you are eternal! Let it sink in. What are you worried about?! The latest war? Politics? But you are eternal. Heart attacks, disease, traffic accidents, fires, natural disasters? But you are eternal. Your body may wither and stop, but you go on, forever and forever. You are eternal. You are one with the Creator of the universe of universes (T-19.IV(D).1:4).

Paragraph 2

2 Thoughts *seem* to come and go, but all this means is that you are sometimes aware of them and sometimes not. ²An unremembered thought is born again to you when it returns to your awareness, yet it did not die when you forgot it. ³It was always there, but *you* were unaware of it. ⁴The thought God holds of you is perfectly unchanged by your forgetting. ⁵It will always be exactly as it was before the time when you forgot, and will be just the same when you remember. ⁶And it is the same within the interval when you forgot. ⁷The thoughts of God are far beyond all change, and shine forever. ⁸They await not birth. ⁹They wait for welcome and remembering.

• Study Questions •

3. (7:6–8). Summarize the three aspects of time referred to here in which God's Thought of you is unchanged.
4. How does hearing this make you feel? What does it say to you about yourself, about your safety, about God's Love for you?

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Think of some instances in your experience when thoughts seemed to disappear from your mind but were later still there when they returned to your awareness (2:1). I know I've had that happen. Just a week or so ago, I was trying to remember the name of the minister of music in the American Baptist Church I was a member of more than forty years earlier. I simply wanted to remember him because I was thinking about people who had influenced my life by their love for God, and this was one such man. I racked my brain for days. I managed to remember the minister's name and two assistant ministers who were there for a much shorter time who had much less impact on me than the minister of music. I remembered the name of a young woman from West Virginia who visited the church one summer (I had a crush on her). But the name of the music minister would not come. It seemed to have vanished from my mind. Then, one day, I got the letter "R." I started trying various men's names starting with that letter: Roger, Roy, Robert, Ralph, Reggie...it just would not come. But then, suddenly, there it was, as clear as ever: Raymond McAfee. The memory of his name brought him so vividly to mind my eyes started with tears.

I've also had ideas about some article to write, forgotten them, and been unable to recall them for days, only to have the ideas come back fresh a few days afterward. The mind is a funny thing, isn't it? Thoughts do seem to come and go, but apparently, they never really leave the mind. They just drop below the radar, mostly undetected by your conscious awareness (2:1), but "born again" in all their glory when you become aware of them again (2:2). It isn't really born again; it never died. It was always there in your mind (2:3).

The same is true of God's Mind and His Thought of you. When you forget it, it does not die or go away (2:4). It just drops out of awareness, awaiting rediscovery. Keep in mind that the "Thought" in question here is *your reality, your true Identity*. It is the real you. And *this* has been "perfectly unchanged by your forgetting" (2:4). *Perfectly* unchanged! I love the extra degree of meaning that the word "perfectly" adds. Your forgetting had zero effect on your reality. Your reality remains "*exactly* as it was before the time when you forgot" (2:5), and it retains its unsullied perfection all during the time you seem to be wandering in the wilderness of doubt and darkness (2:6). When you finally wake from your dream, your reality will still be there, unshaken, unaltered (2:5).

God's thoughts are exempt from change; they "shine forever" (2:7). In our seeking to identify with our true identity as Thoughts of God, we are not waiting for this Thought to be born (2:8); this Thought that is you is only waiting for you to welcome it and remember it (2:9)

One significant aspect of our mental pathology is our belief that we have somehow tragically altered our reality. We think, “Yes, maybe God created me perfect, but I’m sure not perfect *now*.” Oh, yes, you are!

Most of the remainder of this section consists of a wonderfully poetic paean to the Thought God holds of you. It should leave no doubt in our minds that the shimmering perfection that Jesus describes is our reality *now and forever*.

Paragraph 3

3 The thought God holds of you is like a star, unchangeable in an eternal sky. 2So high in Heaven is it set that those outside of Heaven know not it is there. 3But still and white and lovely will it shine through all eternity. 4There was no time it was not there. 5No instant when its light grew dimmer or less perfect ever was. 6Who knows the Father knows this light, for He is the eternal sky which holds it safe, forever lifted up and anchored sure. 7Its perfect purity does not depend on whether it is seen on earth or not. 8The sky embraces it and softly holds it in its perfect place, which is as far from earth as earth from Heaven. 9It is not the distance nor the time which keeps this star invisible to earth, but those who seek for idols cannot know this star is there.

• Study Question •

5. (3:1–3). Explain your understanding of the idea that God’s thoughts do not wait for birth, but for “welcome and remembering,” and tell what this means to you personally.
6. We tend to think that what keeps us from seeing Christ in ourselves is a matter of time or distance; we believe we must go somewhere, do something, and spend a lot of time to find this light. What, if not time nor distance, is really keeping us from seeing the truth?

Practice Suggestion: (3:4–7). Spend some time as you read this and the paragraphs that follow trying to visualize what is being talked about as you read. The “star” in the image is “the Thought God holds of you” as His perfect and complete Son, completely lovely, eternally whole. The “eternal sky” is God’s Mind (see 9:1). Picture this; close your eyes and see that star shining “still and white and lovely.” See yourself as one of those “outside of Heaven” that do not even know the star is there—yet it is still there! “There was no time it was not there.” Try to let the sense of that sink in and wash over you: “There was no time it was not there; no instant when its light grew dimmer or less perfect ever was.”

The imagery begins by comparing God’s Thought of you to a star (3:1). Keep this in mind as you read. When Jesus mentions a *star*, he refers to the Thought God holds of you. In this first sentence, he emphasizes the permanence of a star, “unchangeable in an

eternal sky” (3:1). Stars, science will tell us, are by no means changeless and eternal, but to any human consciousness, they certainly *seem* to be changeless. They were there when you were born; they are there when you die. So he is envisioning a star that endures forever. He says that God’s Thought of you is like that — permanent, changeless.

3:2 makes it clear that he isn’t talking about an actual, visible star. This is a star set high in Heaven. Those outside of Heaven (which means pretty much everyone in this world) do not even know this star exists! Nevertheless, it will “shine through all eternity” (3:3). It does not even exist *in time*; it lives in eternity. “There was no time it was not there” (3:4). Not a single instant of time exists or existed in which the light of this star (remember: star=you) “grew dimmer or less perfect” (3:5).

Compare this with what Chapter 15 said:

“There never was an instant in which God’s Son could lose his purity. His changeless state is beyond time, for his purity remains forever beyond attack and without variability. Time stands still in his holiness and changes not. And so it is no longer time at all, for caught in the single instant of the eternal sanctity of God’s creation, it is transformed into forever.” (T-15.II.3:5–8 (CE), T-15.I.15:5–9 (FIP))

You are an eternal light, a star that shines forever. Anyone who “knows the Father knows this light” (3:6) because God the Father is the sky in which this star exists. You are the star; God is the eternal sky. In that divine home, your true identity is held safe, “forever lifted up and anchored sure” (3:6). I like the implication of that imagery: “anchored sure.” You can’t drift away; no sudden current will ever pull you away. You are *anchored* in God! Your light is secure, always shining. It’s permanence and brilliance does not depend on being seen on earth (although it could be seen here) (3:7). You are anchored in God, embraced by the sky (God), and softly held in your perfect place, a place that is vastly removed from earth since it is in Heaven (3:8).

Your brilliant identity, the star that is you, is not kept from sight here on earth by distance or time. The difficulty in seeing it is because “those who seek for idols cannot know this star is there” (3:9).

The discussion about what keeps us from seeing our real identity links to the preceding discussion about idols. Our identity is kept from our sight because we seek something in form as a substitute for God the Father’s love (T-30.III.2:1-2 (CE)). We do not see the shining star of our Self because we are still looking to idols to make us happy.

Paragraph 4

4 Beyond all idols is the thought God holds of you. ²Completely unaffected by the turmoil and the terror of the world, the dreams of birth and death that here are dreamed, the myriad of forms that fear can take; quite undisturbed, the thought God holds of you remains exactly as it always was. ³Surrounded by a stillness so complete no sound of battle comes remotely near, it rests in certainty and perfect peace. ⁴Here is your one reality kept safe, completely unaware of all the world that worships idols and that knows not God. ⁵In perfect sureness of its changelessness and of its rest in its eternal home, the thought God holds of you has never left the Mind of its Creator, Whom it knows as its Creator knows that it is there.

• Study Question •

7. What is the “eternal home” (4:5; cf. 3:6) in which the Thought of God is kept safe?

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(4:1). Notice the continuing play back and forth between *idols* and *the thought God holds of you*. These are the two “competing” answers to our yearning for completion. See also W-pI.152.5, W-pI.167.8, and W-pII.283.1. Can you see how your mind goes back and forth between believing in your true identity and believing in an idol, either a false image you have made of yourself or the external idols it believes it needs to find happiness?

God’s thought of you is *beyond* all idols. It is so far past idols that they have no effect whatsoever on it. The “turmoil and the terror of the world” do not affect the truth of what you are. One easily detectable clue that you are identifying with your ego and body is how you are affected by the world’s turmoil and terror, of which there is an abundance. The truth of you is utterly unaffected by it all. That is the inner core we seek to connect with and rest in during meditation.

All the stories of birth and death in this world, no matter their nature, do not upset the peace of your inner Self.

Fear can take thousands of forms. None of them touch the reality of your Self. Amid all these jarring dreams, “the thought God holds of you remains exactly as it always was” (4:2). Profound stillness surrounds it — the ultimate noise reduction filter (4:3)! Your Self “rests in certainty and perfect peace” even though the battles of the world rage on.

When you know that you and everyone else are only facets of perfect and changeless wholeness so that nothing can affect you or alter you in any way, nothing can threaten you, then such perfect peace is not only possible, it is inescapable. When the Course assures us, “There is nothing to fear,” it really, really means it! Let’s read Lesson 48; it’s relatively short:

“There is nothing to fear. The idea for today simply states a fact. It is not a fact to those who believe in illusions, but illusions are not facts. In truth there is nothing

to fear. It is very easy to recognize this. But it is very difficult to recognize it for those who want illusions to be true.

“2 Today’s practice periods will be very short, very simple, and very frequent. Merely repeat the idea in its original form as often as possible. You can use it with your eyes open at any time and in any situation. It is strongly recommended, however, that you take a minute or so, whenever possible, to close your eyes and repeat the idea slowly to yourself several times. It is particularly important that you use the idea immediately should anything disturb your peace of mind.

“3 The presence of fear is a sure sign that you are trusting in your own strength. The awareness that there is nothing to fear shows that somewhere in your mind—not necessarily in a place which you recognize as yet—you have remembered God and let His strength take the place of yours. The instant you are willing to do this, there is indeed nothing to fear.”

In our “one reality” we are immune to all the world’s ills. This reality is “unaware of all the world” (4:4). Our Self does not see the worship of idols and the ignorance of God. Instead, it sees *past* these things to the truth of God’s creation.

“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 (FIP)).

This Self is secure in its changelessness, knowing it is at home in God (4:5). It has never left God’s Mind.

My holy brother, think of this awhile: The world you see does nothing. It has no effects at all. It merely represents your thoughts. And it will change entirely as you elect to change your mind and choose the joy of God as what you really want. Your Self is radiant in this holy joy—unchanged, unchanging, and unchangeable, forever and forever. (T-5.I.6:1–5 (CE))

The Self and the Creator equally share the knowledge of one another’s presence in their union. What more effective source of peace could there be?

“Father, I was created in Your Mind, a holy Thought that never left its home. I am forever Your Effect, and You forever and forever are my Cause. As You created me I have remained. Where You established me I still abide. And all Your attributes abide in me, because it is Your Will to have a Son so like his Cause that Cause and Its Effect are indistinguishable.” (W-pII.326.1:1-5 (FIP)).

Practice Suggestion: (10:1–5). Spend some time being quiet, and allowing the Holy Spirit to translate all your prayers of need and lack into occasions for remembering your completion. Let Him take you “beyond all idols” to “the Thought God holds of you.” The reality of what is described here is the “quiet center” we all seek to bring back to awareness as we practice the holy instant. Pause and practice now. Tell yourself that what is said here is true about you, and that you can and will remember it. Remind yourself that it is true of you even if you are not aware of it; your forgetting has not affected it (10:2). Take some time, now, to remember.

Paragraph 5

5 Where could the thought God holds of you exist but where you are? ²Is your reality a thing apart from you, and in a world which your reality knows nothing of? ³Outside you there is no eternal sky, no changeless star, and no reality. ⁴The mind of Heaven's Son in Heaven is, for there the Mind of Father and of Son join in creation which can have no end. ⁵You have not two realities, but one. ⁶Nor can you be aware of more than one. ⁷An idol or the thought God holds of you is your reality. ⁸Forget not, then, that idols must keep hidden what you are, not from the Mind of God, but from your own. ⁹The star shines still; the sky has never changed. ¹⁰But you, the holy Son of God Himself, are unaware of your reality.

• Study Question •

8. *(11:1–5). Why do you suppose Jesus is talking about where the Thought God holds of you is? We tend to have the thought that all this talk about our perfect reality is describing something other than what we are, where we are. There is this perfect Self, and then there is “the real me,” or at least “the me I am right now.” How does Jesus counter such thoughts here?*

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Think about it! God's thought of you cannot possibly exist anywhere but where you are (5:1). Your reality can't be anything or anywhere that is apart from you. It cannot exist in a world that it "knows nothing of" (5:2). It's where you are, and it can't be in this world. Therefore, *you* can't be here!

All this marvelous stuff we're reading about—the eternal sky (which is God); the changeless star (which is your Self); all of reality—does not exist *outside* of you, some other place where you are not. It all exists within you (5:3). You exist in Heaven, not this world. In Heaven, your mind and God's unite in endless creation (5:4).

You do not exist in two parts. There aren't two versions of you: small contracted ego and vast, expansive Self; there is only one real you (5:5)! And it is the one God created. The "other you" is an illusion, an hallucination.

The next line is perhaps more difficult to comprehend (5:6). You may think, "Yes, there is only one real me, but I'm unaware of It, and what I'm aware of is this pitiful

version of myself." The Course sentence may seem at first to say that your reality is the only you that you can be aware of.

But in my opinion, it is saying that you can only be aware of *one version* of yourself at any time. When the ego occupies center stage in your mind, that's all you see. The real you is invisible. In the same way, when your true Self is in the foreground, the ego fades into nothingness. In other words, either you are hallucinating the ego, or you aren't! What seems real to you at any moment is either "an idol or the thought God holds of you" (5:7).

So, Jesus says, don't forget that any idol you hold onto hides your reality from your mind (but not, thankfully, from God's Mind) (5:8).

When your ego, your separate self, seems to be the real you, "The star shines still; the sky has never changed" (5:9). Your Self is still there, safe in God's eternal Mind, and you are where your Self is (5:10). Where else? Yet, although you are still the holy Son of God, you are momentarily unaware of your reality (5:11).

The truth is, we have spent and still spend most of our lives in this unawareness of reality. This section's message reassures us that that has not affected our reality; it continues forever in the Mind of God. We are having a nightmare, nothing more. That's why the practices in the Workbook are so repetitive. We *need* constant reminders of the truth. We need to affirm, over and over, "I am as God created me." "I exist in God's Mind, His perfect thought. I am forever the effect of God." The more often we repeat this kind of thought, the more we will begin to experience our reality, to rise above our hallucinations. And always remember that the self *you* made is meaningless; God guarantees your sinlessness:

"Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God. Over and over this must be repeated until it is accepted. It is true. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God. Nothing can touch it, nor can change what God created as eternal. The self you made, evil and full of sin, is meaningless. Your sinlessness is guaranteed by God, and light and joy and peace abide in you." (W-93.1:1-7 (CE))

• **Study Question** •

9. **Question for thought:** *How can the message of this section be related to the instructions in Section I, "Rules for Decision," about how to have a happy day? (#25)*

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Answer Key

1. God's Thoughts exist changelessly in His mind; therefore, His Thought of you is eternal. Though you may have forgotten what God thinks about you, He has not, and cannot. His Thought of you is "whole" and "completely lovely." Any appearance of need we have, that causes us to *ask* for anything, is answered by that Thought of wholeness and complete loveliness. Our asking comes from an illusion of incompleteness. We seek *because* we will to be complete; God's Thought, the only reality, eternal and changeless, *is* complete. His Thought meets and cancels out our seeking.
2. Therefore, form does not exist.
3. The Thought God holds of me is and always will be exactly the same. It was the same *before* I forgot; it will be the same *after* I remember; and it is the same *now*, while I am actually still forgetting it. That is God's answer to our crying out for completion; He reminds us our completion has never changed.
4. [Robert Perry writes:] My answer to this question is: It makes me feel very peaceful and secure. It relieves me from any concern that my forgetting God and forgetting who I am has actually changed something; it lets me know that my forgetting has had zero effect. And that lifts any sense of guilt from me. It makes it okay to be what I am, as I am, even to be still in a condition of not remembering fully who I am. It removes any sense of unworthiness or neediness. It lets me know that I am still complete and whole, even though I am not fully aware of it.
5. It means that what is real—God's Thought—exists now and eternally. It is not something that does not exist, waiting to be born; it already, always exists. Within time we are waiting for something, but we are not waiting for our reality to come into existence; it exists always, already. We are waiting only to accept (or welcome) that truth about ourselves, and to remember that it has always been so.

For me, this is similar to thinking I am a slave, living like a slave, and learning that the king has declared all slaves to be free. I may still forget, I may still act like a slave, but more and more I am remembering and realizing, "I am already free!"

6. Seeking for idols. See 3:5, 11:8, and T-29.VII.6:1.
7. God's Mind.
8. Where could your reality be except where you are? How can it be separate from you? It *must* be with you, in you, and it must *be* you, right now. And you have only *one* reality, not two. There is not a perfect, complete you and an imperfect, incomplete you. There is only you, perfect and complete. Right now, and always, and forever. Additional references on not having two realities but one are: T-14.IX.2:6; T-16.III.6:1; W-pI.96.3:2.

9. Idols keep your reality hidden from your mind (not from God's). So, in letting go of idols, in letting ourselves go *beyond* idols, we can discover that reality. And this is *exactly what we are doing* when we decide not to make decisions by ourselves. Our decisions fixate on forms; we seek for forms to make us complete each and every day, and that is seeking for idols. Pausing in the morning to remind ourselves that it is not the idols we want; that forms cannot complete us; that we do not *need* completing; pausing to let the Holy Spirit remind us of the “completely lovely Thought” God holds of us—that is what is being asked of us when we are told to decide not to make decisions by ourselves.

Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

The Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is identical to the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often entirely different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Effects of Switching Editions of the Course

The commentaries on Chapters 29, 30, and 31 were written prior to the publication of the Complete and Annotated Edition (CE) of the Course in 2017. Originally they were based on the edition published by the Foundation for Inner Peace (FIP). The references to other parts of the Course were based on the FIP edition, and the comments themselves were based on the same edition. There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and these final chapters had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate CE reference if it differs from the FIP reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE restored the plural use of “you” where the FIP had substituted the phrase “you and your brother.” One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.