

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 13, Section VI

Again, let's remember the context within the chapter. The whole chapter is about guiltlessness, and about seeing a guiltless world. Two sections back we began to focus in on the role time plays in our perception of this world, and how, as egos, we use time: We hold our imperfect and incomplete memories of the past in our minds and project them onto the present. The result is that we don't really see the present; we see an illusion of the past superimposed on the present. That results in a future that looks like the past.

The previous section discussed the two emotions of love and fear. It showed how this projection takes place because of a fundamental *fear* in us. It is a fear about what we are, a fear that we have changed ourselves by our futile desire to be separate from God—in a word, guilt. Because we believe we have changed ourselves, we believe others to be as we think we are. We fear our selves, and project that fear onto the world. We recall fearful images from the past and see them everywhere in the present.

This section, “Finding the Present,” discusses how we can break out of that destructive pattern. To be free of guilt we must be free from time, because “You are not guiltless in time, but in eternity” (T-13.I.1:2). This section teaches us that we escape from time by finding the present, and we find the present by being willing to let go of the past.

### Paragraph 1

#### • Study Question •

1. *How is seeing the reality of others through our own related to the false images of other people our minds have built up from the past?*

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To perceive truly is to be aware of all reality through the awareness of your own. (1:1)

*True perception*, which is what the Course is teaching us, consists in seeing perfection and innocence in everything because you see it in yourself. It is seeing “the guiltless world” which is the theme of this chapter. In true perception you have learned that you do not need to fear yourself; instead, you can love yourself. The Holy Spirit loves what He sees in you (T-13.V.9:6), and therefore you can also. Since God created you, you have remained unaltered; the futile wish to be an ego, separate from God, has changed nothing. “You have not lost your innocence” (W-pI.182.12:1). You have done nothing to merit guilt and punishment. You have not sinned.

Changing how you see yourself literally changes the world for you! Your reality, when perceived, acts like a lens to correct your vision of the world. Because your own reality is beautiful, all that you see is beautiful.

All of us, all the time, see the world through a filter of the way we see ourselves. The problem is that we think our own reality is something dark, twisted, and spoiled by our egos. So we see the world as dark, twisted and spoiled. Remember, the world you see is always an outward reflection of an inward condition (T-21.In.1:1-5). As you see yourself, you see the world. Therefore, how you see the world can reveal how you see yourself. What you are encountering in the world is always, in some way, a reflection of some part of you. If you are seeing your true holiness, you will see that holiness in whatever you encounter (T-13.IV.6:9).

For true perception to occur you must be willing to lose all your illusions, because “Reality leaves no room for any error” (1:2) All of the *error*, all the false perception, has to be dropped. The whole purpose of any illusion is to hide reality from you; therefore, to perceive reality, you must drop the illusions. This is one of the major themes of the Course, stated first in the Introduction to the Text (T-In.1:7). The illusions, the false perceptions, are the blocks; love’s presence is the reality they hide.

A primary source of illusion, in the context of this chapter, is the *past* and the way we use it. We have seen how we make the past real in the present and superimpose it over present vision. We relate to shadow images from the past instead of to what is so *now*, in the present. Since we must let go of all such illusions to have true perception, the Course describes true perception of a person as seeing them only as they are *now*, rather than seeing them through a filter of their past (1:3-4). When we perceive truly, we forget any reactions we may have had to the person in the past, and we react only to what is before us in that moment (1:5). How often, instead of this clear perception, have we allowed our reactions to a person to be, not to who they really are, but to who we *think* they are, based on past experience?

When the Course speaks in sentence 3 of “now,” and all through this section, it is referring, not to what we might call the “sensory present,” but to the eternal present. That is, to perceive what is so “now” means to perceive what is eternal; for instance, the Christ in each other rather than our bodies and egos (see 3:2). Being in the present, to the Course, does not mean being hyper-aware of what all our physical senses are perceiving in this instant: the sights, the sounds, the body sensations, and so on. Some spiritual teachings emphasize such focused awareness of the physical present; that isn’t what the Course means by it. The present shows us reality, freedom, light and truth (see 6:2-3). We might say that when the Course speaks of the present, it really means eternity (see 6:5-6), and the seeing or vision we use to see in the present is not our eyes, but our inner vision (T-13.V.9:1-2).

“The one wholly true thought one can hold about the past is that it is not here” (WpI.8.2:1). If it isn’t here, if the past does not *now* exist, then how can we say it is real? What is not here and does not exist is not real! When we view someone through his past actions and our reactions to them, we are not in relationship with the person himself, but rather to a private image of him. So we are relating to an illusion and not to reality.

In true perception, we simply don't see do that. To experience true perception, we have to be willing to let go of these illusions about our brothers and sisters. Because we identify with the ego, we value these false images. They serve our ego's need to project guilt. This keep us holding on to them so that they continue to block true sight.

Jesus teaches us to question all our illusions. One good question is, "Is it sane to perceive what *was*, in the past, as if it were here *now*?" (1:6). Suppose you remodeled your house and removed a wall, opening two rooms into one. Would it be sane to continue to walk around the wall as if it were still there? If someone did that you would think they were nuts! But that is exactly what we are doing in our relationships. Is that sane? We need to stop reacting to the past as if it were here now.

The past can completely block out a true perception of present reality (1:7).

You are not being asked to do the impossible. The Course does not mean that you must give up all memory of the past. You cannot do that; you could not function in this world if you did. If every time I met you I asked your name and acted as if I had no memory of you, that would be just as insane as the ego's use of the past we are discussing here. It is, to be specific, *the ego's use of the past* that we are being asked to give up. These images of our brothers and sisters that we carry around in our minds, calling them memories, are not the whole picture. They are not even a true or accurate *part* of the picture. It is insane to use these distorted pictures from the past to judge the present.

## Paragraph 2

### • Study Question •

2. *What is the only thing that can cause the shadows of the past to darken the present?*

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The first two sentences present a clear statement of what we are being told to stop doing: using our past experience as the reference point from which to judge the present (2:1–2). Based on past experience, we think we know who this person is and what they are like. We have already formed a judgment about them. We think we know them. In fact, we do not know who they are, or what they are like. Because of the false images based on the past, we have no room for the judgment of the Holy Spirit in the present, which is always that our brother is guiltless and innocent, always that he is either expressing love or calling for love.

We are being asked to forget what we think the past has taught us about our brother—not to forget his name, or the fun times we had together, or what he did to us, or the things we did to him, but to forget the *meaning* we gave to those things, to forget the mental description of this person that we have built up. Even more specifically, we need to forget any guilt we attached to these past events. Only if we do that will we be able to learn from what we see now, in the present (2:3). If we hold on to the past and to the mental description we have made for ourselves of this person, everything they do now

will fall into the same patterns, patterns that exist only in our minds. The patterns act like filters or invisible grids, so that everything we see is forced into the same pattern. We can't see our brothers as they are *now*.

The *holy instant*, in the Course, is described as a moment of timelessness. It is a moment in which we drop all the past and experience one another *right now*. All the meanings we have given the past, all the fear, all the guilt we have seen associated with the other or with ourselves, is gone. When you see only the present, in all its truth, you see only love. All we see is our sameness, our oneness, and our common purpose.

Granted, this is not easy! The Course is talking about undoing a mental habit that is so ingrained that we think it is *natural* (2:1), a part of our nature so fundamental to thought and relationship that there is no other way to do it.

*There is another way.* That is the whole point of the Course: to show you that there is another way, and that you have a choice in the matter. To undo this habit pattern takes constant vigilance. It is something you can practice at any time, with any person. Start to notice how you use the past to judge the present, how habitually you see someone and automatically fit them into a mold in your mind. Notice, and tell the Holy Spirit that you are willing to see them differently.

Suddenly, in 2:4–5, the Course returns to the reason that we are addicted to seeing the present through the past. In T-13.V.9:1, Jesus told us: “You made your way of seeing that you might see in darkness.” In other words, we see this way because we *choose* to see this way. The Course brings us back, with a jolt, to confront the fact that we are afraid of light, afraid of love, afraid of God. Why would we *choose* to see darkness, why would we drag the darkness of the past into the present and use it to obscure reality, unless we are afraid of the light (2:4)? We do not want to recognize the light ourselves. The ego does not want us to recognize it because if we did we would immediately prefer it to the ego. The darkness we hold on to conceals the light in our brothers behind a “dark cloud” of guilt (2:5).

### Paragraph 3

#### • Study Question •

3. a) *We seem to see darkness in our brothers. Where does the darkness really reside?*
- b) *What does it mean to be born again?*

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*This darkness is in you (3:1).*

The very darkness you think you are seeing in your brother or your sister is in your mind and nowhere else; that is the only place it exists, and it doesn't really exist there because it is just an illusion you've made up (see T-13.V.3:8). This is what the Course means when, later in the Text, it tells us: “You never hate your brother for his sins, but only for your own.” (T-31.III.1:5).

Some of us get very frightened by thoughts like these. If you find these thoughts

frightening or disturbing, I want to speak specifically to you,.

It is normal to become frightened when we bring this all back within our own mind. We don't want to see that the darkness is in our own minds. We want so very badly that it be "out there," or "in him and not me." "No!" we scream. "It isn't in me! He did it to me, she betrayed me, I was so innocent and loving and I got victimized and used and abused."

If you find the phrase "This darkness is in you" frightening as you read it, if it strikes terror in your heart, that's okay. Just notice the terror. Notice how you want the darkness to be "out there" rather than "in here." Notice that you *are* afraid of something here. You think you are afraid of the darkness; that's what the ego wants you to think. But remember what we learned in Section III: Maybe it isn't the darkness you fear at all; maybe it is the light.

Just consider that you might be reacting involuntarily, in a kind of programmed response. And be willing to think about that reaction. Notice how automatic it is. You didn't have to think about it; it is as if the reaction is something you learned a long time ago and have forgotten the reason why. It is a strong reaction, visceral and instinctual. Consider that anything so removed from thought and conscious awareness is probably suspect. At the very least, you ought to want to understand it. So very simply, ask for understanding.

I want to remind you of what we discussed in earlier sections. The terror you feel is not about you. Looking at the ego's dark foundations *will not hurt you*. It will liberate you. We are not saying here that you *are* that darkness, just that the darkness is *in your mind* and nowhere else. We're saying it is an illusion that you need not frighten you. When the Course says the darkness is in you, there is no *blame* attached, no *guilt*. On the contrary, the entire chapter is about being without guilt and how to experience that. It's saying that in reality all that is in you is *innocence*. You see the guilt in others *because* you are afraid to see it in yourself, but it doesn't exist in *either place*. You are the cause of the darkness, yes, but what you are causing, the picture of guilt outside or inside, is all an illusion that you've made up.

Take the hand of Jesus and look with him at your mind. Postpone your terror a moment. Look at what is within you, look at your brother, and what you will see is the changeless Christ, both in yourself and in your brothers (3:2–4).

You will see someone without a past because He is changeless (3:2). When for a moment you accept the idea that all those dark projections of sin and guilt you see on your brother exist only in your own mind, you will see his innocence. You will see the Christ. You won't have to effort at it. You will be able to see that he is your brother, a mind joined to you, and separated only by illusions (see T-28.IV.3:3–7).

Yes, he still has illusions. Yes, there seems to be a gap between you. And perhaps your brother still believes those illusions and is manifesting attack toward you. He is still afraid of love, and so are you. But your reality, which you share, is love, and only that is real. There is no guilt in what he does, nor guilt from the past; it was all the same, all a cry for love and completion, distorted by the illusions in your minds. None of that changed the reality, nor ever will.

To be aware of all reality through the awareness of your own is to see Christ in your

brother through the Christ in yourself. It is to say to your brother, “We are both innocent here. No one is guilty, no one ever was. We made mistakes, that’s all.”

This kind of letting go of the past is what it really means to be born again (3:5). We can be born again each moment, as we allow our brother to be born again to us. We can look without condemnation on the present if we are willing to let go of the past—all the resentments, big and little; all the cherished injuries; all the disappointments; all the failed expectations. Drop them. Let them go. Let them go completely. They didn’t mean what you thought they meant. In your memory of your brother there is a lot of darkness. Like a fleck of dust in a movie projector that throws shadows on the screen, the darkness is in your mind, not in him. Let it go. Let him be born again to you, and you will be born again.

The experience we have is that the past is not gone. It seems very real to us. But in reality, the past is gone. That’s obvious to anyone who thinks about it. But “it has not gone from you” (3:7). If the past has reality to me, if the past still has power to block love and corrupt my relationships in the present, I am the only one who is giving that power to the past! The past isn’t there, it isn’t here, but *to me it is*. That is what must change for me to know love’s reality in the present.

## Paragraph 4

### • Study Question •

4. a) *How are we asked to think about time?*
- b) *When we attempt to anticipate the future on the basis of the past, what effect does that have on our readiness to receive miracles?*

Will you use the ego’s interpretation of time or the Holy Spirit’s interpretation? One imprisons, the other releases (4:1). The choice is yours. This is a clear reference to Section IV, which discussed time’s function.

Let us recall what that section said. The way we see our own function determines how we see time’s function. The ego says we are guilty and that our purpose in this world is to pay for that guilt—to be attacked, to be sick, to be punished. This will prove our separation from God. The Holy Spirit teaches that we are innocent and that our purpose in this world is to heal—through recognition of God’s innocent Son in our brother we are here to demonstrate that we are not an ego, and that we are one with our brothers and with God. The most important aspect of time for the ego, therefore, is the past, because guilt lies in the past. To the Holy Spirit, the function of time is the same as our function: healing. He sees the present as time’s most important aspect, overlooking the past, since the present is the only time in which healing can occur.

The ego uses time to make guilty. The Holy Spirit uses time to heal. How do you see your function in time: to heal, or to make guilty? Those are the only options. Do you want to release your brother and so release yourself, or do you want to imprison your brother in guilt? If you imprison him, you imprison yourself as well. Are you willing to

make the choice that “Salvation [forgiveness] is my only function here”? (W-pI,99.Title, 1:1).

The emphasis here is that you are the one who forces continuity on past, present and future (4:2). You want to see them as tied together, past causing present causing future, and so you see them that way and “make them so for you” (4:3). We all have done that. But don’t be fooled! (4:4). Just because you see it that way, just because you’ve made it so for yourself, does not make it so in reality. The situation only seems the way *you* have made it, but that is not the way it is. And the secret of salvation lies just here, in seeing things as they really are, and not as we have set them up (T-27.VII.2:2).

Our delusion is in believing that what we see is reality. We see only what we want to see. To think *that* is reality is truly delusional (4:5). The present is not the past! People are not the way we see them. We’re setting it up that way! We’re seeing our own guilt in everyone else.

“Time’s continuity” is the eternal *now*. Now is the only time there is (W-pI.164.1:2). The idea of a past or future is imposed on reality only by the human mind. There is only one instant, and it is now; it is this holy instant. *Now* continues forever. The only reason we see time as consisting of past, present and future is because we want to see it that way for our own purposes (4:6). Those purposes are the purposes of destruction, the purposes of the ego, the purpose of establishing and maintaining sin, guilt and fear.

What is our purpose for the *past*? We hold on to the past because, without the past, we would have no grounds for judging anything, and we want to judge. We want to place responsibility for our lack of peace on something outside ourselves. In the next paragraph it says we “use it to attack the present” (T-13.IV.5:7). Our purposes for the past are guilt and attack.

What is our purpose for the *future*? We hold on to the future because, without the future, we would have nowhere to place punishment, which we think is necessary to right the wrongs we see in the past. The future gives us a place to locate fear. The future also provides a place for us to locate all the good things we are avoiding in the present, things like love, or joy, or peace. If we expect to be healed tomorrow, it means we don’t have to be healed now. But now is the only time there is. Our purpose for the future is *punishment, fear and avoidance*.

Who can deny that this is how we use time in this world? We “anticipate the future on the basis of past experience, and plan for it accordingly” (4:7). Doing so is natural to us, or so we think. We plan for the future based on the past; of course we do! We do it all the time. We do it without thinking about it. That is exactly why the Course talks about it. Jesus wants us to think about *it*, to become aware of what we are doing. He does not want to make us guilty about it. He just wants us to become aware of what we are doing.

As always, the method of the Course is consistent. It insists the truth is obvious and does not need to be sought for. The way to find the truth is to become aware of the illusions and lies we are making up. The way to find the Christ in ourselves is to look at the ego; the way to find love is to look at our fears. We “find” the positive by exposing the negative that is obscuring the positive and blocking it from our awareness. The title of this section is “Finding the Present.” The way to find the present (which is all there is) is

to become aware of the illusions of past and future that block it from our awareness.

There is a better way to look at time. There is an alternative; there is a choice. The way we use time is based on our purpose for time, and the purpose we see for time is based on the purpose we see for ourselves. We see ourselves as sinful and unworthy; that vision of self is fundamental to the ego identity. The ego wants to find guilt and fear everywhere to continue its own existence, so its purpose for time is guilt and fear. That is why it concentrates on the past and the future, because the past establishes guilt and the future supports fear. We use the past to determine the future because our intention is to make guilt real.

By treating time in this way, the ego in us very effectively does not allow the miracle to intervene and free us from time (4:8). We *don't allow* the miracle. Through our belief in the reality of past and future, we shut out our present salvation.

## Paragraph 5

### • Study Question •

5. *Where have we been looking for truth, and where is it sure to be found?*

If you see a person as if they had no past you are seeing them without guilt. The Course isn't telling us to forget the facts about our brother's past; that would not be a very practical way to live in this world. It is telling us, rather, to forget our *interpretation* of the past, to forget our grievances and judgments about one another. It is the *ego's use* of the past we are supposed to let go of, the ego's *purpose* of guilt regarding the past and fear regarding the future.

To see someone without their past means that you recognize all the errors the person has made in the past are *past*, and therefore not here now. Because the errors are not here now, they can have no effect on the present unless you deliberately bring them along and pretend they are present. Remember what was said on in Section IV:

The shadowy figures from the past are...not real, and have no hold over you unless you bring them with you. (T-13.IV.6:1-2; see also T-13.IV.5:6-7)

When you are judging someone because of their past, you are choosing to make the past real in the present. You are giving the past power over you by bringing the past with you into the present, giving it reality in your mind, and saying that it has a hold over you in the present. That is a choice you are making, and not a fact.

I repeat, the Course isn't trying to make you guilty about this. We *all* do it. We do it almost all the time. Jesus isn't asking you to stop doing this. He isn't asking you to fight it, to try to change it. All that Jesus is asking of you is to *notice* when you do it, and to notice it without judging yourself for it. Our failure to notice the ego is what gives it its apparent power; we follow the ego unconsciously. Becoming conscious of the ego undermines its power. We see how silly it is. We can smile at it. And when we can look at it without judging it, it disappears.

The only way to look without judging is to look with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. That

can take many forms: it doesn't have to involve the words 'Jesus' or 'Holy Spirit.' For me, the form it takes is that I talk to Jesus about myself. I say something like, "Oh, I see what I am doing here, Jesus. I'm dredging up the past and using it to attack my brother." Sometimes I just mentally say, "Help!"

When you see a brother without his past, you can "perceive him as born again" (5:1). This results in both you and your brother being born again. If you recall, being born again in the Course's vocabulary means to be freed from your past, without any guilt (3:5). The past paragraph said that by allowing the *miracle* in the present, which is just seeing your brother without his guilty past, *you* will be reborn (4:8). This sentence saying that you will see *him* as reborn. Your perception of him as innocent frees him from his guilt and his past (5:2). Since you share the same past, you share the same release (5:3). The Course teaches us that what we give to another we give to ourselves. So when you release a brother, when you shift your perception to see him as born again, without a past, you are also freeing *yourself*. Letting go of the past in your relationships is how to be born again (see T-13.X.5:2).

Think for a moment the effect it has on someone when you let go of your condemnation and judgment, and see them without their past. What a liberating feeling that is, to know that nothing from the past is held against you! It is part of the reason why people "tire" of one relationship and move on to another—they want a relationship without any past. Forgiveness offers you a fresh, new relationship without the pain of breaking up, and without the loss of your shared growth.

When you see your brother without his past, you *release* him. Release him from what? From the implied threat of punishment, from the prison you have erected around him. I think this is what Jesus meant when, in the Bible, he told his disciples that we have the power to forgive sins. What an incredible power that is! What incredible effects it can have on people when you tell them, by action if not in word, "I do not condemn you." It's like being born again.

To let go of his past you have to let go of your own. If he is free, so are you. If nothing from the past condemns him, nothing from the past condemns you either. "The holy light you saw outside yourself, in every miracle you offered to your brothers, will be returned to you" (T-13.VIII.8:4).

To see your brother as he is—to perceive the truth, the Christ in him—you must become aware of the clouds from the past that you are holding in your mind, obscuring the present, and let them go. This is how to seek the truth in the present (5:4). You just have to notice the barriers you have put up to obscure the truth. Without the clouds of the past, what your brother is in truth is obvious. The vision of Christ in your brother lies only in the present; the vision of Christ in yourself lies only in the present. If you are looking at the past, you won't see that vision! It isn't there! When you were trying to determine who your brother is by analyzing the past, you've were looking for the truth where the truth is not (5:5).

There is a story about a man walking down a street at night who came upon another fellow under a lamppost, looking for something on the ground.

"What are you looking for?" asked the first guy.

“My car keys,” replied the second man.

Wanting to help look, the first man asked, “Where were you when you dropped them?”

“In that alley,” said the fellow doing the looking, pointing over his shoulder to a dark alley.

“If you dropped them over there, why are you looking here?”

And the guy answered, “Because there is more light here.”

The man was behaving in a very irrational way, wasn't he? You can't find the keys by looking where they are not. But Jesus is pointing out that we are just that irrational when we look for truth in the past, when truth can exist only in the present. That's what we are doing when we try to evaluate our brother in the present on the basis of his past. The truth about our brothers or ourselves is only in the present, so let's learn to look there.

In the past we were living from our egos, at least most of the time. We can't deny that. Therefore, almost all of the past that we remember is based on ego thinking, and therefore “made in anger” (5:7). Because the ego is irrational, its memory of the past is meaningless information. In the analogy of a court case, it is not allowed as evidence. When a thought of the past comes up as an attack on a brother in the present, you can act as judge and say, “The jury will disregard that remark.” (You, of course, are the jury, the the one who decides which witness to listen to.)

If you allow thoughts of the past to intrude on your mind and attack the present, they block out the freedom and release that exists only in the present (5:7). Your way out of prison is always present, but “you will not see” it even if you try to see it, as long as the past is allowed a place in your considerations.

## Paragraph 6

### • Study Question •

6. *The only aspect of time we ever experience is the present. Based on this paragraph, explain why awareness of the present unifies, while awareness of the past separates.*

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The first sentence expresses the same thought we saw earlier in T-13.IV.6:2. The Course emphasizes our need to become conscious of the causative role we play in the way we experience time. We think it is “natural” to bring the past into the present, something we cannot help doing. The Course says it is not natural; in fact, it is insane, like looking for the car keys in a place they cannot possibly be. It says that we make a *conscious choice* to bring the past into the present, and we don't have to do that if we don't want to. If it is a choice and not an inherent part of our nature, then we obviously must *want* to do it because we *are doing* it. The Course encourages us to look at our reasons for dredging up the past. It shows us that we choose to hold onto the past because we see our purpose incorrectly; we see our purpose incorrectly because we see ourselves incorrectly. We hold onto the past because we believe in sin, guilt and fear, and

ultimately, that the separation is real. Thus, the way we treat time is nothing more than the ego trying to hold on to its identity (T-13.I.8:6). We don't have to bring judgment and condemnation with us. When we realize that we have a choice in the matter, we are free of them (6:1).

The present holds love. The present holds joy. The present holds peace. Things such as these are “the only things that are forever true” (6:2). Time does not affect them. There is no joy, no love, and no peace in the past or future. They can only be a present experience. Even looking at a joyful experience in the past may bring a sense of loss in the present. Watch where you are looking! The Course wants us to focus our attention on the present.

All healing lies within the present. Elsewhere in this chapter, the Course several times reiterates the same idea in other words, so we know this is an important concept (see T13.VIII.1:1, T-13.VI.8:1, and T-13.I.1:2–3). Healing lies in the present because the *continuity* of the present is real (6:3). Continuity means “uninterrupted existence” or “unbroken succession.” The present is continuous. It exists without interruption, in an unbroken succession of instances of now. There is never a moment when you are not in the present. The Holy Spirit's idea of continuity is *now* and only *now*. Now is the only time you ever exist; you never exist in the past or future. How can you be healed when you are not there?

You are always in the present—and so is everyone else. So *now* “extends to all aspects of the Sonship at the same time” (6:4). (The Course often uses the term “aspects of the Sonship” to refer to our individual identities. This is just one of many instances in which the Course recognizes some form of plurality in the unity of the Sonship.) That is why when you are healed you are not healed alone (W-pI.137). Everyone is there in the present with you. Healing is available *now* and only *now*. It is as available to you as it is to me.

And *now* is the only time we can communicate, or “reach each other” (6:4). If I am in the past, or I am seeing you in the past, I can't reach you and you can't reach me. *Now* is the only time that can happen. In the past we are always separate. A few lines down, it says this clearly: “Only the past can separate, and it is nowhere” (6:8). When you let go of the past, you let go of everything that separates you from your brothers—which is exactly why the ego so insistently holds onto it!

Sentence 5 states what we observed earlier about the continuity of the present; it always *is*. In this sense, it is the closest thing in this world to eternity (T-13.IV.7:5). Jesus lived in the present all the time, which is why He could say, in the Bible, “Before Abraham was, I am.” He was saying in another way, “The present is before time was” (6:5). If you try to think of existence without time—of eternity, in other words—the one thing that has to continue is the sense of *now*. Before time, or after time, *now* must continue.

This discussion may seem quite abstract. Where it becomes practical is in the realization that separation is always in the past and never *now*. If only the past separates, and now never ends, then separation is never now! And *now* is forever! Therefore, there is no separation.

Our experience seems to contradict this, but our entire experience of a separate life is just a constant reliving of an instant that is past, the instant we believed in separation. (There is a long discussion of this in T-26.VI.13:1-14:1.)

“Forgive the past and let it go” (T-26.VI.14:1); that is the practical application of all this, the way it looks in our lives. Each time we forgive the past and let it go, we come a little closer to ultimate forgiveness of that primordial instant. Each time, when just for an instant we forget the past and love without attack, we have undone a little more of the past and come a little closer to forgiving the thought of separation itself. And when that is forgiven, all is forgiven, and time will be no more.

In the present are all things that are eternal (6:6): love, joy, peace, truth, and also our true Self. In the past, nothing exists. In the future, nothing exists. Everything that exists, exists in the present. In the present, you find eternity. The present is the only place you can experience the truth stated in the Text’s Introduction: “Nothing real can be threatened. Nothing unreal exists” (T-In.2:2–3).

In a sense, I think you can understand the phrase “all things that are eternal” in 6:6 as pointing to “aspects of the Sonship” in 6:4. The true Sonship, in all its aspects, exists only in the present, and all its aspects “are one. Their continuity is timeless and their communication is unbroken” (6:6–7). The Course is always saying, in one way or another, that Oneness already *is*; the Atonement is already complete. It all already exists in the present. We are not aware of it because we live in the past! We “aspects” are all already in perfect, unbroken communication, but we don’t know it because we are “separated by the past” (6:7), a past that exists only in our minds, and that only because we bring it with us by conscious choice. By holding onto the past we are holding open this imaginary gap between us “which is not a gap at all” (T-26.VI.13:2).

The past “is nowhere,” it doesn’t exist! (6:7). Oneness already is. We are already one. We are not separated. We only *imagine* we are separate because we hold the barrier of the past in our minds. When we let go of the past, oneness or sameness becomes immediately apparent. That is a holy instant, an instant of forgiveness, an instant of loving without attack. We use an imaginary past that doesn’t exist to attack each other. When we let go of the past we let go of attack thoughts (because there is no reason for attack), and when we let go of attack, all that is left is love. That’s how we discover that love is what we really are.

Using the past to evaluate the present is not natural. Nor is attack natural. Love is natural. Joining is natural. Oneness is natural. Communication is natural. When we let go of the unnatural, the natural appears.

It is not something you do; it is an *undoing*. You don’t find the present by looking for it. You find the present by looking for the illusions of the past in your mind and letting them go, that is, looking at them without judgment, counting them as of no importance, or just a silly idea. As you do that, the present appears in its eternal reality.

This undoing of the past is what defines the *miracle*. Nothing changes except the content of our minds (see T-28.I.1).

The past is over and gone, but we *keep it in memory* so that it *appears to have* effects in the present. It *interferes* with our awareness of Present Love. The miracle *undoes* that

interference; it removes the past from our awareness so we can see what it has been hiding from us.

So one description of a miracle might be: In a miracle, the past is forgotten, and we realize we are no longer affected by it.

## Paragraph 7

### • Study Question •

7. a) *What choice do we have in regard to shadow figures from our past?*
- b) *How does a miracle worker bring the awareness of Christ to others?*

Jesus now begins to appeal to our *will*, our responsibility for choice in how we use time. Often when the Course uses a term like “would,” as it does in 7:2, it is a form of the verb “to will,” as in making a choice or decision. “Would you...hold the past against them?” means, “Are you going to continue to *choose* to hold the past against your brothers? Knowing that the present offers you freedom from your past, and that holding onto their past means holding onto your own, do you really still want to hold the past against them?”

Here, in the present, you can find your brothers. You can see them in the light, you can see them as they are, which is as God created them, rather than hidden by the darkness of your unforgiving thoughts. Seeing them in the present, you can be united with them, and you can be freed from your own past. That is the experience the present offers. The present offers the *miracle*. Your brothers are your way out! Why, then, would you choose to *interfere* with that miracle by continuing to hold the past against them?

Over and over again, Jesus points out that miracles are natural, that if they are not occurring for us something is wrong. (See Miracle Principle #6, T-1.I.6:1–2.) *We* are what is wrong. If we continue to hold grievances, if we continue to listen to all the dark thoughts of the past that the ego constantly dredges up in our minds, we are choosing to stay in the darkness by refusing the light (7:3). The light is there, but we are covering our eyes with the past.

None of us can immediately stop doing this all at once. Because our unconscious terror is so great, letting go of the past is usually a long process. But we all can start to be aware of what is going on in our minds. We can notice when we are responding to the present as if the past were here and now, and we can say to the Holy Spirit, “I see what I am doing. I am covering my eyes. I am afraid of Your light, and I am choosing the darkness.” In doing that, we *are* bringing our darkness to the light, and if we keep doing that, the darkness will dissipate and disappear.

Sentence 4 is saying that whenever you *freely receive* it, the light of perfect vision is *freely given*. There is a line in the next section that says much the same thing: “Love waits on welcome, not on time” (T-13.VII.9:7). I have said that finding and living in the present is a long process, and it takes a long time before we can do this consistently. But it isn’t really *time* that is required; it is acceptance or willingness to receive it. We can

have willingness in any instant. It takes no time for that to happen. In any given instant, we can choose to love without attack, and in that instant *everything* that the Course talks about is right there, instantly, because it is *always* there.

Jesus says this light “can be accepted only without limit” (7:4). What prevents our seeing the light is the limits we place on it. “I’ll forgive this person but not that person. I’ll overlook this mistake but not that mistake.” You must be willing to see your brother as *totally* innocent. A single flaw destroys perfection. One spot on an otherwise perfectly white tablecloth, and the tablecloth is no longer perfectly clean. As long as you protect that one spot, God can’t show you a clean tablecloth. We need to notice how we hold on to certain “spots” and refuse to let them go. That is what is preventing the miracle.

The present is “This one, still dimension of time” in which the miracle occurs (7:5). If you have ever tried to meditate and to still your mind, you will realize that the *noise* in your mind is comprised of thoughts about the past or future. In the present, you find stillness. The present is always the present. It is absolutely unvarying; the present is always here. Here there is no awareness of “what you were,” that is, of the past. If, as you meditate, you find your mind is filling with thoughts about the past, you can bring yourself to the present by becoming aware that you are here, now, in the present, *thinking* about the past.

In the present “you look at Christ.” You won’t find Him in the past or future, only in the present. And “you call His witnesses to shine on you” (7:5). This is a reference to your brothers; they are Christ’s witnesses when you see them in the present. When you see them in the past they are the ego’s witnesses. Your brothers will be Christ’s witnesses “*because you called them forth.*”

How do we call forth our brothers as witnesses to Christ? In Part A of “The Obstacles to Peace” (T-19.IV(A)i.10ff), we are told that we send out messengers with specific instructions as to what to find and to bring back to us. That was the main point of the previous section: are you listening to love, or to fear? It’s your choice. And depending on which voice you choose to listen to, you send out either messengers of love or messengers of fear. Read these lines about the two kinds of messengers:  
T-19.IV(A)i.10:9-11:2.

If you are receiving messages of sin and guilt from your brother, you called them forth. If you are receiving messages of love and gentleness, you called them forth. It is your choice. You decided what you wanted to see, and how you wanted to see your brother. You get what you asked for. You receive what you gave out.

When you listen to the voices from the past you are choosing to see sin and guilt, and you will see them. When you listen to the Voice Which speaks in the present, you are choosing to see love and innocence, and you will see them. Always, it comes back to this choice in my mind. Do I take the ego’s hand, or do I take the Holy Spirit’s? What do I choose to see? The mind is the cause; what I see is the effect of my choice.

If you don’t like what you are seeing, it is still you who are choosing to see it (my paraphrase of T-12.VII.7:6). The ego tries to tell you that the reverse is true, that what you are seeing is the cause of your unhappy thoughts. The Holy Spirit tries constantly to tell you that what you are seeing *reveals* what you are thinking, even if you have hidden

those thoughts from yourself. He wants us to use the world as a classroom to undo those mistaken thoughts.

When you decide you want to see the light, when you decide you want to see your brother as innocent, you are sending out messengers of love. And they will *always* come back with what you sent them to find. You decide to look for it in them (7:6), that is, look for the truth, innocence, love, and the Christ, in your brothers. If you do you will always find it. What you see in them will show you the truth about yourself as well.

We have to decide that we are looking to find people innocent rather than guilty. We choose to find love, or a call for it, rather than to believe that what we see is attack. We set out to prove to our brothers that they are innocent instead of constantly trying to prove they are guilty. Instead of finding *fault* we set out to find *perfection*. Jesus is telling us that if we make this choice, our brothers will not disappoint us! (7:6). If we look for love we will find it because *it is the truth*. That is the shift of mind that brings miracles.

## Paragraph 8

### • Study Question •

8. *How are we called upon to bring salvation to the world?*

In every encounter with another person each day, just remembering the thought in sentence 1 could transform your life. Right now, my brother and I can experience salvation! In every thought that arises in your mind concerning another person, or anything outside of yourself that you might judge, *now* is the time of salvation. (Of course, as I said earlier, in its deepest meaning, “now” means eternity. Salvation consists in experiencing the eternal reality of our brothers and sisters.)

Sentence 2, with its “reach out” talk, may remind us of the familiar AT&T commercials about “Reach out and touch someone.” The call to extension, to actually reaching out to the people around us in some tangible manner that brings them the healing “touch of Christ” (8:2), is very clear. The metaphysical talk about time and eternity has very practical application in our daily lives. Whose life are *you* touching?

Begin to learn to love indiscriminately. Stop allowing your judgments or your thoughts of the past to block the flow of love. Jesus charges you to extend yourself, not just to a few, but “to all your brothers” (8:2) all the time. Choose to see them released from fear, released from all guilt, released from all kinds of feeling bad about themselves.

Our *continuity*, our Eternal Identity, our true Self, is found “in timeless union with them,” that is, with *all* our brothers (8:3). We are not talking about finding a better private self-image here, a better Allen Watson or a better you. We are talking about finding a Self that includes everyone. We are talking about finding a Self that we all share, of which we are all simply a part. This “greater Self” is “God’s guiltless Son” who “is only light” (8:4), with no darkness in him at all.

This “greater Self” is the “him” referred to in the rest of this paragraph. When Jesus tells us to “Call all [our] brothers to witness to his wholeness” (8:6), he means that we

should go out looking for this shared Self in everyone we meet. If we make it our choice to find Christ in everyone, we will find him! Through the Course and through our minds, Jesus calls us to this union with him, and he wants each of us to go out in the world and do the same thing in regard to our brothers. You don't find the light by seeking darkness. You won't find innocence by looking for faults in your brothers. Start looking for their love and you will find it.

Every single person has a part in this Self we are all seeking to find. The image here is of a choir singing a great hymn of thanksgiving. Every voice is needed to sing his or her part, and it won't be complete until everyone is singing the same song. This joining together of separate voices is the earthly reflection of the eternal song of love in Heaven that is described in *The Song of Prayer* (see S-In.1:1–8). As you see the light in your brothers, you are witnessing to them of the truth about themselves, and you are encouraging them to join in the song. The light you see shining from them is witness to the light that is in you as well.

## Paragraph 9

### • Study Question •

9. *According to this paragraph, how can we remember God and see our own healing?*

When you drop the past and stop holding it against your brother, you are telling him the past is gone, and in the present he is innocent. That calls forth the light in him. You are literally asking your brother to show you Christ—not in words, not demanding of him or her, “Show me love! Show me Christ!”, but by your attitude. You are telling them that you believe the Christ is what is in them, the Christ is truly who they are. You “shine” on them. Your function in this world, in the part of it in which you have chosen to live, among the people with whom you have chosen to live, is to “call forth the witnesses to God’s creation” (9:1), to draw out of people their awareness of the love that is within them. As you do that, you will remember God yourself. Those whom you heal bear witness to your healing, for in their wholeness you will see your own.

Sentence 2 is saying the same thing in other words. In fact, this same thought is repeated over and over, in many different forms, in these final paragraphs: The way to see the Christ in yourself is to see Him in others. The way to be healed is to give healing to others. The way to know you are forgiven is to forgive others. Since all that you see outside yourself is really a reflection of your own mind, as you forgive them you really are forgiving yourself.

As you share healing and release from the past with others, songs of praise to God rise from both you and them (9:3). Not necessarily literal songs, although you may feel like singing; it is the *feeling* of joyfulness that is meaningful here, the content and not the form. There will be a feeling of gratitude to one another, since you have each served to release the other, and that gratitude will extend to God Himself. The Course clearly tells

us that God does not want praise in the sense of being told how wonderful He is (T4.VII.6:1–2). Miracle Principle 29 tells us that true praise to God consists in affirming the perfection of His creations (T-1.I.29:1–2; T-13.X.14:5). So our very act of extending to our brothers and seeing Christ in them *is* praise to God.

As we open our hearts to God’s love and extend forgiveness, something beyond ourselves responds within us (9:3–4). That is God’s Answer, elsewhere called the Holy Spirit. “In Him you are answered by His peace” (9:5). As you experience a holy instant, a moment of healing with a brother, a profound peace comes to you. That peace is the “proof,” so to speak, that you are on the right track.

This Answer *always* comes (9:4). If you call (by being willing to see things differently, to drop the past and let go of grievances), the Holy Spirit always answers with His peace. Anyone who has ever, even once, seriously practiced the Course’s instruction can tell you this is so. And if you practice it, you will also know that it is so, by direct experience.

“His call to you is but your call to Him” (9:5). This is why the Answer is inevitable. My desire for God and His desire for me are actually the same thing, because we are One. There is only one Love, and I am It. As the Workbook says in lessons 171–180, “God is but Love, and therefore so am I.”

There is an old Christian hymn with words by an anonymous author that express this thought beautifully:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew  
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;  
It was not I that found, O Savior true;  
No, I was found of Thee.

I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole  
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!  
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;  
Always Thou lovedst me.

“Always Thou lovedst me.” God’s love for me, for you, has never known interruption. When I feel drawn to Him, when I somehow find willingness in myself to let go of the past and shine with forgiveness and love on my brothers, it is already His Love acting through me. “He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me.”

## Paragraph 10

### • Study Question •

10. a) *How can we find the light in ourselves?*
- b) *What two phrases, in sentences 7 and 8, describe those to whom we bring healing?*

We don’t know the light is in us (10:1). We have been *told* the light is in us. Maybe we *believe* that the light is in us. But we do not yet *know* that the light is in us. When we

*know*, we will be in the real world. There will be no more doubt. Now, however, there are still doubts. How can we find the light in ourselves? How can we come to *know*?

We find the light through its witnesses (10:2)—through the people around us we forgive. We find the light by giving it away. As we give light to our brothers, as we shine on them with forgiveness and love, affirming their innocence, “they will return it” (10:2). The Christ in them will *always* answer to the Christ in you. This doesn’t mean their *ego* will agree! It doesn’t mean that their outward reaction will always be one of love and acceptance of your love. Often it won’t be. Yet something in them always agrees, always responds, and if you are tuned in to the right channel, you will receive it.

We make a mistake when we look to the world outside ourselves for validation of our love. The validation comes within the mind, like everything else in the Course. The section in the Manual on “Should Healing Be Repeated?” is very relevant here. It says, in part: “Whenever a teacher of God has tried to be a channel for healing he has succeeded” (M7.2:1).

In the Workbook, the Course explains more clearly what happens when we offer forgiveness, healing and love to another person and they *appear* to not accept it. Some part of that person’s mind receives the gift, even though consciously they may reject it (W-pI.197.4:1–4). God saves the gift in His storehouse until the person is free enough from fear to accept it (M-6.2:3–9).

All gifts of love you give are effectual. The other person may not be ready, in time, to accept them, but that does not matter. He receives them anyway. The Holy Spirit in his mind receives them for him, and keeps them ready, waiting until he is ready to receive them.

Once again the underlying thought is repeated: We don’t know the light in ourselves, but each time we see a brother in the light we bring our own light closer to our awareness (10:3). That is the practice of forgiveness. “Love always leads to love” (10:4); the same idea. One of love’s chief characteristics is that it is always extending itself. Whenever you give it away, there is more of it. It increases by being given away. Whenever you extend love, you receive it. The way we come to know our own love and innocence is by seeing it in other people. Jesus just keeps reiterating this idea.

“The sick” includes not just the physically sick, but the mentally sick and the emotionally sick—it includes everyone in this world, everyone in your life. The Psychotherapy pamphlet says that “All sickness is mental illness” (P2.IV.8:1). It’s all listening to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit, listening to the voice of fear instead of the voice of love.

The Course is telling us that all the ego-driven people around us—all the ones who are totally into living by the ego, who have absolutely no interest in the Course or anything spiritual, all the “bastards”, all the “sons-of-bitches”—they are our teachers and our guides! They all “ask for love.” “They are guides to joy.” They are “guides to peace.” They are your saviors (10:5,7,8).

They are all calling for love. And as you see through the ego’s perception of attack, anger, separation, physical illness, indifference, or malice, see through to the call for love that is behind it, and respond—not to the ego your ego sees, but to the love behind it—as

you respond with love, they “are grateful for it, and in their joy they shine with holy thanks” (10:5).

You may not see them shining with holy thanks in outward manifestation. Sometimes you will, but often you will not. You need to learn that that’s okay. You have to trust that “love always leads to love” (10:4). Within your own mind, you can receive their gratitude even if they are not outwardly giving it. You see the beauty in them even if they do not. It is that sight of the beauty in them that “calls you home” (10:9). It allows you to see more of that beauty in yourself, and that is their gift to you. That is how, even acting in their ego, they can be your guide to peace and joy.

“*You* have established them as guides to peace, for *you* have made it manifest in them” (10:8, my emphasis). You called it out; you drew it forth. You chose how you wanted to see them and you saw them that way. You did it all (with a little help from the Holy Spirit!); the results have nothing whatsoever to do with their outward response to you, and nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not their behavior changes. The change happens in your mind.

## Paragraph 11

### • Study Question •

*11. Try to describe the "path" light takes in this paragraph, starting with the fact that God gave the light to us (11:2). Where does it move next? Where does it end up? Notice the word "shine" as well as the word "light" in looking for your answer.*

The opening lines of this paragraph send chills down my back every time I read them. We can be channels of love that comes from beyond this world! The world cannot give this light, this love. But *I can! You can!* Wow! No wonder the workbook tells us, “I am the light of the world” (Lesson 61). *This is why I am here. This is why you are here* (WpI.61.5:3–5). This is the “function God would have me fill” (W-pI.192).

Once you begin to practice this Course, it is addictive. You shine forth the light; it shines back, calling you to follow it further. And there is literally *nothing in this world* that is so attractive! (11:4). The peace, the joy, the love, the freedom that come from an experience of deep healing of the mind are indescribable (T-3.VI.3:1).

This attraction of love is irresistible. It is irresistible because love attracts love, and love is what you are—therefore you are irresistibly attracted to it. It is so attractive that you will quite literally give up the world for it! (11:5).

Jesus is talking about the *real world* here. Experiences of healing in this world show the light of love to us, and it draws us right out of the world into another world. It isn’t a different physical world; you don’t disappear from this world and appear in another dimension. The real world is this world seen through the eyes of forgiveness (T-17.II.5:1). It is a world “bright with love which you have given it” (11:6). The gifts of love to your brothers, the gifts of forgiveness, are what populate this world. Your love

(God's love as you) creates this world.

In the world you see through the eyes of Christ, everything reminds you of the Father and His holy Son (11:7). *Everything*. That is how Jesus saw the world: everything reminded him of God and of his own identity as the Son. The sight of this world comes because you *choose* to have it.

There is some paradoxical language in sentence 9. It says that we brought others to the real world, and then, in the same sentence, it says “they brought you here.” Who brought who? I brought them, but they brought me. I shine on them, and they shine on me.

It only seems paradoxical; in reality both are true. When I extend love and healing to a brother, I am healed as well. Who heals whom? I bring them to the light, but in so doing they bring me to the light. They are grateful to me for their healing, and I am grateful to them for mine. It is, as the Course says, “a collaborative venture” (see T-4.VI.8:1-6). I can't make it without them, and they can't make it without me. So we end up both being grateful to the other.

The combined light in giver and receiver attracts others out of their darkness (11:10). This is how light spreads. How do we draw people out of darkness to the light? Simply by looking on them! Simply by being unafraid of their darkness and their ego, by overlooking their “sins” and seeing the light hidden in them. Simply by loving them. God drew us simply by loving us; we draw them simply by loving them. Not by preaching to them, not by telling them how wrong and confused they are, not by insisting they read the Course and get with the program. Just by looking at them with love.

If there is any hint in the Course of a movement gathering power, this is it. It's a snowball effect—a snowball of love. I forgive you, extending love and healing, seeing the light in you. This shows me the light in myself, and I become addicted to the experience, so I forgive more and more; you begin to give as you have received, forgiving those around you. More and more people are infected by it. This happy infection of love begins to spread throughout the world. The power of it becomes “so compelling” that it eventually draws everyone out of darkness. That will be what the Course calls the Second Coming of Christ (W-pII.9:3:2).

I believe that, as students of the Course, we are part of this happy infection of the world with love. It is only just beginning, and it has a very long way to go, but we are part of it now. Spreading this infection is my mission in life. It is the mission in which Jesus calls each of us to join him. And we practice it every moment of every day with every person we meet, as we choose to see beyond the ego to the light that is hidden in everyone, to draw that light forth by simply looking on it. We brush aside the shadow figures of the past our ego minds throw up as barriers, let go of judgment, and hear the constant calls for love that resound on every side. And we answer. That is all there is to do, that is the only meaningful activity in this world.

## Paragraph 12

### • Study Question •

12. a) Paragraph 12:1-3. *Awakening means a conscious choice to love instead of fear. What signifies our willingness to follow the light of love?*  
b) Paragraph 12:4-7. *How are the nightmares we experience in sleep parallel to our situation in failing to see the light of Christ in our brothers?*

What a beautiful summary of the purpose of the Course this first sentence is!

The intention of the Course is to teach us to follow the laws of love of *our own free will* (12:1). There is no coercion in *A Course in Miracles*. You do not have to do anything you don't want to do. In fact, the purpose of the Course's mind training is to bring you to the place where *you want* to follow the laws of love, where you realize that following the laws of love is what you have always wanted in your heart of hearts. The important thing, in the Course, is not that you do anything differently, but that you *want* to do it differently. It repeatedly says that all it asks of us is "a little willingness" (T18.IV.4:1; T18.V.2:4). It is the *willing*, the *wanting*, the *choosing* that is important. "There is no strain in doing God's Will as soon as you recognize that it is also your own" (T2.VI.6:4).

The idea that we can be frightened into loving by threats of hell is so absurd that it would be laughable if such a belief were not the foundation of our major religions. Love *cannot* be imposed from without; it *must* be chosen from within. Charles Finney, a great Christian evangelist of the last century, founder of Oberlin College, defined love as "the eternal will to all goodness." He was right, in that love is a matter of the will, a matter of choice. If love is not freely chosen, it cannot be love; acting against my will comes only from fear, which is love's opposite. Many people in the world today who "obey God" do so out of fear, not love. That isn't what God wants; it isn't what the Course teaches.

The Course is teaching us that we are miserable because we listen to the voice of fear instead of the voice of love. It is teaching us that following the laws of love is what makes us happy, content, and peaceful. It points out that this fact proves that our nature must be love, because we could not be happy acting against our own nature; therefore, if acting in love makes me happy, my nature must be love. I must be "as God created me" (WpI.110.Title). That is what is meant by "quiet recognition of the truth in them" (12:1, compare with M-5.3). I choose to follow the laws of love because I want to, and I want to because love is what I am. That is the truth.

God draws us to love by *attracting* us, by showing us that we want it. The peace, joy, contentment and inner serenity that come from allowing love to flow through us is without question. Nothing is more powerfully attractive. Our willingness to love is "signified by giving" (12:2). That is, we demonstrate our willingness to follow the laws of love by giving love and light to others. Giving is how we know we are willing. "To give is how to recognize you have received" (W-pI.159.1:7). As the Apostle James wrote concerning "faith without works":

Believing is like that. If it does not do anything it is no good. Belief by itself is

dead. In that case someone may say, 'You believe. And I do good things. Try to show me that you believe without doing any acts of kindness. I will show you that I believe by doing acts of kindness.' (James 2:17–18, Weymouth translation)

Sentence 3 is another repetition of the recurring theme, that we learn the truth of the love that is in us from the people to whom we give love, and who accept it. The more love you give, the more you get back. If you want love, start giving it away.

“In sleep you are alone” (12:4). That is a simple fact. When we sleep *physically*, we are alone, and our awareness is narrowed to ourselves. When we sleep *spiritually* we do the same thing. When we “close our eyes” to the light in our brothers, when we pull down the curtains of past memory and block the light of the present from our awareness, we are alone, we are narrowing our awareness to ourselves.

“And that is why the nightmares come” (12:5). The entire nightmare of this world arises because we shut our eyes to the light in our brothers, because we *refuse* to see the light and love that is in them. We live in self-imposed isolation. We *dream* of isolation “because [our] eyes are closed” (12:6). We are not really alone, but we *dream* we are because we are shutting out the light that is always shining in our brothers. We think we are alone because we can't see our brothers (12:7), but the reason we can't see them is because we shut our eyes.

## Paragraph 13

### • Study Question •

*13. How is it that we can be "asleep," and yet have Christ in our own minds, calling us to awake?*

•

And yet the laws of love are not suspended because you sleep. And you have followed them through all your nightmares, and have been faithful in your giving, for you were not alone.

Jesus is getting a bit mystical here; he's talking of something I don't think we can really understand yet. He's saying that because you are (or part of your mind is) asleep, you think you are alone, and you think you have suspended the laws of love (13:1). He's saying that what you think isn't true. You are not alone, you haven't suspended love's laws, and your giving has never stopped (13:2). At some level (a level of which you are not aware here in the dream), part of you is still awake and still giving—you aren't aware of it, but it is there. As Jesus says elsewhere, “Not one note in Heaven's song was missed” (T26.V.5:4). The dream we think we are in never really happened.

Christ “is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well” (WpII.6.6:1–2). In our sleep, Christ, our true Self, has been awake and active. Jesus is talking about something that is outside of time and space here, something in Heaven or eternity. I can only imagine what he is talking about! At this stage of our growth, I think we just have to take Jesus at his word here. Even though I think I'm asleep and in a

nightmare, on some level that I don't understand my true Self has never stopped giving for me, and giving me the gifts He gave (13:4).

I find I can appreciate this idea in the sense that it tells me I haven't missed anything! When I look back at my life and all the "missed opportunities" for love, all the times I've listened to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit, I can get discouraged over how long it has taken me to get even this far. When I consider that I may have been at this for hundreds of lifetimes, I could get *really* discouraged. Jesus is saying that while this awful dream of separation has been going on, eon after eon, nothing has really happened and nothing has been lost. Christ has always been perfect love, and has been giving and receiving love without ceasing. He's saving it all up for me, so that when I finally awake it will all be there for me. This is a *dream* of loss, but the loss is not real.

Because this dream is not real, because the giving of love has never ceased, here—within the dream—I can "call unto [myself] the witnesses that teach [me] that [I] never slept" (13:9). I am asleep, my eyes closed, and I see the terrible dream. But right there on the other side of my eyelids is the real world! And I am in it; I'm not where I think I am. Here, within the dream with me, I carry the memory of the real world.

Here in the dream there appears to be loss. In this dream world there is a past that seems to prove that separation is real. There, in the real world, loss has never occurred. In that world, there is no past apart from God (13:6).

Each brother in the dream whom I meet *in the present* is a contact point between the world of the dream and the real world. In the present I can remember that real world, in which the past apart from God never occurred. Because perfect love is there, in that real world, I can draw forth the light and love in each of my brothers, and so learn that this dream world is not the real one.

## Summary of Finding the Present

One sentence summary: *You find the present by letting go of the past.*

If I meet a brother in the present without reference to the past, I find the real world, the guiltless world. Using the past to condemn the present is not natural to me; it is a matter of my own choice. I have chosen use the past to obscure the light in the present because I am afraid of the light. I am afraid because the light means the loss of my ego identity.

The darkness I see in my brothers exists only in my own mind. I see it because I choose to see it. I can choose otherwise. I can choose to let the past go, and look without condemnation on the present.

In forgiving, letting go of the past, I will release my brother from condemnation. In releasing him, I will be released. Separation exists only in the past.

If I choose to hold on to the past, I am choosing to remain in darkness and refusing to accept the light. I am choosing to remain separated.

My mission in life is to call forth the witnesses to love in everyone. Each person around me is my savior, my guide to finding my own light, which I do by perceiving the light in him.

The light of the real world is irresistibly attractive. Each experience of it draws me to the next. I become *willing* to follow the laws of love because they are true. I become *willing* to lay aside the world I have made, a world of dreams, in exchange for the real world, a world in which there is no past of separation, no loss, and no guilt.

Eventually this love will draw everyone into its fold. The world we know will vanish, and we will know that we never slept.

## Answer Key

1. If we see our own selves truly, as an extension of God's love, we will not see the false images of our brothers and sisters as attackers. We will see them as the love they are.
2. The only thing that can lead us to bring the darkness of the past with us into the present is our fear of the light.
3. a) The darkness is in us, in our minds. If we see it, it is in us.  
b) "To be born again is to let the past go, and look without condemnation upon the present" (2:5).
4. a) We are asked not to be deceived by the linear appearance of time, thinking that because we see it this way, this is its reality.  
b) We let the ego's view of time control us, thus preventing the miracle from freeing us.
5. We have been looking in the past, where truth is not (because the past was made in anger); truth is to be found in the present.
6. The separating attitude of condemnation is always based on the past; thus, "only the past can separate" (6:8). Being in the present enables us to reach one another (6:4) because it contains reality and eternity; in the present there is no past to separate us.
7. a) We have a choice as to whether or not to see the shadows of the past, or to let them go.  
b) The miracle worker looks for the truth in others, and calls upon them as witnesses to Christ.
8. We are asked to reach out to our brothers and touch them with the touch of Christ, through seeing the light and the wholeness in them, and calling them to wake up to their own wholeness.
9. We remember God by calling forth witnesses to His creation, shining on them and bringing their minds to light. We see our healing through healing others, and receiving their witness of our healing.
10. a) As we give light to others, they return it; we find light through its witnesses. We see them in light, and this brings our light closer to our awareness.  
b) Guides to joy; guides to peace.
11. God gives us light. We then give it to others. Shining out of them, it calls to us into the real world. When a miracle occurs, light shining from me, being received, and shining back from another, the two sources of light will join together so powerfully that it will draw others out of darkness.

12. a) Paragraph 12:1-3. Our willingness to follow is signified by our giving of love to others.  
b) Paragraph 12:4-7. By closing our eyes to the Christ in those around us, we experience the nightmare of this world.
13. Although we seem to be alone in our sleep, we are not. Christ has protected us. Our real Self has continued to be awake, following the laws of love, giving gifts in our name. Christ's vision has not left us. The sleep itself is an illusion.