

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 31

The Final Vision

Section III

The Sleeping Prisoner

An explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats is at the end of the commentary. See also the note there about 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 III

Recall how Section I of this chapter spoke of two lessons we can learn, with very different outcomes (the lesson of guilt, resulting in the world of terror, vs. the lesson of innocence, resulting in the real world). Section II also spoke of different outcomes from our choice between calls for death and calls for life. This third section continues the theme of the two different outcomes and how our choice determines the outcome. For references to “outcome” in the two preceding sections, see:

T-31.I.6:5–6

T-31.I.7:2–4, 8–9

T-31.I.8:1

T-31.I.11:1–1

and

T-31.II.3:1 (FIP), T-31.II.3:6 (CE)

T-31.II.5:6–8

T-31.II.9:6–7 (FIP), T-31.II.10:6–7 (CE).

As you can see from all those references, this concern about “outcomes” is central to the message in these sections.

The interweaving of many threads from earlier in the Text seems to intensify in this chapter. Jesus is bringing the Course to a crescendo leading up to the climax: the last section, “Choose Once Again.” As you continue studying this chapter, notice how the entire chapter is pointing towards the crucial importance of our making and holding to the choice between death and life, hate and forgiveness. Notice as well the emphasis on the outcomes resulting from our choice.

Paragraph 1

Only the self-accused condemn. ²As we prepare to make a choice that will result in different outcomes, there is first one thing that must be overlearned. ³It must become a habit of response so typical of everything you do that it becomes your first response to all temptation and to every situation that occurs. ⁴Learn this, and learn it well, for it is here delay of happiness is shortened by a span of time you cannot realize: You never hate your brother for *his* sins, but only for your own. ⁵Whatever form his sins appear to take, the form obscures the fact that you believe them to be yours, and therefore meriting a just attack.

• Study Question •

1. (1:1). *This sentence is concise but packs a real wallop. It forcefully states the central thought of this paragraph. How would you express this same thought in your own words?*
2. *What, previously, were we said to have overlearned? (See (T-31.I.3:4–6 ; 4:5–6 (CE), T-31.I.3:4–6; 4:5–6 (FIP),*
3. *(1:3–5). What lesson are we asked to “overlearn” now to compensate for the false lessons we have overlearned?*
4. *(1:3). Judging from the context and the advised response, what do you think the “temptation” referred to here must be? (T-31.I.11:1 may help you answer if you think about the two “lessons” spoken of in that section.)*
5. *In the first paragraph of Chapter 30, Jesus said something similar to 1:3 here. What was it?*

•

Only people who see guilt in themselves see guilt in others (1:1). This simple sentence sums up the message of the preceding two sections. How we perceive ourselves determines how we see the world:

The world you see is but a judgment on yourself. It is not there at all. (T-20.III.5:2-3)

If we feel guilty—guilty about anything at all—we will see other people that way. If we believe we are less than perfectly innocent, we will be sure that no one is perfectly innocent. The old childhood taunt, “It takes one to know one!” contained more wisdom than we realized. It takes a guilty person to see a guilty person. The critical difference in what the Course is saying is that the guilt not real in either case.

To say it takes a guilty person to see guilt in another does not mean that the form guilt takes in the other person (as you see them) is identical to the form in you. To think condemning thoughts about a liar does not prove that you are a liar. With something as simple as a lie, it’s likely that at some time you, and everyone, have told a lie and have felt some guilt about it, so when you condemn a liar, perhaps you are projecting your guilt about lying. When you condemn a person for something you have never done and never would do, however, it’s more challenging to see how this is a projection of guilt in you. Perhaps we might say that if we condemn another person for doing or saying something, we would condemn ourselves if we did the same thing. “If I ever did that, I would deserve punishment.”

Whatever form our supposed sin may take, we *all* have done some things we believe to be wrong. We've been selfish, greedy, or deceitful at some point, and we've felt guilty. We believe in guilt as a principle. We believe that, behind our façade of innocence, in truth, we deserve punishment. It is because we believe that about ourselves that we believe it about others—about anyone.

Jesus then proceeds to whet our appetites. In the two preceding sections, he has been priming us to look beyond the false options of leader or follower, either of which results in the same outcome: guilt. He wants us to make a genuine choice between truly different options that will produce genuinely different results. If we keep repeating the same thought patterns, we will continue to have the same outcome in our lives. Something has to change! Our *minds* have to change.

He tells us there is “one thing” that must be “overlearned” (1:2). That word, *overlearned*, should grab your attention and remind you of something you read recently in this chapter. In Section I, Jesus told us that we have already overlearned confused and impossible lessons. Because we have overlearned them, they “obscure the simple and the obvious” truth (T-31.I.3:4) and “stand implacable before the Voice of truth, and teach you that Its lessons are not true” (T-31.I.5:4). The core lesson we thus overlearned is, “The Son of God is guilty.” Sentence 1:3 tells us to overlearn one particular thought until it becomes an automatic response to temptation. Jesus hammers this home. It must become a habit that is “so typical of everything you do that it becomes your first response...to every situation that occurs.” Turning a thought into a habit paints a clear picture of just what he means by *overlearning*. It must become so ingrained that it requires no conscious effort. To reach that point, where this thought becomes a reflex reaction to *every* situation, we will need to consciously practice it until we no longer have to think about it. It will become automatic. We will need to consciously repeat this thought again and again until we find ourselves reacting with this thought before we think of anything else. It becomes our *first response*. (He has not told us yet what that thought is. We might imagine it is simply the opposite of the false lesson: “The Son of God is innocent.” But that isn't quite it. Jesus tantalizes us by holding back that critical thought for another sentence or two.) The idea of having such thoughts burned into our minds, ready for instant retrieval in moments of temptation, is one of the core techniques taught in the Workbook for Students (see W-pI.31.5:1; W-pI.76.12:1; W-pI.95.5:3). It is one of the purposes of the disciplined inculcation of ideas advocated by the Workbook.

We've all learned at least some things to this degree. For most of us, we've learned our native language like this. When we pick up a telephone, we automatically say, “Hello?” We don't have to think, “Now what's that word? Goodbye? Who? Oh, yes: *Hello?*” But if you are in the process of learning to speak a foreign language, like Spanish, you may have to pause and think until you come up with the correct Spanish word: *Hola!* And you have to remember that the “H” is silent. But, if you repeat that over and over, if you live in a Spanish-speaking country where you say hello a dozen times a day, before long, you say *Hola* without thinking at all. I spent a year in France while in college. I happen to be an excellent learner of languages and accents, but I was surprised to be mistaken for a French-speaking Swiss or a native of Alsace by the end of the year. I spoke and wrote French all the time. But it went farther than that! I didn't realize I had formed the habit of *thinking* in French until returning to the United States. I found myself having

thoughts in French that I had difficulty translating into English! *That's* overlearning. And that is how completely Jesus wants us to learn what he is about to tell us.

Another note on this sentence: The word “habit” came up not too long ago in the Text. Can you remember someplace else recently that spoke of needing to develop habits of response to the situations in our lives, “so you will have them ready and for any need.”? (FN T-30.I.1:8 (CE)). This same idea of a *habitual* way of responding to temptations will be spoken of yet again in T-31.VIII.5:1 (FIP), T-31.IX.5:1 (CE).

In 1:4, he adds to our motivation. He tells us that if we learn this well, we cannot even imagine what an enormous span we will shave off the length of time it takes to arrive at complete happiness. I get the feeling here he isn't talking days, weeks, or even years; he's talking lifetimes. Centuries. Millennia! The Course says:

“Just as the separation occurred over many millions of years, the Last Judgment will extend over a similarly long period, and perhaps even longer. Its length depends, however, on the effectiveness of the present speed-up. We have frequently noted that the miracle is a device for shortening but not abolishing time. If a sufficient number of people become truly miracle-minded quickly, the shortening process can be almost immeasurable. But it is essential that these individuals free themselves from fear sooner than would ordinarily be the case, because they must emerge from the basic conflict if they are to bring peace to the minds of others.” (T-2.XIII.3:1–5 (CE), T-2.VIII.2:5-6 (FIP). (FIP edited the wording significantly.)

“Each time you practice, awareness is brought a little nearer at least; sometimes a thousand years or more are saved.” (W-pl.97.3:2)

“The miracle substitutes for learning that might have taken thousands of years.” (T-1.II.6:7 (FIP), T-1.47.2:6 (CE))

The possibility of shaving thousands of years off my spiritual journey is undoubtedly strong motivation! What is it that we are supposed to practice repeatedly to make it a habitual response to every situation we encounter that might trigger our judgment?

“You *never* hate your brother for *his* sins, but *only* for your own.” (1:5)

That's it. That's the thing we need to overlearn. *Never. Only.* No exceptions to this rule! You always hate your brother for *your* sins.

Application: *Think of several different people, and with each one get in touch with the sinfulness you see in that person, and then say,*
I never hate [name] for his [or her] sins, but only for my own.
Try to make a silent vow to carry this thought with you until you have made applying it to everything an automatic reflex.

Paragraph 2

2 Why should his sins *be* sins if you did not believe they could not be forgiven in you? 2Why are they real in him if you did not believe that they are *your* reality? 3And why do you attack them anywhere, except you hate yourself? 4Are you a sin? 5You answer yes whenever you attack, for by attack do you assert that you are guilty, and must give as you deserve. 6And what can you deserve but what you are? 7If you did not believe that you deserved attack, it never would occur to you to *give* attack to anyone at all. 8Why should you? 9What would be the gain to you? 10What could the outcome be that you would want? 11And how could murder bring you benefit?¹

• Study Question •

6. Try to recognize the ways in which you do not believe what is being said in 2:1–3. Can you think of some of these “good” reasons, which the Course must be asserting are not true?
7. As a restatement or rewording of what these sentences say, try to complete this sentence: *Whenever I attack anyone, I am asserting that I am a _____ and therefore I am _____, I deserve to be _____, and I am incapable of giving anything to anyone except _____.*

Why would you believe your brother’s sins are real and deserving of attack unless you hated yourself because you believed that the sins *in you* are real and unforgivable? You are asserting that *you* are a sin, guilty, every time you attack. You declare that you deserve attack and can give only what you deserve. It would never occur to you to attack if you didn’t believe you deserved attack. Why would you? How could it benefit?

(2:1–3). These three rhetorical questions are all asking the same basic question, or asserting the same basic proposition: namely, that if you see sin in others, believe it real, and attack them, it proves that you believe sin is your own reality and unforgivable, and you hate yourself for it. This must be so because there is, in truth, no other possible reason for seeing and attacking sin in others. That is a pretty radical proposition! We all most likely have several “good” reasons why

1. This paragraph provides evidence for the key assertion in paragraph 1 that “You never hate your brother for *his* sins, but only for your own.” This paragraph seems to contain two main ideas. First, that the sins you see in your brother only seem like real, unforgivable sins that can justly be attacked because that is how you see your own sins. In other words, it is only because your sins feel so solid and immovable that your brother’s sins seem set in stone. Were you not seeing him through the lens of your rocklike sins, his would appear as they are: insubstantial and forgivable. Second, that you only attack his sins because you believe that you *deserve* attack yourself, due to your sinfulness. Apparently, you recognize somewhere inside that whatever you give you will receive. Based on that, you give attack *so that* it will loop around and come back to you, because in your feelings of sinfulness you believe you deserve nothing better. Both of these ideas add up to the same conclusion: It is only the sins you see in yourself that lead you to hate and attack the sins in your brother.

we attack sin in others that have nothing to do with sin in ourselves, and that, in fact, assert our own perfect innocence. We perhaps need to reconsider our motivation.

The same argument continues in the rest of the paragraph. First, stop for a moment and take a look at Study Question #2 above, and complete the sentence there, which has you apply the questions in 2:4–6 to yourself.

When you have completed the sentence in question 2, read it aloud and see if it “resonates” inside. Or do you, perhaps, feel as if this is not true for you? Do you feel that sometimes when you attack another person, this sentence would not apply to you?

In my opinion, it is perfectly logical, and quite likely, that even at this point in our study, these ideas will feel a bit foreign, hard to understand, or even simply untrue. We need to see this, not as some kind of failure on our part, but simply as an indication that we have much to learn.

(2:7–11). Spend some time thinking about the statement in sentence 7, and the questions that come in the following sentences. Try actually answering them and see what you come up with; for instance, asking yourself, “If I did not believe I deserved attack, why would it occur to me to give attack to anyone else? Would it occur to me at all?”

The statement in sentence 7 is in clear language. Its meaning is plain. However, the reasoning behind it may be hard to grasp, because on the surface, at least, we *do* think that we do not deserve attack, and yet we must attack others (at least sometimes) to prevent their taking advantage of our innocence (2:8). We think that the “gain” to us is self-protection (2:9–10). We “benefit” from “murdering” our brother because it forestalls his murdering us (2:11)!

This aspect of our thinking will be discussed as “the face of innocence” in Section 31.V. In some sense, I think, that section is necessary to expand on the thought given here and to explain why, at first blush, it does not appear to be true. We’ll discuss that when we come to it.

But sentence 7 *does* make sense if you understand that in order to recognize our own innocence and harmlessness, we must of necessity recognize the innocence and harmlessness of *everyone*. In actuality, the only way we could truly understand and believe that we are harmless and do not deserve attack is if we realized that we were created innocent by God and that we remain as He created us. If that is true of us, it must also be true of all others whom God created. Therefore, since others are equally innocent, they cannot and will not, in reality, attack us, and therefore, attacking them would not even occur to us.

Paragraph 3

3 Sins are in bodies. ²They are not perceived in minds. ³They are not seen as purposes but *actions*. ⁴Bodies act and minds do not, and therefore must the body be at fault for what it does. ⁵It is not seen to be a passive thing, obeying your commands and doing nothing of itself at all. ⁶If you are sin you *are* a body, for the mind acts not. ⁷And purpose must be in the body, not the mind. ⁸The body must act on its own and motivate itself. ⁹If you are sin, you lock the mind within the body, and you give its purpose to its prison house, which acts instead of it. ¹⁰A jailer does not follow orders, but enforces orders on the prisoner.

• Study Question •

8. (3:1–3). From what is said here, what do you suppose Jesus believes about this? Does he believe in sin at all? Does he perceive the real problem as the action or the purpose?
9. (3:3–6). According to the logic of the ego that Jesus is describing in these sentences, why must the guilt of the body be real?

•

(3:1–3). Again Jesus reasons with us; we need to follow his reasoning to understand what he is trying to say to us. He reasons using statements that we may disagree with, at least at first. I believe he is continuing to support his assertion, in 1:5, that, “You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own.” He has said we must *overlearn* this one thing, so he provides more argument to support that assertion. The previous paragraph has argued that attacking our brothers for their sins would not even occur to us if we did not believe we deserved an attack for our sins. If we saw ourselves as innocent, we would perceive the equal innocence of our brothers. Now, he argues that we perceive ourselves and our brothers as at the mercy of our bodies, compelled by our bodies to act sinfully. Thus, seeing ourselves as sinful causes us to misperceive ourselves as being bodies.

When you think of the word “sin,” do you think of it as something your mind does or something your body does? Do you see sin as an *action*, or as a *purpose*?

While we perceive sin as being in our bodies, not our minds, Jesus sees it the other way around. That is not to say that he would call the purposes of the mind “sin.” He argues that to believe sin is real, you have to locate it in the body and not the mind; you must distort the actual relationship between body and mind. The way we think, sins are actions, and bodies perform actions. So the body must be at fault (3:4). We think that our bodies somehow control us and make us do sinful things. We don’t understand that the body is a passive thing that only does what we (in our minds) tell it to do (3:5). Therefore, if you are a sinner, by the ego’s understanding, “you *are* a body,” because the mind does not act, but the body does (3:6).

(3:7–11). Jesus now takes the reasoning to the point of absurdity to demonstrate that the entire line of reasoning the ego is using is false and leads to ridiculous conclusions if followed. The idea that *we* are sinful and deserving of attack lies behind our perception of *our brothers* as sinful. He is trying to show us that the idea that we “are sin,” that is, genuinely guilty, is absurd because it leads to saying that the mind is locked in the body and controlled by the body, which acts on its own and motivates itself. By this line of thinking, we have imprisoned ourselves in bodies; our prison houses now control us. The jailer is the body, and the mind is the prisoner, which is absurd.

So, what’s really going on?

Paragraph 4

4 Yet is the *body* prisoner, and not the mind. ²The body thinks no thoughts. ³It has no power to learn, to pardon or enslave. ⁴It gives no orders that the mind need serve, nor sets conditions that it must obey. ⁵It holds in prison but the willing mind that would abide in it. ⁶It sickens at the bidding of the mind that would become its prisoner. ⁷And it grows old and dies because that mind is sick within itself. ⁸Learning is all that causes change. ⁹And so the body, where no learning *can* occur, could never change, unless the mind preferred the body change in its appearances to suit the purpose given by the mind. ¹⁰For it *can* learn, and there is all change made.

It is the body, not the mind, that is a prisoner (4:1). The body cannot think, learn, pardon, nor enslave; it cannot give orders to the mind or force it to do anything (4:2–4). The body can imprison the mind only if the mind is *willing* to be imprisoned by it (4:5). The body sickens, ages, and dies because the mind is sick. It does so because the mind *wants* to become the body's prisoner (4:6–7). Since the body can't learn, and only learning causes change, the body could never change unless the mind—where all learning and change originates—wanted change to suit the mind's purposes (4:8–10).

(4:1–10). There are some rather radical presuppositions and conclusions in this paragraph. For instance, to say that the body cannot give orders to the mind or set conditions the mind has to obey seems to contradict our experience. Think of the last time you were seriously ill. For that matter, think of the last time you had to go to the bathroom or the last time you tried to skip sleep! Or, conversely, the last time you had difficulty getting your body to *go* to sleep. To accept the Course's radical assertions, we have to be willing to question our interpretation of such experiences.

Likewise, Jesus says that “learning is all that causes change.” How, then, does a mountain change? How does a flower grow? Are we to assume that all such things occur because some mind, somewhere, learned something about erosion or growth? I believe the answer is: Yes. Yet such an idea seems incredible to us. It's easier to believe that my mind controls my body than to believe my mind controls a mountain. Yet if all matter is nothing but energy appearing as something solid, as quantum physics suggests, the idea becomes more believable².

Based on these and other premises, the conclusion is that the body sickens, grows old, and dies solely because the mind is sick. Every change of any kind in the body happens because the mind, to suit its purposes, prefers it. This causal relationship applies, in my opinion, to the entire material universe, not just to human bodies.

Ponder these thoughts a while, and let yourself realize how drastically your usual way of thinking contradicts the thoughts expressed here. Think about how you would behave entirely

2. “The very “reality” that pre-quantum physics had been studying has been demonstrated by quantum physics to not even exist!”

“Our observations are part and parcel of what we observe. Our perception of the universe is a part of the universe happening through us that has an instantaneous effect on the universe we are observing.”

“Quantum physics reveals that the seemingly solid and substantial physical world is actually composed of something that is not physical at all, but rather mental.”

(The Quantum Revelation, Paul Levy)

differently if you believed what this paragraph is saying. The illusion that your mind is trapped in your body (which comes from the belief in your sinfulness, 3:10) has become seemingly perfect and all-pervading. Think how wholly and thoroughly your mind must have accepted the idea that you are sin to make that illusion seem beyond question!

Paragraph 5

5 The mind that thinks it is a sin has but one purpose: that the body be the source of sin, and keep it in the prison house it chose and guards, wherein it holds itself at bay³—a sleeping prisoner to the snarling dogs of hate and evil, sickness and attack; of pain and age, of grief and suffering. ²Here are the thoughts of sacrifice preserved, for here guilt rules and orders that the world be like itself: a place where nothing can find mercy, or survive the ravages of fear except in murder and in death. ³For here are you made sin, and sin cannot abide the joyous nor accept the free, for they are enemies which sin must kill. ⁴In death is sin preserved, and those who think that they are sin must die for what they are.

• Study Question •

10. (5:1). Notice the repetition of the word “purpose” in 4:9 and 5:1. If the purpose of the mind is what is given here in 5:1, and the body changes its appearance to suit the mind’s purpose, what sort of changes in bodily appearance would you expect? See also 5:4.
11. (5:2). Do the words beginning with “a place where nothing...” seem to you to be an apt description of this world? What, according to this sentence, causes the world to appear this way?

•

“The mind that thinks it is a sin” (5:1). This is how the Course describes us all: as minds that think they are a sin. That self-definition is much more profound than simply thinking I’m a sinner. It carries the notion that sin has corrupted us to the core, infecting our very essence with guilt. We have forever altered our nature.

Most of us don’t consciously think of ourselves this way, but I believe that *unconsciously* we do. Have you ever thought of yourself as anything but separate from God? Haven’t you always had a bit of doubt that you were “right with God”? Thoughts like, “What’s wrong with me?” and “Why did I do that?” have been common. These are indications that, deep down, you question your purity and holiness. You may not realize it, but you’ve become trapped in a thought system that sees your nature as “sin.” You’ve missed the mark, however you conceive of the mark.

A sin-trapped mind wants nothing more than to project the guilt onto the body (5:1). Such a mind cannot face what it believes is its reality (sin); it wants to locate blame outside of itself, and the body’s purpose is to be that scapegoat. The only purpose in a mind that thinks it *is* a sin is to have the body be sin’s source. It *needs* the body to be the prison house for the mind, kept imprisoned by hate, evil, sickness, attack, pain, age, grief, and suffering (5:1). That way, we can blame the sinful condition on the body.

3. Pronoun clarification: “that the body be the source of sin, and keep it [the mind] in the prison house it [the mind] chose and guards, wherein it [the mind] holds itself at bay.”

Such a mind, ruled by guilt, preserves the idea of sacrifice and orders the world to be like itself, a place without mercy, where murder and death are the only way to survive. That seems to me to be a further projection of the guilt. The world is merciless toward your body and thus to you. You who are a mind, believing you are sin, cannot abide the joyous and the free; they are your enemies and must die. Therefore, you too must die, and so sin is preserved in death (5:2–4). Once you are dead, nothing can ever change the fact that you were sin.

(5:3–4). We all know that our bodies often seem like prisons that subject us to sacrifice, sickness, and death. Try thinking about the various forms of suffering your body subjects you to. Now realize that, according to this paragraph, these are things you *ordered* your body to do. You wanted to preserve the idea of sin and “sin cannot abide the joyous and the free.” Instead, sin is preserved by death. Does it seem possible that you have this underlying motivation? Victim consciousness has overcome us all in a state of mind that believes it is at the mercy of the world, shaped by forces beyond its control, with no way out.

Paragraph 6

6 Let us be glad that you will see what you believe, and that it has been given you to *change* what you believe. ²The body will but follow. ³It can never lead you where you would not be. ⁴It does not guard your sleep, nor interfere with your awakening. ⁵Release your body from imprisonment, and you will see no one as prisoner to what you have escaped. ⁶You will not want to hold in guilt your chosen enemies, nor keep in chains to the illusion of a changing love the ones you think are friends. ⁷The innocent release in gratitude for their release. ⁸And what they see upholds their freedom from imprisonment and death. ⁹Open your mind to change, and there will be no ancient penalty exacted from your brother or yourself. ¹⁰For God has said there *is* no sacrifice that can be asked; there *is* no sacrifice that can be made.

• Study Questions •

12. (6:5) *If you release your body from imprisonment—if you stop forcing it to be your prison—how will you now see others, based on this sentence?*
13. (6:7). *The previous sentence (6:6) talked about us setting our chosen friends and enemies free. Why would we do this?*
14. (6:9a). *What will be the effect of releasing your chosen friends and enemies?*
15. *Based on this section’s discussion of learning and change, what specific change are you supposed to open your mind to?*

•

We’ve just been told we believe we are imprisoned by our bodies, which seem like “snarling dogs of hate and evil, sickness and attack” (5:1). The news up until now has seemed pretty bad. But here we are told to be *glad* about it! Based on the preceding material, sentence 6:1 means something like this: “Let us be glad that you will see sickness, attack, sacrifice and death if you believe in sin. Because if what you believe determines what you see, you can decide if you want what you see, and if not you can elect to change what you believe.” (6:1)

It's almost shocking when the Course tells us to be glad we see what we believe even when what we see is awful. Yet we *should* be glad that we will see sacrifice and death if we believe in sin because it places the power in our belief, and we have the power to *change* our beliefs. Now that we know the cause of suffering is under our control we can change it.

(6:1). For reflection: Based on this idea, can you find yourself being glad about the suffering you have experienced in your life?

The body always follows our beliefs (6:2) and our purposes. Remember, the body does nothing on its own. It responds to our beliefs and the mental instructions we give it. It does not interfere with them. The body can't lead you anywhere against your will. It doesn't keep you spiritually asleep, nor does it resist your awakening (6:3–4). All of that is coming from your mind.

(6:4). Practice Suggestion: You may want to turn this into a kind of practice, saying to yourself, "My body does not keep me asleep, nor interfere with my awakening."

Therefore, we can stop forcing the body to be our prison by changing our beliefs. When we do, we will also see others as free of *their* bodies (6:5). Recognizing that our minds have sourced our suffering, we will have no desire to hold our "chosen enemies" in chains. Nor will we want to tangle our "chosen friends" in a relationship of "special love," which is only an illusion of love (6:6).

A profound change of attitude toward others arises from your relief at finding freedom for yourself. By releasing your body from being your prison, you have released yourself from guilt and sin and have re-discovered your innocence. In reciprocal reaction, out of gratitude for your release from guilt, you will release others. Their release, in turn, will uphold your release (6:7–8). This is why the power of the miracle increases in relationships.

Practice Suggestion: Try applying this to a specific "enemy" and a particular friend. Say, "If I release my body from being my prison house, I will no longer want to hold in guilt my chosen enemy, _____, nor keep in chains to the illusion of a changing love _____ whom I call a friend."

"Open your mind to change" (6:9) so that you can release yourself and your brother from the ancient penalty of "sin." To open our minds to change sounds remarkably like T-31.II.1:1, "Let us be still an instant, and forget" the ancient lesson that God's Son is guilty. Open your mind to allow change, and you will realize that there is no ancient penalty (for "sin") imposed on your brother or yourself (6:9). God has declared that He asks no sacrifice (in reparation for sin) of us, and no sacrifice can be made (6:10).

At the start of this commentary, I pointed out the importance of the concept of "purpose" in the first three sections of the chapter, so I'd like to highlight the several mentions of purpose in this section. Here are the sentences that mentioned it. First, speaking of how we (mistakenly) view sin:

Sins "are not seen as purposes but *actions*" (3:3).

"If you are sin you are a body, for the mind acts not. And purpose must be in the body, *not the mind*" (3:6–7).

"If you are sin, you lock the mind *within* the body, and you give its purpose to its prison house, which acts *instead of it*" (3:9).

“And so the body, where no learning *can* occur, could *never* change, unless the mind *preferred* the body change in its appearances to suit the purpose given by the mind” (4:9)

The mistake we make is thinking that sin is caused by the body, whereas the actual cause of “sinful” actions is the purpose the mind assigns to the body. While discussing the third paragraph, I said it isn’t that the mind’s purpose actually *is* sinful. Instead, the actions we deem sinful originate in the mind’s purpose, not in bodily impulses. We make the mistake of locating purpose *in the body* instead of in the mind, which causes us to see ourselves *as* bodies rather than minds.

We must realize that purpose resides in our minds and choose to change the purpose we give to our bodies. Instead of making them scapegoats for our guilt and instruments for punishing ourselves and others, we can assign a new purpose to them: To carry out the will of God, the function of forgiveness, and the extension of God’s love. That change of purpose erases the mind’s false sense of guilt and causes us to recognize ourselves and all our brothers and sisters as God’s holy creations.

Answer Key

1. Only people who see guilt in themselves see it in others. The only people who condemn others as sinners are people who are accusing themselves of the same guilt. (Your words may be different, as long as they express the same basic thought.)
2. We have overlearned the lessons we have taught ourselves, the ego's lessons: that our will is not our own, our thoughts do not belong to us, and even we are someone else. In short: "the Son of God is guilty."
3. We are about to choose to overlearn a different lesson—that the Son of God is innocent, instead of that the Son of God is guilty. We are about to choose life and forgiveness and help instead of death and hate.
4. The temptation seems to be a temptation to learn the wrong lesson, that is, to learn "the Son of God is guilty." By reminding ourselves that we never hate our brother for his sins but only for our own, we are forcing ourselves to reconsider what lesson we want to learn. It is very much like Lesson 134:

"Then choose one brother as He will direct, and catalogue his 'sins,' as one by one they cross your mind. Be certain not to dwell on any one of them, but realize that you are using his 'offenses' but to save the world from all ideas of sin. Briefly consider all the evil things you thought of him, and each time ask yourself, 'Would I condemn myself for doing this?'" (W-pl. 134.15:1–3)
5. It said, "We seek to make them habits now, so you will have them ready and for any need" (T-30.I.1:8), where "habits" referred to the steps we take in practicing. We must learn that the sins for which we hate and condemn our brother are nothing but a projection of our own self-condemnation and self-hatred. We see our brother as guilty because we see ourselves as guilty, and seeing someone else as guilty *demonstrates* that we are condemning ourselves and harboring guilt. And we must overlearn this to the point that it becomes our "first response to all temptation," a "habit of response" that is "typical of everything [we] do."
6. Some reasons we give for attacking sin in others: Although I am perfectly innocent, I am being unjustly attacked without provocation and must defend myself. Sin is real in others even though there is none in me; some people are just evil.
7. Whenever I attack anyone, I am asserting that I am a *sin* and therefore I am *guilty*, I deserve to be *attacked*, and I am incapable of giving anything to anyone except *attack*.
8. Jesus does not really believe sin exists. So when he says, "Sins are in bodies," he must be talking about how *we* see things. The second sentence clearly is talking about how we perceive sins to be in bodies, not in minds. When he says, "They are not seen as purposes, but *actions*," it describes how *we* see sins. But it seems to imply that *he* sees the real problem as being the purposes of the mind, and not the actions of the body, while with us it is the reverse.
9. Sins are actions; bodies perform these actions, minds do not; so therefore (in the ego's reasoning) the body must be "at fault" or guilty.

10. If the mind's purpose is to make the body the source of sin and the prison for the mind, and the body's appearance changes to accord with this purpose, then sickness, aging, and death are logical kinds of changes to expect in the body. If I think I am sin, and my mind wants to foster that belief, then dying makes sense, because "those who think that they are sin must die for what they think they are."
11. Our minds, ruled by guilt, *order* the world to be this way.
12. You will see them as free of the body's constraints.
13. By releasing our bodies from being our prison, we have released ourselves from guilt and sin and have discovered our innocence. In gratitude for our release, we will release our brothers.
14. Seeing them free will uphold your own freedom from the prison of the body.
15. Changing your belief that you are sin, and changing the purpose you gave the body, that it be the prison house that is the seeming source of sin.