

# Workbook Lesson Support Notes

## by Allen Watson

### LESSON 311 • November 7

**“I judge all things as I would have them be.”**

#### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

**Practice suggestion:** Choose a person you are currently judging, and repeat the following lines:

*I will accept Your judgment of [name].*

*I cannot understand [name] apart from his oneness with totality.*

*I do not know [name] and I cannot judge.*

*And so I let Your love decide who [name] is.*

#### Commentary

The basic lesson of the Course about judgment is that we can't really do it. We simply don't have the equipment. We don't know enough; as this lesson says, our judgment “cannot see totality and therefore judges falsely” (1:4). What our judgment does, then, is to make things into what we want them to be, rather than what they really are. Unfortunately, it does so based upon “the agony of all the judgments we have made against ourselves” (1:6). We project our self-condemnation onto the world, and what we see, as it said back in Lesson 304, is “my state of mind, reflected outward” (W-pII.304.1:4).

Instead of attempting to judge anything, we are asked to take judgment and “make a gift of it to Him Who has a different use for it” (1:5). In other words, we let the Holy Spirit judge for us. He always judges according to the truth, the reality of God's creation. “We let Your Love decide what he whom You created as Your Son must be” (2:3). He gives us “God's Judgment of His Son” (1:6).

Another way of looking at it is that we allow the Holy Spirit to tell us what we truly want: to see the perfection of God's creation everywhere and in everyone. And then, because that is what we want to see, we “judge all things as [we] would have them be,” but now we judge differently because we want something different. Given to the ego, our minds always want to find fault because we are trying to deny and project what we think are our own faults; given to the Holy Spirit, our minds always find love or a call for love.

Today, then, Father, I would see Your Son as You created him. I would judge him truly. I would suspend my warped judgment and accept Yours in every way. Today I want to see the truth in everyone. Teach me to relinquish judgment on my own, and to accept the eternal judgment You have made: “You are still My holy Son, forever innocent, forever loving and forever loved, as limitless as your Creator, and completely changeless and forever pure” (W-pII.10.5:1).

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### Part 1: W-pII.10.1:1–2

Christ's Second Coming gives the Son of God this gift: To hear the Voice for God proclaim that what is false is false, and what is true has never changed. (1:1)

This is one of the great statements of the ultimate message of *A Course in Miracles*: “what is false is false, and what is true has never changed.” Put into these deceptively simple words, the message almost seems to be trite or tautological, like “Red is red.” Of course “what is false is false, and what is true is true.” It's obvious.

What gives the statement its profundity is the fact that *we do not believe it*. As we are told in the Text:

This is a very simple course. Perhaps you do not feel you need a course which, in the end, teaches that only reality is true. But do you believe it? When you perceive the real world, you will recognize that you did not believe it. (T-11.VIII.1:1–4)

All our problems can be summed up in this: We have taught ourselves to believe that what is false is true, and what is true is false. We believe that the body, sin, guilt, fear, suffering, and death are all real. And we do not believe (or at least strongly doubt) that spirit, holiness, innocence, love, and eternal life are real. The perception of the real world shows us that the latter list—what is real—is really real, and the former list—what is false—is really false. And *that* is the Last Judgment.

All the learning process we appear to be going through is really teaching us nothing except that one lesson, over and over, in one example after another. Something we thought of as real—our own sin, or sin in a brother, or death, or attack, or separation—is shown to be false, and the love we thought was absent is seen to be present. Where we thought we saw sin we now see innocence. Where we thought we saw an attacker we now see our savior (T-22.VI.8:1).

Then will he see each situation that he thought before was means to justify his anger turned to an event which justifies his love. He will hear plainly that the calls to war he heard before are really calls to peace. (T-25.III.6:5–6)

Try to imagine what it would be like to have some situation which, right now, seems to justify your anger turned into something that, instead, justifies your love. That is what the miracle does. That is what “what is false is false, and what is true has never changed,” really means. The real world is a kind of perception in which *everything* you see justifies your love, because nothing exists which does *not* justify love. That is what is “real” about the real world. What is false is that anger is ever justified: “Anger is *never* justified” (T-30.VI.1:1). What is true is that love is *always* justified. God's Love for you, for instance, is always justified. God's Love for your brother is always justified. And therefore, your love for your brother is also always justified.

“This the judgment is in which perception ends” (1:2). When we have achieved this final judgment about everything, the purpose of perception is over. There is nothing more to perceive, because all reason for separation is gone, and oneness is once again knowable and known. We no longer perceive one another, which requires separation, subject and object; instead, we *know* each other as parts of ourselves, “wholly lovable and wholly loving” (T-1.III.2:3).

## LESSON 312 • November 8

**“I see all things as I would have them be.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

### Commentary

This lesson is the second in a pair. The previous lesson told us that we judge all things as we would have them be. This lesson continues: “Perception follows judgment” (1:1). Judgment is, in this context, nearly synonymous with interpretation. We first want a certain thing to be true; we therefore judge or interpret what is around us according to that desire; and having judged (interpreted), we perceive what we wanted. “For sight can merely serve to offer us what we would have” (1:3). The Course’s presentation of perception and how it works is consistent and insistent:

You see what you believe is there, and you believe it there because you want it there.  
Perception has no other law than this. (T-25.III.1:3–4)

If we want to see the real world, we will see it. If we join with the Holy Spirit in His goal, we “cannot fail to look upon what Christ would have him see, and share Christ’s Love for what he looks upon” (1:6). The key is in what we want.

It’s hard to admit that what we are seeing we must have wanted to see, at some level of our minds. The ego has a sick mind, quite literally; the unrecognized ego thoughts and wishes manifest in the world even though we are not conscious of them. But the world is our mind’s mirror; what we see is what we have chosen to see. The world does not change because we are afraid to look within our minds and see the thoughts that caused it. If we will look, He will heal.

I recall someone standing during an ACIM workshop, when Ken Wapnick was sharing along these lines, and telling how, during the television reports on a California earthquake, he became aware that there was a part of his mind that was disappointed that the death toll was so low. Something in him wanted it to be more dramatic, wanted to see more death. I remember once realizing quite clearly that I wanted someone dead—someone quite close to me. It was a shock, but when I let myself be aware of it I was also aware that the thought was not new!

We need to be willing to find the cause of the world we see within our own minds, so that we can change our minds about the world. With changed thoughts, we will see a changed world.

If we will, we can look upon “a liberated world, set free from all the judgments I have made” (2:1). Today we can choose to see the world differently—if we want to. There is no guilt in choosing not to see it differently, but think of how unhappy your perception of the world has made you up till now and ask yourself if you don’t want to see it differently. Seeing the real world is your will. It is up to you, and to me, to choose to see it today.

*Father, this is Your Will for me today, and therefore it must be my goal as well. (2:2)*

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### Part 2: W-pII.10.1:3-4

In two sentences we have the Second Coming, the Last Judgment, and the final step:

At first you see a world that has accepted this as true [the Second Coming], projected from a now corrected mind. And with this holy sight, perception gives a silent blessing [the Last Judgment] and then disappears [the final step], its goal accomplished and its mission done. (1:3-4)

The “this” which we see the world as having accepted is the statement from the previous sentence: “what is false is false, and what is true has never changed.” If the *world* has accepted this statement, it indicates to me that this is not simply the real world (the world seen through forgiving eyes) but the Second Coming, in which all minds have been given to Christ. The unified, healed mind of the Sonship is still projecting, but “from a now corrected mind,” and therefore what is being projected is a healed world. When we see this “holy sight,” we pronounce the Last Judgment, which is a silent blessing, for as the Course says elsewhere, the Last Judgment is not a meting out of punishment but a final healing (T-2.VIII.3:3).

With the “final healing,” then, the goal and mission of perception itself (as the Holy Spirit sees its purpose) is over, and so perception itself vanishes, no longer needed. Here, perception vanishes; in the next paragraph (2:3) the world itself, which is the object of all our perception, “slips away to nothingness.”

What’s the point of understanding these eschatological events? (Eschatology is “The branch of theology that is concerned with the end of the world or of humankind” [American Heritage Dictionary].) They represent the goal towards which the Course is leading us. As the Course itself says, in “Setting the Goal” (T-17.VI), when you accept a certain goal you begin to overlook or discount everything that stands in its way, and start to focus on the things that will bring the goal about. It says:

The value of deciding in advance what you want to happen is simply that you will perceive the situation as a means to *make* it happen. You will therefore make every effort to overlook what interferes with the accomplishment of your objective, and concentrate on everything that helps you meet it. (T-17.VI.4:1-2)

If we have even some small understanding that the final goal is a silent blessing, a final healing, an overlooking of all error and a recognition of the innocence of all of God’s creation, and of all of our own creations, we will begin to perceive our day-to-day situations as “a means to make it happen.” We will make every effort to overlook attack thoughts and condemning judgments, whether in our own minds or in others, because we will see them as something that interferes with the goal we are seeking.

Another value of this understanding of the Last Judgment is that it eliminates one of the sources of our fear. We’ll see more about this further on in this section, but for now, just realizing that God will *not* be running an inquisition and punishing us for every minuscule transgression of His laws will come as a great relief to many of us, influenced by our immersion in a culture where religion is often filled with fear of God’s wrath. The idea of a wrathful, vengeful God is something the Course goes out of its way to counteract.

## LESSON 313 • November 9

**“Now let a new perception come to me.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

*Practice suggestion:* I find that this lesson is more effective if you make it specific: “*Now let a new perception of this person (or situation, or event) come to me.*”

### Commentary

The vision of Christ “beholds all things as sinless” (1:1). This is a new perception that *comes* to me. I don’t go after it; I receive it. I open to it, and it is given to me: “This vision is Your gift” (1:3). To see all things as sinless is not something that I must strive to do; it is a gift, given to me by God. When I perceive sin, what I can learn to do is to ask for a different perception: “Now let a new perception come to me.” I can want this new perception, and wanting is all that is required. The rest is given. “Love will come wherever it is asked” (1:2).

Christ—Who is my true Self, eternal, changeless—already “sees no sin in anything He looks upon” (1:5). This is not a vision that my Self has to achieve; it is mine already, in Christ. All I need to do is to allow that new perception to come to me. As I do, as I look out upon the world and see it as forgiven, I will “waken from the dream of sin and look within upon my sinlessness” (1:6). There is the message of the Course in a nutshell: See your own innocence by seeing the world’s innocence. Find your forgiveness through forgiving others.

Like vision, which has always been a part of my Christ Self, so too sinlessness: it has been kept by God, “completely undefiled upon the altar to Your holy Son, the Self with which I would identify” (1:6). That is all we are doing: identifying with the Christ, with something that already is. “Enlightenment is but a recognition, not a change at all” (W-pI.188.1:4). There is nothing to achieve, nowhere to go; we are already there, and all that is required is the recognition of what is already so, the identification with what has existed forever. We let the new perception come to us, that is all.

So, my brothers and sisters,

Let us today behold each other in the sight of Christ. How beautiful we are! (2:1–2)

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### Part 3: W-pII.10.2:1–2

The final judgment on the world contains no condemnation. (2:1)

No condemnation! It seems to be very hard for us to get beyond the idea of condemnation. We’ve been

taught for generations that in the Last Judgment, God will separate the “sheep” from the “goats,” the “wheat” from the “tares,” the good guys from the bad guys, and will send the bad guys into everlasting punishment. We rather like the idea of vengeance; it seems like justice to us. We go to movies and we cheer when the bad guys finally get blown away. Of course, when it comes to picturing ourselves standing before God’s Final Judgment, we get a little nervous—very nervous, in fact. Because we know we aren’t perfect.

How can there be no condemnation in the Final Judgment? There can only be one explanation. There is no condemnation because “it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless” (2:2). The only way there can be no condemnation is if there is no sin. *Everything* and *everyone* is forgiven, totally. And that bugs us. “You mean the bad guys *don’t* get blown away at the end of the story?” It doesn’t seem fair to us, because we believe that sin is real, and deserves punishment.

The old-time evangelists of the eighteenth century, like Jonathan Edwards (the author of the famous sermon “Sinners in the hands of an angry God”), had some things right. They taught that sin is sin. There is no order of sin—every sin is infinitely sinful and demands eternal punishment because *any* sin is an attack on an infinite God. As C. S. Lewis put it, the idea of a “little” sin is like a “little” pregnancy. Edwards had people so terrified when he delivered his sermon that people in church were holding on to the pillars of the church in fear that the ground would open and swallow them up into hell. If sin were real at all, he was right. All of us would be infinitely guilty, and all of us would deserve eternal punishment. In this picture, there *are* no “good guys.”

Therefore, if sin is real at all, and vengeance on *anyone* is justified, then vengeance is justified on all of us. If the bad guys get blown away at the end of the story, we *all* get blown away. In holding on to the idea of condemnation and punishment, we are condemning ourselves to hell. And somewhere inside we know it—that’s why we feel so nervous!

The only alternative is *no* condemnation. Total forgiveness. No sin in anyone. And that is the message of the Course: “*God’s Son is guiltless*” (T-14.V.2:1). That will be God’s Final Judgment, and that will be *our* judgment when we reach the end of our journey.

For it sees the world as totally forgiven, without sin and wholly purposeless. (2:2)

The final judgment sees the world, not only as without sin, but without a purpose. This notion cannot be squared with the idea that God created the world; would God create anything without a purpose? The purposelessness of the world, though, goes quite well with the idea that our ego minds have made the world up.

Have you ever looked at the world and suspected that it was basically without any purpose or meaning? That the endless progression of birth and death doesn’t seem to be going anywhere? We all grow up (some with more difficulty than others, some with more success than others), we struggle through life, we attain what we can, and then—so it seems—it all comes to an end, and everything we have accomplished, and everything we have become, is lost (see T-13.In.2). What is the point? Many, particularly among the younger people today, have accepted this point of view, and have succumbed to despair and apathy.

And yet, there is validity to this point of view. In fact, the final judgment will ultimately confirm it! The world *has* no purpose. It is the misbegotten offspring of a mind made mad by guilt (see T-13.In.2:2). The realization, however, need not lead to despair; it can become the springboard to eternal joy. Seen as without purpose, we can at last let it go, and remember that our true home is in God.

## LESSON 314 • November 10

**“I seek a future different from the past.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

**Practice suggestion:** Think of a past mistake, especially a major one such as long-term lovelessness in a relationship. Then repeat the following lines to God, trying to mean them as much as you can:

*I leave this past mistake behind.*

*I leave the future in Your Hands.*

*I trust Your present promises to guide my future in their holy light.*

Try to feel the freedom from past and future contained in these words. Let your sense of care drop away.

### Commentary

In the ego’s perception, the future is only the result of the past; it is little more than the past itself extended beyond the present. To the ego, the past determines the future. In the perception of the Holy Spirit, “The future now is recognized as but extension of the present” (1:2). What we choose to perceive and to believe in the now determines what the future will be like; the future is not determined by the past. “Past mistakes can cast no shadows on it, so that fear has lost its idols and its images, and being formless, it has no effects” (1:3).

By letting go of the past and realizing that it cannot touch me now, I bring into being a future different from the past. My present choice for salvation, my present willingness to accept the Atonement for myself, deprives the past of all its fear. The “idols and images” (1:3) of fear are things such as all the guilt of the past and all the false perceptions of the past. They are no longer available to fear when I have released the past into God’s Hands and have accepted forgiveness for myself. I am beginning from this present moment with a clean slate. Without the forms of past idols and images, fear can have no effects.

Based on the guilt of the past my future was certain death. But with the past released from “sin,” and life now my present goal, death has no claim on me (1:4). My physical body will still “die” most likely (barring some rare miracle of being caught up into heaven in a whirlwind, like Elijah in the Bible, II Kings 2), although the body does not truly die because it never lives; but since I am not my body, I will not die, and I will not fear death. “All the needed means are happily provided” (1:4). When my mind is straightened out and my goal is life, everything I need to reach my goal is provided by the Holy Spirit. “When the present has been freed” from all guilt and all fear, that present will simply extend “its security and peace into a quiet future filled with joy” (1:5).

The key is in allowing my mind to be freed from guilt and fear right now. I can practice doing this in the holy instant. I can take a moment and allow the peace and security this lesson speaks of to flood my mind. I can bring my guilt and hurt and pain and anger to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to heal my mind. As I do this more and more the peace will extend itself outward into my day. Perhaps the most common

testimony of people who have been studying the Course for some time is, “I am much more peaceful than I ever was before.” It works. And as that peace grows in the present, as more and more of our present moments are spent in that peace of mind, the future will more and more be filled with joy.

Let me, then, “choose to use the present to be free” (2:1). How many of my present moments are spent grieving or sorrowing about the past, lamenting things lost? How many present moments are spent in fear of something future? Let me choose to use the present differently. Let me choose, every time I am aware of the present, to use that moment for peace and for nothing else. To do so is the way out of hell. Leave the future in God’s Hands. Leave past mistakes behind (2:2). Let me lay my life in God’s Hands, “sure that You will keep Your present promises, and guide the future in their holy light” (2:2).

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### Part 4: W-pII.10.2:3–6

When all of creation, every mind, has at last accepted the new perception of the world as without sin and without purpose, the world will end. “Without a cause” (2:3), I think, refers to the world’s being seen without sin, for sin and its companion, guilt, in the Course’s view, caused the world. “Without a function” (2:3) then would mean the same thing as “purposeless” (2:2). To the ego, the purpose of the world is destruction, or punishment. Once the cause and the function of the world have been removed from all minds, the world “merely slips away to nothingness” (2:3).

As the Manual for Teachers puts it, “The world will end when its thought system has been completely reversed” (M-14.4:1). (You may want to read this entire beautiful section, entitled “How Will the World End?”—particularly its moving final paragraph.) In the vision of the Course, the end of the world is not a cataclysm, nor is it some great triumph by heavenly hosts, but a quiet melting away, merely the disappearance of an illusion whose apparent necessity has ended.

“There [in nothingness] it was born, and there it ends as well” (2:4). In other words, the world was made up out of nothing, and nothing will be left when it disappears. Only the thoughts of love expressed are real and eternal. Everything else goes, including “the figures in the dream” (2:5), that is, our bodies, which—with sin gone as cause and death gone as their purpose—will simply “fade away” (2:6). As we have read often before, in earlier “What Is” sections and in the Text, the body was made by the ego for its purposes. The Holy Spirit can, and does, co-opt the body for His purposes as long as we are in the dream. He is leading us to realize that “what is false is false, and what is true has never changed” (1:1), and once that purpose has been achieved by us all, the body no longer has any purpose. It simply fades away.

One last phrase is added: “because the Son of God is limitless” (2:6). The body fades away because the Son is limitless, and the body is a limit. When our minds have been returned to Christ, fully, we will no longer have any need of limitation. What we are is limitless, and a limited body would be useless to us.

This is the “end of all things” as the Course sees it. How, then, should we live now, still within the dream, but knowing this is its ending? We “need merely learn how to approach it [the ending]; to be willing to go in its direction” (M-14.4:5). We cooperate with the Holy Spirit, today and every day, in learning to look upon the world without condemnation, to see it as totally forgiven. We allow Him to teach us that there is no purpose in the world, and to gradually wean us of our attachment to it. We open ourselves more and more to the vision, growing within us, of the limitless Son of God.

## LESSON 315 • November 11

**“All gifts my brothers give belong to me.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

### Commentary

In Lesson 97 we are told that if we practice with the lesson’s idea (“I am spirit”) and thus bring reality a little closer to our minds, the Holy Spirit will take the minutes we give to Him in those holy instants “and carry them around this aching world” (W-pI.97.5:1). It says, “He will not overlook one open mind that will accept the healing gifts they [the minutes you give] bring, and He will lay them [the gifts] everywhere He knows they will be welcome” (W-pI.97.5:2). He talks about how “each gift to Him [will] be multiplied a thousandfold and tens of thousands more” (W-pI.97.6:1). Now, one thousand times ten thousand is ten million. So He will multiply our gifts at least ten million times, except it says “tens of thousands,” plural tens, so that means as much as ninety million times. Perhaps the numbers are simply symbolic of “an extremely large number,” but I’m sure Jesus means, quite literally, that an unimaginably large number of minds will be affected by our choice. Every mind that is open to receive will receive our gift; millions of minds.

Now in this lesson we see the opposite side of the coin. For all those millions who are open, and who, like us, give the gift of their mind to God for a moment, we, in turn, receive their gifts. Thus, every moment, thousands of my brothers and sisters find the way to God for a moment and give a gift, which I receive because all minds are joined, as the first paragraph tells us. A smile between brothers or a word of gratitude or mercy, anywhere in the world, offers a gift to my mind. I can receive the certainty of anyone who finds the way to God.

All minds are joined. Every moment, a thousand gifts arrive at the portal of my mind, given by other minds. If I am open, I can receive every one of them! In a study group where this concept was discussed, a student remarked, “That sounds like a full-time job!” Indeed. Sounds like my kind of job, too.

Ever wonder where some of those blessed thoughts come from? Ever wonder why suddenly, in the midst of a rather blah day, something comes into your mind and gladdens your heart? We usually think, if we think of it at all, that it must be the Holy Spirit. But it could equally well have been your sister whose mind found the way to God at just that moment and smiled at someone, and in so doing sent her gift to you. The Holy Spirit was just the postman. Someone you never knew, halfway around the world, just gave you a blessing!

This cosmic exchange of gifts within the greatest “Internet” in the universe is going on all the time. Everyone is wired in; you just have to read your mail.

So let us lift our hearts in gratitude and thanks to every Son of God. Let us this morning and this evening spend some time in thanks to our brothers, who are one with us, for all their multitude of gifts, most of which have gone unacknowledged for most of our lives.

Let me say to all of you who read this: “Thank you for remembering, my sister or my brother!” Thank you for loving instead of fearing. Thank you for being aware, for being alive. Thank you for smiling, for

letting joy through. Thank you for showing mercy. Thank you for forgiving. Thank you for joining with another. Let my meditation today be on all the ways I am constantly being blessed by my brothers and sisters, and on the reality that I gain from each and every one.

*I thank You, Father, for the many gifts that come to me today and every day from every Son of God. (2:1)*

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### **Part 5: W-pII.10.3:1**

You who believed that God's Last Judgment would condemn the world to hell along with you, accept this holy truth: God's Judgment is the gift of the Correction He bestowed on all your errors, freeing you from them, and all effects they ever seemed to have.

Most of us, at least in Western society, have grown up believing in some kind of hell. We say, "God will get you for that." We curse one another with the words, "Go to hell!" Intellectually we may have rejected the idea of a literal hell, with flames and demons with pitchforks, but the notion is woven into our thoughts nevertheless. There is a sort of visceral fear of what may lie after death that gnaws at our guts, denied, repressed, but still...there. If we do believe in God, as many do, the worry about how He will judge us, how He will evaluate our lives in the end, eats at us constantly.

To us, then, the Course appeals: "Accept this holy truth!" Judgment is not condemnation but a gift, a gift of Correction. Not a punishment, but a cure. Not "no exit," but a way out. The Last Judgment does not enumerate our every fault and then lock us into their consequences for all eternity. No, it corrects our errors and frees us from them, and not only from the errors themselves but from "all effects they ever seemed to have."

Think about it. How would it feel to know beyond any shadow of doubt that you were free from all your errors, and from all their effects? That would be total jubilation! The "Hallelujah Chorus" in spades. But that, the Course is telling us, is the *truth*, and it is this truth that "has never changed" (1:1). We are free from our errors and their effects, we always have been, and we always will be. That is what we will all, collectively, come to accept in that moment of Last Judgment. And that is what we are now learning to accept for ourselves, and to teach to all our brothers and sisters. We release each other from our sins, that those we release may in turn release us.

## LESSON 316 • November 12

**“All gifts I give my brothers are my own.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

**Practice suggestion:** You may want to try the following visualization. It will probably work better if someone reads it to you, or if you read it onto a tape and play the tape back to guide you through it.

Begin by repeating this line from the Urtext: *“Help me to perform whatever miracles you want of me today.”*

Then ask the Holy Spirit to whom he wants you to give a miracle today. For this exercise, we’ll focus on just one person.

Once you have a person in mind, then ask the Holy Spirit what form this miracle should take. It might be sitting down and forgiving this person. It might be a kind word or some outer gesture. Ask Him, *“What form should this miracle take?”*

Now visualize actually giving this miracle to this person, at whatever time of day you expect this to occur. See the scene unfold in your mind.

Now, in your mind’s eye, look off in the distance a bit. There you see a temple-like structure. Its two magnificent doors are open wide, and on either side of the massive doorway an angel is standing. You see people from all directions walking towards this building, carrying treasures into it. These treasures are the gifts that these people have been given by others. One person has been given the precious gift of forgiveness and is carrying that into the building. Another has been healed by a miracle worker, and is carrying in this gift of healing. Another has received unconditional love from a friend and is carrying that in.

As you look, you begin to see specific people that *you* have given to, carrying into the building the treasures you have given them. See one person after another that you have given gifts to, walking inside to deposit their gifts. You see recent people you’ve given to, and those you gave to a long time ago. You see people you gave some particular thing to, and people you gave to continually over years. Note each person specifically.

Seeing these people, you realize that this is *your* treasure house. Even though you experience yourself as being outside the building, everything on the inside belongs to you. It’s all yours. And after seeing so many people carrying inside the gifts you have given them, you begin to get a sense of just how many treasures you have stored up.

The person you are giving to today is beside you. This person looks at you and says, “Come with me.” See this person take you by the hand and walk you towards your treasure house. He or she is your escort into the building. You see the treasure house looming closer. You see the doors open wide in welcome. As you approach, the angels greet you and say, “Welcome. Your house has been waiting for you. Enter in where you are truly welcome and at home, among the gifts that God has given you.”

Walk in through the doors and see the dazzling splendor that awaits you. Feel the holiness that

pervades the place. Feel the peace and the sense of home. As you look at the treasures, feel a sense of ownership. Feel the abundance that comes from all these treasures being yours. This is your new home, the home in which your mind will live from now on. Sit down in this home and spend some time just soaking in the holiness, peace, and abundance.

## Commentary

This lesson is obviously a companion to yesterday's, "All gifts my brothers give belong to me." We receive all the gifts our brothers give, and we also receive all the gifts we give. Of course the reverse is true as well: Everything any brother or sister gives, they also receive, and they receive all the gifts we give as well. Everyone receives everything. It must be so because we are all one.

"Each one allows a past mistake to go, and leave no shadow on the holy mind my Father loves" (1:2). The gifts we are speaking of are gifts of forgiveness in which we let a past mistake go, instead of holding on in unforgiving grievance about it. When I give such a gift, I am blessed because the shadows of that past mistake are removed from my mind. The shadows no longer obscure the truth about my brother; my forgiveness shows me Christ in him.

Therefore, we not only receive a gift every time one is given by someone else—a smile, a word of mercy, an act of love—but also, we receive a gift each time anyone else receives a gift! "His grace is given me in every gift a brother has received throughout all time, and past all time as well" (1:3). When Jesus looked at the woman caught in adultery and said, "Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more," and she received his gift of forgiveness, I received a gift as well as she.

Our treasure house is full, says the lesson (1:4). "Angels watch its open doors that not one gift is lost, and only more are added" (1:4). The fact that we may not be aware of these gifts makes no difference; they can't be lost. Every loving thought is treasured up and kept for us; not one is lost. The treasure of love just keeps growing, just as God keeps eternally expanding and extending.

You know, if we could really get a grasp on these thoughts our lives would be transformed. We are being showered, deluged, with gifts of love in every moment. We have the rich inheritance of all the love for all of time, "and past all time as well" (1:3), to draw upon. Our perspective is so horribly constrained by our self-inflicted isolation! We have no idea how rich we are.

But I can come now, today, this moment, into my treasure house. I can "come to where my treasures are, and enter in where I am truly welcome and at home, among the gifts that God has given me" (1:5). I can remember all the gifts I have and guarantee them to myself by giving them away, as Lesson 159 instructs us:

There is no miracle you cannot give, for all are given you. Receive them now by opening the storehouse of your mind where they are laid, and giving them away. (W-159.2:4-5)

The treasure house is in my mind; the gifts are all there. I can recognize I have them by giving them away. It's like keeping the circulation going. And since all the gifts I give my brothers are my own, giving them is how I know I have them, and how I keep them. That's another way to understand the lesson theme: *The only gifts I have are the ones I give away*. So let me today give love to my brothers, give joy to my brothers. Let me offer peace of mind to everyone. As I do, the gifts will be mine.

If we feel uncertain how to go about claiming and recognizing all these treasures, this deluge of blessing, we can join in the prayer that closes this lesson, phrased to recognize the fact that we do not, as yet, recognize all these gifts, and asking for instruction in doing so:

*Father, I would accept Your gifts today. I do not recognize them. Yet I trust that You Who gave them will provide the means by which I can behold them, see their worth, and cherish only them as what I want.* (2:1-3)

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### **Part 6: W-pII.10.3:2**

To fear God's saving grace is but to fear complete release from suffering, return to peace, security and happiness, and union with your own Identity.

If the Last Judgment contains no condemnation, if we are, all of us, free from our errors and every effect they ever seemed to have, how foolish to fear it! Street evangelists with their placards proclaiming, "Prepare to meet thy God!" are offering a message of fear: "Look out! Soon you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and if you are not ready, you will be damned." Jesus, in the Course, is telling us that there is no reason to fear. Fearing God's judgment is fearing the very thing we all want: complete release from suffering. The judgment of God does not damn, it redeems.

We suffer because of our guilt; forgiveness releases us. We are in distress because of our fear; forgiveness returns us to peace, security, and happiness. We are estranged from our own Identity by our belief in sin, but forgiveness brings back union with our Self.

Our fear of God is deeply ingrained. When God approaches we react like a trapped wild animal, feral, vicious and terrified. Oh, my soul! He comes only with healing! He comes only to bring us everything we have ever truly wanted, and more. "Fear not!" the angels announced at Jesus' birth, "For behold! I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people" (Lk 2:10). That is what we are being asked to believe, that underneath all the appearance of terror, death and vengeance we have overlaid on it, God's creation consists of pure joy, pure love, pure peace, pure safety. God waits for us, not to punish, but to fold us forever in His everlasting Arms.

## LESSON 317 • November 13

**“I follow in the way appointed me.”**

### Practice instructions

A short summary:

- **Read** the commentary paragraph slowly and personally.
- **Pray** the prayer, perhaps several times.
- **Morning and evening:** Repeat the idea and then spend time in Open Mind Meditation.
- **Hourly remembrance:** Repeat the idea and then spend a quiet moment in meditation.
- **Frequent reminders:** Repeat the idea often within each hour.
- **Response to temptation:** Repeat the idea whenever upset, to restore peace.
- **Read the “What Is” section** slowly and thoughtfully once during the day.

### Commentary

“I have a special place to fill; a role for me alone” (1:1).

There is a place for me in the plan of Atonement. There is something that is meant specially for me to do, and until I find and fulfill my part, “salvation waits” (1:2). My particular twist on the insanity of separation needs to be healed before healing is complete.

I do believe we each have a particular part to play in the drama of salvation. We each have a “special function” to fulfill, and part of following the Holy Spirit is learning to discover what that role is. It may not be anything grand or large in the public eye. It may be the healing of one particular relationship. It might be, as it was with Helen Schucman, bringing some message from God into this world. It might be raising children and bringing them up from the perspective of a healed mind. It might be tending bar and listening to the patrons with forgiveness. But we do have a function, and we need to find and fill it.

Whatever it is, it will be some aspect of healing, some aspect of alleviating guilt, some way of recognizing the Christ in those around us. It will be a function which, in some way, gives and brings grace into the world, for all functions within the plan of God fall into this general category. Healing is our function here.

When I find my function I will find my happiness, for happiness is my function. This is what I choose today. Today, Father, I pray:

“I’ll go where You would have me go; I’ll do what You would have me do. I’ll be forever in love with You.”<sup>1</sup>

*All my sorrows end in Your embrace. (2:5)*

## What Is the Last Judgment?

### Part 7: W-pII.10.4:1

God’s Final Judgment is as merciful as every step in His appointed plan to bless His Son, and call him to return to the eternal peace He shares with him.

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<sup>1</sup>. If you have not heard the wonderful tape album (or CD) by Donna Marie Carey, Real Love, which contains a song with the words I have just quoted, all songs based on ACIM, I highly recommend it. Available from Community Miracles Center, <http://www.miracles-course.org>.

The plan of God and its ending are characterized by one thing: mercy. The final outcome will be mercy, and every step along the way to our learning that will be merciful. God has a plan, and that plan is to call us “to return to the eternal peace He shares” with us. No part of that plan is anything but merciful.

Sometimes, even though we may believe that the ending will be merciful, we think that harshness, pain, and suffering are necessary along the way. I don’t think so. I believe that the merciful nature of the outcome permeates the entire pathway. Every bit of it is aimed at release from suffering. “There is no need to learn through pain” (T-21.I.3:1). When we have already, in our blindness, chosen pain, it can be used to teach us; but there is no need for it to be that way. God’s only desire is to release us from our suffering.

And in the end, He will. In the end, we will know the fullness of His mercy, the consistency of His Love, and the shining radiance of His joy. At the heart of the universe, God is an infinite expanse of welcome.

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## ALL MY SORROWS END IN YOUR EMBRACE

In a couple of articles for *A Better Way*, I have shared my love for the prayers in Part II of the Workbook. They are a wonderful way to prepare one’s mind to enter into quiet communion with God, which is exactly what the Workbook says they are for (I make this claim based on a careful examination of the introduction to Part II, especially 3:3 and 4:6). To encourage their actual use for this purpose, I would like to comment on the prayer for Lesson 317, “I follow in the way appointed me”:

*Father, Your way is what I choose today. Where it would lead me do I choose to go; what it would have me do I choose to do. Your way is certain, and the end secure. The memory of You awaits me there. And all my sorrows end in Your embrace, which You have promised to Your Son, who thought mistakenly that he had wandered from the sure protection of Your loving Arms.*

My comments take the form of suggestions for how one might pray this prayer, and so I suggest that you may want to do just that. One way to do this is to read a line from the prayer and my commentary on it, and then pause and spend a minute or two focusing on that line, actually praying it, before going on to reading the next part.

### **Father, Your way is what I choose today.**

This prayer opens (as do more than half of the prayers in Part II of the Workbook) by having you address God as “Father.” Rather than speaking into empty space, or beseeching some remote and fearful deity, you begin this prayer by speaking directly to your Father. The word “Father” here is meant to call upon our image of the ideal father, the perfect dad. What is the perfect dad like? He is near, available, accessible. He is a source of safety and protection, a place of refuge. He provides for all your needs, making sure you are not lacking. All he wants is your happiness. He regards you as a part of himself, a continuation of his line, an extension of his very identity. And so he gives you all of his love and plans to pass on to you all that he has, including his name, his station in life, and his fortune. In addressing God as “Father,” try to hold this image of fatherhood in mind. And try to make it a personal address, so that you are really speaking directly to your Father. Expect Him to hear you.

This first sentence makes a powerful declaration. You are telling God that His way is what you are choosing today. What is His way? You might try filling in things you associate with God’s way. You might say, “Your way of forgiveness (or peace, or love, or salvation) is what I choose today.” You might even have specific things that choosing God’s way today will entail. It may come to your mind that choosing His way means forgiving your coworker or giving up some fear you are hanging onto.

But to make this prayer meaningful, you have to mean it. As much as you can, endeavor to genuinely

view today as a day in which you choose God's way. This may mean reflecting on some questions: How much have you chosen His way as yours? How much are you still holding out, so that His way is only one option among many for you? How much do you still see your happiness as coming from your ability to control external events and situations and people? Based on your experience thus far, which way seems to promise you more: yours or His? To the extent that you can honestly answer "His," then put that feeling into the saying of this line. See this day as one you will look back on and say to yourself, "That was the day when I chose God's way." To make this more real, when you come to the word "today," you might even want to fill in the day of the week and the date.

### **Where it would lead me do I choose to go;**

When you enlist in God's way you are agreeing to all that goes with it, which includes going wherever He sends you. You are placing no limits on this agreement. It is a blanket commitment, covering all possibilities. This not because you have some sense of blind allegiance or slavish duty, but because you trust that God knows better than you what will make you happy. So as you speak this line try to evoke a feeling of trust, knowing that your Father would not lead you to your doom. You might even add, "because I trust You."

You might also want to think of some of the places where His way might lead you. "Where" in this line specifically refers to places in this world you would go as part of fulfilling your special function; this lesson begins by saying, "I have a special place to fill; a role for me alone." Yet it can also refer to more abstract "places" like peace or salvation or Heaven. Try taking whatever places come to mind in terms of where His way might lead you and then add them onto the end of the above line: "to my in-laws' house, to move to Maine, to peace, to Heaven."

### **what it would have me do I choose to do.**

This line is, of course, very much like the previous one. Again, you may want to remind yourself that you can trust your Father's way to lead you to peace, not death. You also might want to listen for things He specifically wants you to do today. Perhaps you can sense that He wants you to call someone, do a favor for someone, or take care of something you have been putting off.

You have now said three times in different ways that you are choosing His way. This is no trivial statement. Remember the power your choosing has. What the Course says about your learning power also applies to your power of choice: "There is no greater power in the world. The world was made by it, and even now depends on nothing else" (T-31.I.3:2-3). If you say, "Your way is what I choose today" and *mean* it, your whole life could change.

### **Your way is certain, and the end secure.**

Once again the word "way" is used. In addition to being the focus of every line of the prayer so far, it also crops up in the lesson's title ("I follow in the way appointed me") and in the paragraph before the prayer ("when I willingly and gladly go the way my Father's plan appointed me to go"). These two references tell us something about this way. This is a way we can "follow in" and a way we can "go." Clearly, this way is a sort of roadway, pathway, or highway. It is a path that one travels on.

What does it mean, then, to say that this "way is certain"? For this, we can turn to clues in nearby lessons. Lesson 321 tells us that God's way is the certain way to finding our *freedom*. Lesson 331 tells us that it is the certain way to our *release*. So, "Your way is certain" means "Your way will work. It will take me where it promises. It will lead me to freedom, to release, to my home." Try to say this with real conviction. To gather this conviction, you may want to reflect on where *your* way has led you. Has it worked? A recurrent theme in the Course is that our roads, though they promise to lead us to freedom, end up leading us nowhere. Only God's road brings us to the destination we truly desire.

This leads right into the second part of the above line, for it too refers to the destination of this way or

path. We now affirm that the end, the goal, the destination of God's way is secure. This means that we will get there for sure. We will reach the destination, for God has guaranteed it.

So when you say this line, "Your way is certain, and the end secure," try to envision your own journey home. You have walked down many dead-end roads in the past, roads which started with high hopes, yet got increasingly bumpy and futile the further you traveled. Yet when you truly set your feet on God's way, you will be walking on a smooth road straight to your destination. It may seem thorny and twisted at first, but this is only because you will frequently leave His road in search of your old pathways. Yet the further you travel on God's way, the more committed to it you will be, and so the easier it will become, until the day comes when you reach its very end. And that day *will* come for you.

### **The memory of You awaits me there.**

Now the prayer directly speaks of the end of the road. We have been journeying since time immemorial, through countless experiences and untold difficulties. What has it all been for? What wondrous destination awaits us at the end of the journey? "The memory of You"—the memory of God. To appreciate what this memory is, we must first discuss the pre-separation state. Before the separation, we lived in a state of knowledge. We knew God face to face. This knowing was so immediate, so total, that there was no separation between our knowing of God and God Himself. The two were one and the same. God was directly present in our minds, and this Presence *was* our knowing of Him. He was our Love, and knowing Him was our whole existence and unending joy.

This is the knowledge we forgot in the separation, leaving us in a state of chronic lack and loneliness. This is what we have been blindly searching for through all our wandering. This is what we head straight toward as we follow in God's way. This is the sweet reward that awaits us at the end of the road. Our Love Himself awaits us with Open Arms. There, we will remember Him, the One Who was everything to us, the One we loved with our whole being, the One we have searched for through all the ages.

Choosing God's way means that you see this one event as what your journey is for. You see your entire passage through time as an arrow shot at this one event. You see every day, every hour, every situation, every relationship, every event, every lifetime as having a single purpose—to bring you to the event which infinitely dwarfs the entire journey and everything in it: the memory of your Love.

### **And all my sorrows end in Your embrace,**

What a beautiful line! Our Love has been waiting for us with Open Arms, and now that we reach the end of the road, now that we remember Him, He wraps us in His embrace. In the total love of this embrace, nothing else matters. All the pain of the journey vanishes. All the sorrows of the human condition, the sorrows we have carried since the world began, are gone. The sorrows were *of* the journey, and both they *and* the journey end together, here in His embrace. Why? Because at the root of each sorrow was the feeling of being separated from Him. Now that we are with Him, as the Course says, "where is sorrow now?" (M-15.1:12).

This poignant line reminds me of two other lines from the Course that express the exact same sentiment:

The graciousness of God will take them gently in, and cover all their sense of pain and loss with the immortal assurance of their Father's Love. (T-14.IX.4:3)

*I need but turn to Him, and every sorrow melts away, as I accept His boundless Love for me.*  
(W-pI.207.1:3)

I suggest that you really spend some time with the above line. To help make it more meaningful to you, you may think of a particular person's embrace that was so loving it made your sorrows melt away. Then imagine that embrace being multiplied an infinite number of times. And you also might want to detail some of your sorrows. List all of the sorrows you can think of, all those sorrows that will one day

end in His embrace.

**which You have promised to Your Son,**

Can you ascertain exactly what God has promised to His Son, according to this line? It is His embrace. God's promise to you is that, after all your journeying, you will end up in His embrace forever. How sure do you think a promise from God is? You might even imagine that you have an actual promissory note from Him, for is this not what *A Course in Miracles* is? In fact, you might try this: Take the Course in your hands and while looking at it, think of its origins, how it says it comes from God's Own Voice through Jesus to you. Then dwell on this line: "This is the promissory note You sent to me, Your Son, promising that I will end up in Your embrace forever."

**who thought mistakenly that he had wandered from the sure protection of Your loving Arms.**

Up until now the prayer has said that God's embrace waits for us at the end of the journey and that God has promised us this embrace. Now the conclusion of the prayer puts a whole new spin on things. Do you see what that spin is? It is that we never left His embrace. We are still there. That is why the end is so secure. That is why He can promise that we will end up in His Arms. We are there right now and always have been.

Imagine the following scenario: You are within the sure protection of God's loving Arms. In these Arms, you fall asleep and start to dream. And in this dream you "wake up" and leave His embrace. You wander off, and as you wander, a growing sense of lack and loneliness opens up within you. Yet this just provokes more wandering, for now you must find the special thing out there that will fill this gnawing hole in you. By the time you suspect that only God can fill this hole, it is too late; He is out of sight and you are not sure that you can ever get back. And this brings us more or less to where you are right now in the dream of your life, as you read this sentence of this essay. For this story is no metaphor. It is the literal story of your existence. But remember: You never woke up. You are still dreaming. And so you are still lying asleep in the sure protection of His loving Arms. You are still in the safety of His fatherly embrace, merely dreaming that you are on a journey that is soaked with the sorrow of being separate from Him.

Let this idea into your mind as deeply as you can while praying this line. You might want to use this version: "I, Your Son, thought that I had wandered from the sure protection of Your Loving Arms. But I am still there. I am still there. I am still there."