**Jesus:
The Manifestation of the Holy Spirit**

Excerpts from the Workshop held at the
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*Kenneth Wapnick, Ph.D.*

**Part I**

I originally thought that a good subtitle for this workshop on Jesus and the Holy Spirit was, "Who the hell are They anyway?" [Laughter] That actually implies what we will be talking about. A little more serious, and actually even more to the point is the title someone suggested to me: "Jesus and the Holy Spirit: What in the world are They?" But perhaps an even better subtitle for the workshop's major title, "Jesus: the Manifestation of the Holy Spirit," is "The illusion and the reality of Jesus." That is basically what we will be spending most of the workshop talking about. While it is probably true of all of the workshops that I do, I think it is even more the case here that I am conceptualizing the workshop as a whole. So much of what I will be talking about—at the beginning especially—may seem very out of "sync" with what you have probably heard me say other times, or with what you yourself have experienced about Jesus or the Holy Spirit. I am basically setting a context for a lot of what we will be talking about later on. So in this case, the whole is not found in each part as it is in the Sonship. But each part is an integral part of the whole. So please don't walk out after this first part of the workshop if I say something that seems blasphemous or heretical.

I would like to speak first about our old friend, Plato—he conceptualized something that is referred to in the Course at least one time specifically, and implicitly all the way through. A statement in the teacher's manual, which I quote frequently, says that "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality" (M-21.1:9-10). That statement, while not literally taken from Plato, is quite close to what he said of artists' representations of objects: "[they] stand at third remove from reality." (The complete context and reference for this description appears below.) I would like to begin with this, as it is a good entree into a discussion of reality and illusion in the Course, and even more specifically of the reality and the illusion of Jesus.

One of the major problems Plato wrestled with all his life—it is basically one of the major themes of all of his philosophical treatises—is the difference between appearance and reality. Much of what I will be talking about here at the beginning, in terms of Plato, you will recognize as an antecedent to what we find in the Course. Later in the workshop, I will discuss the role of Jesus, as well as Helen, in terms of the dictation of the Course. When I do that, I will discuss again how Plato was one of the major influences on the form in which the Course comes.

Let me start by beginning to make a [**chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29) — this will be different from what many of you are used to seeing me do. We will put *reality* at the top of the chart. Next to *reality* we will put *truth*. While Plato usually did not speak of God as such, he did speak about truth and perfection, and the world of Ideas. I am not going to give a long discussion of Plato; but he did talk about the world of Ideas, which from the point of view of the Course, would be the world of Heaven or spirit. Plato's concept of reality is not quite the same, but certainly its place in his philosophy parallels the place of Heaven in the Course's philosophy. It is the only truth.

Basically, Plato taught that for every concept or category of object and thought (i.e., material or abstract) we perceive here in the world, there is a corresponding *perfect* Idea or *perfect* thought—what he called "the world of Ideas." A famous example he used is that of a bed—something very commonplace. In the world of Ideas, there is the perfect bed, or the Idea of the bed. Then there is the category or concept of the bed, that is, a concrete symbol or conceptual form of the ideal bed. Plato used the example of a carpenter who builds an actual bed. And then there are the words describing a bed. Plato initially speaks of a painter representing a bed, but then he shifts to speaking of the poet (specifically Homer) as an artist representing things through words. The three levels are described in the following excerpt from Plato's *Republic* (598b-e; trans. Desmond Lee):

. . . what he [the carpenter] produces is not the form of bed which according to us is what a bed really is, but a particular bed. . . . his product *resembles* "what is" without *being* it. And anyone who says that the products of the carpenter or any other craftsman are ultimately real can hardly be telling the truth. . . . the bed the carpenter makes is a shadowy thing compared to reality. . . . there are three sorts of bed. The first exists in nature, and we would say . . . that it was made by god. No one else could have made it. . . . The second is made by the carpenter. . . . And the third by the painter. . . . the artist's representation stands at third remove from reality. . . . So the tragic poet, if his art is representation, is by nature at third remove from the throne of truth; and the same is true of all other representative artists.

So when the Course says that "words are but symbols of symbols. They are thus twice removed from reality," we can see the progression—there is a word that describes a bed, then a particular concept, that is, an actual physical bed, and finally the reality or true nature of bed, which is the perfect bed. The major theme of Plato's work was that this final level is the *only*truth—it is beyond the physical world, what we cannot see. Everything else is just an approximation of that.

I will put the *ideal bed* here ([**see chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)). And below that the *carpenter* who builds the actual bed. And then there is the *painter* who paints the bed or the *poet* who describes the bed in a poem. In terms of words being "symbols of symbols," the physical bed or concept is a symbol, the word *bed* is a symbol, and so the word is a symbol of the symbol, the concept of the actual bed. The symbol is an attempt to represent something that is beyond anything in this world. So reality is the only truth—that is spirit. Everything else having to do with the world of appearances is illusory.
. . . . . . .

Let us now look at what the Course has to say about God. We will first consider the ego's version of God. The ego develops a concept of God as a sinned—against God—as we know the ego's thought system begins with the idea that we have sinned against God and have attacked Him by separating from Him. So the ego's concept of God—obviously a distortion of the true God—is that He is a sinned-against God. The ego then uses a group of symbols to describe the sinned-against God: He is vengeful, hateful, insane, He believes in bargains, He is angry, etc. All of these are ways that we would describe God within the ego system. Obviously, on a conscious level most of us would not think of God in these ways, but, as Jesus explains to us in the Course, this is how we think of God *un*consciously. To repeat, we begin with the true God or pure God. The ego then makes up a version of God as sinned-against, and then develops a whole series of symbols or words to describe to us what that God is.

Then there is God according to the Holy Spirit. This God is a loving God, Who has not been sinned against. This is the God of the Atonement. The Course principle of the Atonement is that the separation never really happened. According to the Holy Spirit, many different words can be used to describe this God: He is caring, loving, and giving. Three other words used in the Course to describe God—words we will come to again later—are: God is *lonely* without us, God *weeps*without us, and God is *incomplete* without us. If words are symbols of symbols, then Jesus is using such words in the Course to represent another symbol—God as loving. And these are just attempts to reflect what can never be understood in this world—namely, what it really means to say that God is Love.

When the Course talks about God being caring, loving, giving, lonely, weeping, and incomplete, it is using the symbols of the world of illusion, the world of appearances. Similarly with Plato, neither the bed painted by an artist or the bed built by a carpenter is the *real* bed. So the Course is using words to symbolize a concept of God that is beyond the specific words. But the concept of God as loving is not the reality either. Once again, words are but symbols of symbols, and therefore they are twice removed from reality.

As we will consider in greater depth later on, we are all here because we all think of ourselves as people with specific identities that can be described by all kinds of words. We think of ourselves as male or female, as American or British or Canadian or Russian, etc., as Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, Muslim, agnostic, atheistic, etc. We also think of ourselves in terms of cultural or geographical identities, etc., all these are examples of words we use to represent concepts of ourselves. There are other examples of this as well: We may think of ourselves as American, as God's chosen people, who are good and holy, who believe in democracy and freedom, etc. But none of these relates to who we really are as God's children.

Finally, to complete this overview before I begin to discuss it in more detail, we will put God at the top again ([**see chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)), and beneath God we will put the Holy Spirit and Jesus. At this level, basically, we are talking about a concept. The concept that Jesus and the Holy Spirit represent is the principle of the Atonement—that the separation from God never truly happened. The Holy Spirit can be understood in the Course as being the memory of God's Love that came with us when we fell asleep. We took that memory of God's Love and our Identity as Christ with us into our dream when we fell asleep. Jesus is referred to in the Course as the manifestation of the Holy Spirit (T-12.VII.6:1; C-6.1:1), which obviously is a central theme of this workshop. We will come back to this later. So Jesus also represents that same concept—the principle of the Atonement.

At the third level, we will put the Holy Spirit and Jesus ([**see chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)) Who appear to us or Whom we experience in the world of form in terms of concrete or specific activities. Thus, the Holy Spirit "speaks to us"—He is defined in the Course as God's Voice. He is also defined in the Course as our Teacher, our Mediator, our Friend, and our Guide. Jesus in the Course obviously speaks of himself in the same way—he is our teacher, our older brother, our friend, our guide. He is the one who will lead us back. From the point of view of function in the Course, Jesus and the Holy Spirit can be used interchangeably.

So we are talking about two different levels of understanding the Holy Spirit and Jesus. There is the *conceptual level*where They are the symbolic expression of the Atonement principle—namely that the separation from God's Love never happened. We know it never happened because we experience their Love and their Presence in our minds. And there is the *level of form*—the specific ways in which we experience their Presence and their Love. These include the specific roles as Teacher, Guide, Mediator, Friend, etc., where we experience Them as doing specific things for us in the world—answering our specific questions, finding us parking spaces, healing illnesses, etc. All of this involves the level of form, which we will return to later.

But if we understand the idea that "words are but symbols of symbols," and that they are thus "twice removed from reality," then we would know that to have an experience of the Holy Spirit or Jesus speaking directly to us and answering our questions, or doing things for us in the world is really to be "twice removed" from the reality. *Once*removed from the reality would be simply having an experience of Jesus or the Holy Spirit as the Presence of God's Love—that is all, just as a Presence of Love. That, too, is only a reflection of the true reality—it is once removed. In Heaven there is no Jesus or Holy Spirit with a specific identity.

Let us look at a passage in the clarification of terms on the Holy Spirit that is relevant here: "His is the Voice for God, and has therefore taken form. This form is not His reality, which God alone knows along with Christ" (C-6.1:4-5). The Voice for God would be a form on the bottom level in our [**chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)—so we experience the Holy Spirit as a Voice Who speaks to us, or as a specific Teacher Who teaches us. But this form is not His reality—His reality only God knows, because His reality is simply an extension or an expression of God's Love in Heaven. Near the end of this section, the idea continues: "For in its place"—in other words, in place of the ego's dreams—"the hymn to God is heard a little while. And then the Voice is gone, no longer to take form but to return to the eternal formlessness of God" (C-6.5:7-8).

As long as we are within the dream—basically these bottom two boxes ([**see chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29))—we will experience the Holy Spirit or Jesus as a specific person or presence, and at the very bottom as someone who meets our needs and answers us when we need him. When the dream is over, the form disappears. And then the Holy Spirit returns to His true Identity as part of the eternal formlessness of God ([**in the top box**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)).

This is an extremely important idea to keep in mind—which is the reason I am beginning with it—because as we work with the Course, we can very easily fall into the trap of confusing illusion with reality. Or as Plato said, of confusing appearance with the truth. This point is made very clearly in an important passage in the *Song of Prayer* pamphlet, which we will read in a little while. We are not seeking after the Jesus who does things for us here. We are not even looking for the Jesus who is that abstract presence of love. What we really want is to return home. That is the end, that is the goal. That is not the Course's final goal, however. Its final goal is to have us experience this Presence of Love that we call the Holy Spirit or Jesus, but to recognize that it does not exclude us, that *we* are that Presence of Love also.

While Jesus is spoken of in the Course (at the beginning of the section we just read from) as the "manifestation of the Holy Spirit," we are asked (also part of that section) to become his manifestation in the world as well. Just as Jesus is the manifestation of the Holy Spirit because he has nothing else in his mind except the principle of the Atonement—no thoughts of separation, of guilt, sin, fear, etc.—our goal is to become that same manifestation. That is what the Course refers to as being in the real world. At that point, we no longer experience a difference between ourselves and Jesus or ourselves and the Holy Spirit. In fact, we no longer need Jesus at that point. He tells us in the Course that the aim of any good teacher is to make himself dispensable (T-4.I.5:1-2). Once we have learned everything that Jesus is and that he knows, then we no longer need him as a teacher. In fact we will no longer experience ourselves as an entity separate from everyone else. That is what being in the real world means. We may still appear to be in this physical world, but we know it is a dream. And we know that our true identity is shared with everyone, including Jesus. At that point we become like him.

A wonderful poem that Helen took down called "A Jesus Prayer" is basically a prayer from us to him, praying that we will become like him. When we eventually become like him, which all of us will do—in other words we will be free from our egos—then we, too, will become the manifestation of the Holy Spirit. And there will no longer be the separate entities we have in the second box ([**see chart**](https://facim.org/online-learning-aids/excerpt-series/manifestation-holy-spirit/manifestation-holy-spirit-part-i/javascript%3Avoid%280%29)). We will all be part of the Atonement principle. We will all be the living manifestation that the separation from God's Love never happened. That's the goal. When that happens, the Course says God then takes the last step, and everything disappears except God. And we all disappear into the eternal formlessness of God. Or, as it says near the end of the workbook in a very beautiful passage, we all "disappear into the Heart of God" (W-pII.14.5:5). At that point there is no more separation.

Our goal is simply to be in the real world so that we become that concept of the Atonement. As we will see—and this is a major theme of the workshop—we all have to reach that point. And in order to reach it, we need a symbol of God's Love that we can relate to, that we can experience. That is what I am calling the illusory nature of Jesus, or the illusion of Jesus. It is extremely important—and this is a point that I will reiterate throughout the workshop—*not to skip over steps*. As long as we believe we are a separated body—as we all do, otherwise none of us would be here—then we need the illusion of someone who is separate, but who represents something other than what we believe we are. We all believe that we are good, healthy egos. So we need the illusion of someone who represents God's Love for us. Jesus, in terms of the Course, is that person for us.

There is a beautiful section in the teacher's manual, which we will look at later in the workshop, that expresses this. As long as we believe we are here, as long as we have the illusion of ourselves as having a separate identity, physical and psychological—remember we are twice removed from reality—then we need the illusion of someone else who appears to have a separate physical and psychological identity, whom we call Jesus, to take our hand and lead us beyond this thought system. The goal, however, is ultimately to realize that the hand we hold is our Own—not our own as an ego, but our own with a capital "O." The hand that we hold is really the hand of Christ. But until we can learn that is our own hand, our experience is that Jesus extends his hand. As he explains early in the text, by taking his hand we are transcending the ego (T-8.V.6:8). By choosing Jesus as our teacher, we are saying that we no longer want the ego as our teacher.

When we take Jesus' hand and no other hand, when we accept his love and no other love, when we accept his reality as the only reality, then we have learned all the lessons. We become the same love that he is an expression of. That is the end. Until that time, however, we desperately need someone who can represent that other choice for us. Several references in the Course—which we will look at later—explain how at the moment that the separation seemed to occur and we all fell asleep, the principle of the Atonement arose. That is what the Course refers to in some passages as the creation of the Holy Spirit. In truth it was not that God gave an answer to the separation, because if God truly gave an answer to the separation it would mean that there actually was a separation. When the Course speaks like this—as I will elaborate on shortly—it is speaking in the realm of symbolism or mythology.

In reality, when we seemed to fall asleep, we took with us into the dream the memory of God's Love—that is the connecting link. That is the principle of the Atonement. The Course explains that the plan still had to be set into motion, which means that, within the dream, some aspect of the separated Sonship would have to live out or manifest that principle of the Atonement. And that person, of course, is Jesus. That is why he speaks in the Course of his being in charge of the Atonement (T-1.III.1:1). All of these are symbols and metaphors. Jesus is not a general who has been put in charge of the forces—it is nothing like that. The Course is using a metaphor to describe Jesus as our older brother—he is a symbol for us. Other cultures and religions have other symbols, but for us he is the symbol of someone who has demonstrated that the Atonement principle is true—that it is possible to be in the dream and remember the Love of God without reservation or qualification. So the principle of the Atonement came into existence at the moment that the separation seemed to occur. But within the world of illusion, it still had to be set into motion, and it was Jesus who did that for us. Again, all this is within the realm of symbol.

**Part II**

Now let me backtrack just a little. There is a larger theme here that we are just beginning to explore in terms of Jesus and the Holy Spirit—the theme of form and content. This is another way of talking about appearance and reality. The true content is God's Love, and the form is the different ways of expressing it. Within the ego thought system, the content is guilt, hatred, and separation, and the form is the different aspects of a separated world and our experiences here of being separate. Special relationships is the Course's basic term to encompass all the different forms in which we express our hatred for each other and for God.

When I talk about the illusion and the reality of Jesus, the content—the Love of God—would be the reality, and the different forms in which we experience that love would be the illusion. The Course also makes it clear that forgiveness, which is its central teaching, is an illusion—and that the Course itself, as a set of three books, is an illusion. But unlike all the illusions of the world, these illusions do not foster illusions, nor do they breed further illusions—they lead us beyond all illusions. Jesus falls into this category. He is an illusion because he appears to be a separate person. But by taking his hand and walking with him, we share his thought system, and we share his mind. His thought system is not the reality. It is still a reflection, it is still a concept—because forgiveness is a concept. But it is a concept that leads us beyond this world entirely.

Again, it is extremely important when we work with the Course to understand that crucial difference so that we do not get caught and stuck still further in the illusion. To preview a little of what we will talk about later: Choosing the miracle in this context is to accept and experience Jesus' love. Magic—the Course frequently contrasts magic and the miracle—is getting involved in what Jesus does for us or says to us. Now that does not mean this is not helpful, but if we just stay at that level, we get caught. We really want to join with Jesus, to accept his love and accept his thought system—that is the miracle. And that is the difference between the illusion and the reality. We do not really want the Jesus who does things for us in the world. We want the Jesus who stands within our minds. We want a concept of Jesus that represents the concept of the Atonement, which says that we have never separated from the Love of God and have never attacked it.

In a passage from the Song of Prayer that I will read from a little later, Jesus talks about the song of prayer as being the Love the Father and the Son share in Heaven. And he says to us that it is the song we want. We do not want the forms in which the song appears to us. We do not want the echoes, the overtones, the harmonics. In other words, we do not want what is represented on the lower level of the **chart**. We really want the song (S-1.I.2-3)—the song that we sing to our Self, that our Self sings back to us. In fact, there are no two people singing to each other—we are that song of love, we arethat song that God and Christ share. Until we know that, we experience a Jesus or a Holy Spirit within our minds, Who sings that song to us, just as we sing the song to Him.

There is a nice passage in Plato at the end of his discussion of the three beds—the ideal bed, the carpenter's bed, and the painter's bed. Plato observes there that the artist deals with appearances rather than reality. Now the original would be the ideal, a symbol for Plato of the world of the spirit, the world of truth, the world that is beyond everything in this world. The copy, of course, would be something that is in the world of appearances. Plato asks rhetorically: Suppose a man could produce both the original and the copy? Do you think he would want to devote himself seriously to the manufacture of copies and make it the highest object in life? Of course not! If he really knew about the things he represented, he would devote himself to them and not to their representations.

This is the exact same sentiment that Jesus is expressing in the Song of Prayer when he says it is the song that we want. It is the original that we want, not the copy. Plato is urging his listeners and readers not to pursue the things of this world. What we want is the idea. We want the love behind the appearances. In the Course, Jesus is saying the same thing to us: We do not want the various gifts that we think we receive here in the world. We want his love. Learning to identify with his love is the preparation for God's last step, when we realize that we are that love and that in fact we have never left our Source. At that point, the Course explains, the whole world disappears back into the nothingness from which it came (C-4.4:5).

Our goal, however, is not to disappear into the nothingness of God, or into the Heart of God. Our goal is to become the same love of the Atonement that Jesus is. The real world is still within the dream, still within the world of illusion. At that point the mind has no more thoughts of attack and separation within it. Until we reach the real world, Jesus remains within our minds, shining out the love and the light and the truth, and inviting us to come back to him.

Now we will turn to a passage in Chapter 25 in the text which is probably the clearest statement of what I am talking about. And let me first summarize it. I will put a **purple line** here, as I usually do—everything above the purple line is God. That is the only reality—that is where Christ is also. As the Course teaches, God does not know about this world, because if He knew about it, it would be real. This is extremely important—if God knew about the world, then there would be a world. The whole teaching of the Course is that there is no world. In fact there is a passage in the workbook that literally says, "There is no world! This is the central concept the course attempts to teach" (W-pI.132.6:2-3). So if God knew about the separation and gave an answer to it, then there would indeed have been a separation. Otherwise God would not have given an answer to it. But that makes no sense unless we understand that Jesus is talking to us in symbols. That is why I have the **three levels of boxes**. At the top is the reality—with the perfect God, Whose perfection is His extension or creation, Christ. And nothing has ever changed that.

God is totally uninvolved with anything that is outside His Mind, because if it is outside His Mind, it does not exist. So, too, the concept of the Holy Spirit as a separate Voice that speaks in our minds is also part of the illusion, because there is no separation in reality, in Heaven. At the bottom level, we find symbols that give form to the separation—we think of the Holy Spirit as a person, we think of Jesus as a person, we think of each other as persons. So **in the box at the second level**, we have the word concept, and in the third box we have the word form.

There is no way that any of us here within the dream—identifying ourselves as separated bodies, separated personalities—can have any idea or any experience of what reality is. The reality is that we are perfectly at one with God. A wonderful line in the workbook states that "nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin as something something separate from Him" (W-pI.132.12:4). There is no separated or differentiated consciousness that can step back and observe itself in relationship to the other. God cannot observe, perceive or experience Christ. Christ cannot observe, perceive, or experience God. There is no separated mind, no separated consciousness, no separated self that can see itself or experience itself in relation to the other. That kind of experience of another only occurs within the dream (below the purple line on the **chart**).

There is no way here—as we will see in the passage we are about to read—that we can understand how we are totally one with our Source and Creator. It is not uncommon for students to ask what else God created besides Christ, because we are not spirit as we identify ourselves and therefore have no way of understanding what a world of spirit is really like; and so Christ is as much of an unreality as God is. Thus it would make no sense for A Course in Miracles to reflect only on our reality as one with our Source and Creator. In a passage in the workbook Jesus says, "We say God is, and then we cease to speak" (W-pI.169.5:4). That is not very helpful. What would have happened if Helen had taken down these wonderful words, and all that this book contained was, "God is"? People would say, "God is what?" or "Christ is what?" It would make no sense to us. And it would certainly not be helpful. And the Course's purpose, as it observes many times, is to be practical.

So that is the context for this passage. It is the clearest statement in the entire Course of the difference between what it says on the level of form or words and the reality which the words reflect. It is extremely helpful as we read and study the Course to understand the difference between form and content, between symbol or appearance and reality. Otherwise we will get trapped in the very thought system from which we want to escape. Many passages in the Course have to be read as a poem would be read—without analyzing, but rather letting the words flow through and allowing that to turn into an experience. This passage from the first section in **Chapter 25** makes that very clear **(T-25.I.5)**:

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 1) Since you believe that you are separate, Heaven presents itself to you as separate, too.**

Since we believe we are separate here in the world of form—each with a separate identity—then Jesus and the Holy Spirit are each presented to us as a separate identity. In fact, the Course refers to the Holy Spirit, not as an "it," but as a Him, as a Person. He is a Teacher, a Guide, a Comforter, a Friend, a Mediator—always in terms that have to do with a body. So He is presented to us in the Course as separate from us—that is what this first sentence means.

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 2) Not that it is in truth, but that the link that has been given you to join the truth may reach to you through what you understand.**

Heaven is not truly separate in truth. In truth, in reality (above the purple line on the **chart**), Heaven is totally unified. God and Christ are totally one, and the Love of God for which the Holy Spirit is the Voice, is the essence of God and Christ. And we are all totally one. There is no differentiation.

The link that has been given to us is the Holy Spirit, and He has been given to us in a way that we can understand—He comes to us as Someone Who is separate, because we believe we are separate. One of the major premises of the Course—key to understanding both the ego's and the Holy Spirit's thought systems—is that what we have made real inside us is exactly what we will experience outside us. Probably the clearest analogy to this is if we think of ourselves in a theater looking at a movie on the screen in front of us. What we see on the screen is identical to what is on the film running through the projector that is in back of us. It is impossible that there be something on that film that we do not see on the screen. It is impossible that we see something on the screen that is not in the film. If the film is running through and there is a black dot on the film, we will see it on the screen.

Since we believe that we are separate, we must experience the Love of God as separate, because what is within us is exactly what we will experience outside us. If we experience ourselves as a body, if we think of ourselves as a separate organism that is different and separate from other organisms, and if we believe this is what we believe we are—which is inherent in believing that we are a body—then it is impossible for us to conceive of God as anything other than a body. In the text Jesus says, "You cannot even think of God without a body" (T-18.VIII.1:7). This must be because we cannot think of ourselves without a body. Jesus also includes in the Course the biblical statement that God created man in his own image and likeness (T-3.V.7:1), meaning God is pure spirit and so we are pure spirit. The Bible, however, meant that in some kind of strange way, we are flesh—a body—and that this somehow is a mirror of God. So in the Course, Jesus reinterprets that quote to mean that God is pure spirit and therefore we are pure spirit.

Interestingly, we have done the very same thing—we have made God in our own image. In a statement that has become famous, Voltaire proclaimed that God created man in his own image, and then man returned the compliment. The God that we have made up is the projection of what we believe we are. We believe that we are separate, sinful, guilty, and angry, and that we are killers. Therefore the God we have made up must be a God Who is separate, wrathful, angry, and Who is a killer. It is impossible that what we think of ourselves will not determine what we think of God. Since we believe we are separate—that is a given because we are all here in this world or so we think, for our experience is that we are here in this world—we must think of God as separate too. And because we do, we will experience the Love of God as separate—but not because this Love is separate in truth. In truth (above the purple line on the **chart**), God's Love is perfectly unified. Remember, "nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin." Love is not divided or broken. But because we believe we are in a world of form, we can only experience God's Love in a world of form. Since we believe we are a body, we can only experience God's Love through a body. So we think of the Holy Spirit as a person—people used to think of Him as a bird, but a bird has a body, too. Or we think of Jesus as a body, a person.

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 3) Father and Son and Holy Spirit are as One, as all your brothers join as one in truth.**

This is the same idea—there is perfect unity in Heaven. And our brothers are all part of the same Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity—we are all part of the Sonship.

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 4) Christ and His Father never have been separate, and Christ abides within your understanding, in the part of you that shares His Father's Will.**

The beginning of the sentence is a statement of the Atonement principle. And the part of us that shares His Father's Will is the part of our minds that has never left God. That is the part of our minds to which the Holy Spirit is the connecting link, as we see in the next sentence.

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 5) The Holy Spirit links the other part—the tiny mad desire to be separate, different and special—to the Christ, to make the oneness clear to what is really one.**

Our minds are really one—totally joined with God. But we believe we are separate and so we need an experience within the dream of that Love and oneness of Christ and God that then leads us back. That is why in the Course the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the Link or the Bridge. The Course repeatedly describes Him as the Communication Link between God and His separated Sons (T-6.I.19:1; T-8.VII.2:2; C-6.3:1). That link is still an illusion, because we never separated. But as long as we believe we have separated, we need an illusion or a symbol that represents for us the truth of the perfect unity and unbroken Love of God and Christ.

**(Paragraph 5 - Sentence 6) In this world, this is not understood, but can be taught.**

We are taught, not by being taught about God—we cannot be taught about God. At the beginning of the Course, in the Introduction to the text, Jesus says this is not a course about love because love cannot be taught. It is rather a course that aims at removing the interferences to the awareness of love's presence (T-in.1:6-7). So we are not taught about the nature of Heaven or reality or creation or Christ or God. We are taught how to join with the concept or symbol of God's Love that we know as Jesus. That we can be taught. And, as we know from our study of the Course, we learn to join with Jesus by joining with each other—we will look at this more later. And what helps us to join with each other is to join with him.

We are speaking here totally within a world of symbols—but they are symbols that represent and reflect the truth of Heaven. They are not the truth of Heaven, but they reflect that truth. And it is not the reflection that we want—we want the truth. It is not the overtones or the harmonics we want—we want the song. In Plato's terms, we do not want the painting of the bed, we do not want the bed itself, we want the idea of the perfect bed. We want the truth. Learning how to join with each other through forgiveness and how to let go of our grievances is the exact same dynamic as learning how to join with Jesus. I cannot join with you in forgiveness without joining with him. I cannot join with him without joining with you. If I separate myself from you, I separate myself from Jesus, and vice-versa.

That is why this is a course in forgiveness and undoing guilt through the miracle. Learning how to join with Jesus and how to join with each other is how we learn to remember God. So here in this paragraph—and we will see it again as we continue—is a very clear statement about the difference between appearance and reality, between illusion and the truth. This is not a course about truth. If it were about truth, it would not be a course. Truth is never taught—truth can not be learned. The illusion is what we taught ourselves, and therefore the illusion is what we need to unlearn. When the illusion is unlearned, the truth that was always there is left.

There is another nice parallel between the Course and Plato. Plato's theory of education stated that you do not give a student knowledge—you awaken the knowledge in him. The truth is already present in us—we only need to remember it. A major theme of the Course in terms of its process is that we see the face of Christ in each other—which means that we forgive—and then the memory of God dawns on our mind (e.g., C-3.4:1; C-5.2:1). The memory of God is already in our minds, but we have forgotten it.

**Part III**

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 1) The Holy Spirit serves Christ's purpose in your mind, so that the aim of specialness can be corrected where the error lies.**

The error lies within the dream, in the world of symbols. The Course teaches us that the ego has spoken first and is wrong (T-5.VI.3:4;4:2), and that the Holy Spirit is the Answer—we will come back to this point later. In our **chart**, the column with the ego at the top has a concept of a God Who has been sinned against. This leads to a belief in a God Who is vengeful, hateful, and insane, Who makes bargains with us, Who is angry and murderous, etc. This is a God Who has perceived that we have stolen from Him, killed Him, raped Him, abandoned Him, and made up a world as a substitute for His. And He does not like it one bit! This is the ego's God—and the ego's story.

All of the traits that we attribute to God, all the words and concepts that we use to think of God are all equally illusory. The Bible is a virtual encyclopedia of the ego's version of God, both the negative and the seemingly positive sides of God. This God is very much a person. He thinks like a human being, plans and plots like a human being, murders like a human being, and is jealous and loves like a human being. He does not love like God. He loves like a human being. It is special love: "I will love you when you do what I ask you to do, and Heaven help you if you do not." And of course Heaven is not going to help us if we do not. There is no way out.

The ego's concept of God and its group of symbols for God are the symbols that we understand, because these are the symbols that we have made into reality. We know we have made them into reality, whether we are conscious of it or not, by virtue of our being in this world. As the Course explains, this world was literally made to be a defense against God's wrath, and an attack on His sovereignty, His power, and His role as Creator. The body was then made as the individual fortress to keep God out. That we believe that we are housed and live within this fortress means that we believe in the need to have the body and the world as a defense. As a defense against what? As a defense against this sinned-against God Who has now become as insane as we are.

We all believe in this. This is our dream, our set of symbols that begins with the premise that God is angry because we have sinned against Him, and so He is going to retaliate. We made this set of symbols and so the correction will use the same symbols but turned upside down. So God is still seen as a body and we are still seen as separate from Him. But instead of God being sinned-against, God is Someone Who is totally loving, Who does not know about sin. Thus Jesus tells us in his version of the story, his myth as opposed to the ego's myth, that we have left our Father's house, because that is what the dream is. He uses the symbols of the dream, because otherwise we would not know what he is talking about. If Jesus simply said, "God is," we would say, "God is what? There must be more to this."

So Jesus says more than that to us. He says, "Yes, you have left your Father's house. However, God is not angry. God misses you. God is lonely. God is weeping, because there is something missing in His house. God is incomplete without you." Now obviously, these three phrases—God is lonely, God weeps, He is incomplete—are heresy as far as the Course's metaphysics is concerned. Clearly, God does not have a body—He does not have tear ducts from which tears fall. These are symbols that express a concept that God is not angry and that God loves us. The concept of a God Who is not angry is not reality. The reality is that God has never ceased being Who He is. And the reality is that God does not even know about this. God's perfect Love that unites Him perfectly with Christ has never been broken. That is the reality, but it makes no sense to us. Since the ego speaks first—and the ego's symbol for God is that He is a sinned-against and angry God—then Jesus speaks to us using symbols on that level as well.

Jesus' version of the story still comes to us within the world of symbols, within the world of appearances, dreams, and illusions, not the world of reality. But this dream is what the Course refers to as a happy dream. So Jesus tells us that God is not angry. And yes, he tells us, God did send us the Holy Spirit. But He did not send the Holy Spirit after us to punish us and to drag us back to His house so He can beat us up and destroy us—that is only what we believe. And that is why we ran away from home and have stayed away. In fact, not only have we stayed away from home, but we have made our own home—this is still all within the world of symbols. We believe that we ran away from home, we felt terribly guilty, and then we became afraid of the extension of God into the dream—which in reality is just the memory of God's Love. But the ego has turned it upside down.

So, again, Jesus talks to us at our level and says, "No, God is not angry. Yes, God did send the Holy Spirit after you, but not to beat you up. He sent the Holy Spirit to awaken you from the dream and to teach you to be glad that it is a dream." Near the beginning of the text Jesus refers to the Holy Spirit as "the Call to awaken and be glad" (T-5.II.10:5). Jesus talks about the Holy Spirit as Someone Whom God has created in response to the separation and has sent into the dream, because the ego spoke first. The ego said, "God is angry at you for what you have done. He created the Holy Spirit and sent Him into your mind to bring you back home so God can destroy you." Since that is the concept of God that we have believed in, Jesus gives us the correction for it in similar terms.

The correction is as much an illusion as the ego's thought system is. The difference is that the illusion of the ego leads to further guilt and fear, and deepens our identification with the dream. The illusion that Jesus gives us will awaken us from our guilt and fear, so that the dream will end. But we need a steppingstone. The Course explains that we do not go from the nightmares of the ego to the reality of God, because that would be too terrifying for us. Instead, we go from the nightmares of the ego to the happy dreams of the Holy Spirit. And from the happy dreams, we then awaken. (T-27.VII.13)

So the Course is talking on the level of symbol. It is extremely important as we read through the Course not to confuse reality and illusion, not to confuse symbol for the reality beyond the symbol. The reality beyond the symbol can neither be expressed in words nor taught. So we need a set of symbols. But we do not want to make the symbols reality. That is what the churches have done for two thousand years. We do not want to make the symbols the reality and worship the symbol—then we get caught in the symbol. Later we will look at the "Song of Prayer" passage I referred to earlier that makes all of this very clear.

Returning to the text:

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentences 2-3) Because His** [the Holy Spirit's] **purpose still is one with both the Father and the Son, He knows the Will of God and what you really will. But this is understood by mind perceived as one, aware that it is one, and so experienced.**

That is the real world. The unity of God, or the Oneness of God and Christ, is not perceived in Heaven. If we talk about perception, we are talking about someone who perceives and an object that is perceived. The Course repeatedly contrasts knowledge and perception. Knowledge is used almost exclusively to denote the state of Heaven. It is not knowledge of something. It is knowledge that is the awareness of the unity of God and Christ—there is no "I" that is aware of another.

The formulation of the I-Thou relationship by Martin Buber, the great Jewish theologian and philosopher, would still be part of the illusion. It would be a concept of a God: There is a God out there and there is a person here who relates to Him. In reality (**above the purple line**), in Heaven, the "I" and the "Thou" are one and the same—there is no difference. The only way we can understand that the Will of God is the same as what we really will, is to be in the real world. Someone like Jesus is perfectly in touch with the love and the oneness of Heaven. At the same time he is aware that his brothers are still asleep. That is the state known as the real world—I am still within the dream. I am still a thought within the separated mind of the Sonship, but I am totally aware that it is a dream. And I am totally aware that I am a part of Christ, along with everyone else, and that Christ is part of God.

But that cannot be understood from this level. Here we can understand that we all share a common purpose—that we can be taught, that we can learn, and that we can understand. Again, the goal of the Course is that we recognize that we all share a common purpose. Our common purpose is that, as we are all part of this mistaken dream, we all yearn to go back home. The end of the journey and the goal of the Course is for us to be in the real world, where we recognize that we all are part of the same mind.

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 4) It is the Holy Spirit's function to teach you how this oneness is experienced, what you must do that it can be experienced, and where you should go to do it.**

These basically constitute our learning lessons. And the classroom where we learn them is each of the relationships in which we find ourselves—all of our special relationships. The Holy Spirit teaches us how to look at them differently. That is the Course—that is the Course's method. I am an illusion, joining with you as an illusion. I am an illusion letting go of my grievances against you who are an illusion of a person out there, separate from me. But because I believe this is real, this is where I must start.

**(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 1) All this takes note of time and place as if they were discrete, for while you think that part of you is separate, the concept of a Oneness joined as One is meaningless.**

As long as we believe we are bodies—which means we believe we are separate—the idea of the Oneness of Christ that all of us share makes absolutely no sense to us. How could I experience our all being one if I am a body that has needs and I see your body out there and you have needs? And we have to make a bargain with each other so that our needs can somehow be met without killing each other. So there is no way of understanding oneness. That is why in the Course Jesus speaks about time and space as if they were discrete. There is a space where I stand and there is a space where you stand. There is a space where I stood yesterday, a space where I will stand tomorrow. And there is a space where I stand now. There is a yesterday, a tomorrow, and a today.

Throughout the Course, Jesus talks about time and space as if they were real. He speaks of a place within the mind where the Holy Spirit is—or where he is, as if there were a place. Heaven is often described as if it were a place, even though it obviously is not. And the Course talks about our joining with each other, each of us perceiving others as separate from ourselves. This passage is Jesus' way of explaining why he talks like this—not that it is real. Nothing here is real. Nothing here in the world of form is real. Nothing is real within the separated mind of the Sonship.

In a passage near the beginning of the text, Jesus basically apologizes for speaking about the ego as if it were separate (the only place in the Course where he does that, incidentally). He explains, "I have spoken of the ego as if it were a separate thing, acting on its own. This was necessary to persuade you that you cannot dismiss it lightly" (T-4.VI.1:3-4). Jesus also speaks of the Holy Spirit as Someone Who is separate. In reality each (the ego and the Holy Spirit) represents a voice or a thought within our minds. They are not separate from us, any more than we are separate from each other, or separate from God. But because we have made up a world of separation, then we have the illusion of separation.

So we have the illusion of choosing between the ego and the Holy Spirit, because that is extremely meaningful to us. We have made up a world of separation and a world of choices—a world of good choices and bad choices. So Jesus speaks to us in this way, not because it is true—truth is only the perfect Oneness of God and Christ—but because he must speak to us in the language that we understand. And that is the language of the world of illusion and symbols—where we believe we are.

**(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 2) It is apparent that a mind so split could never be the Teacher of a Oneness which unites all things within Itself.**

And each of us is a part of that mind that is so split, because we believe that we are split between God and the ego, between the ego and the Holy Spirit, and we believe that we are split off from everything else. Obviously, as long as the mind is split, we can never understand and we can never teach ourselves that we are all one. The split mind—and the body that arose from the split mind—was specifically made to hide the Oneness of God and Christ from us. The ego knows—we are talking again within a world of symbols—that if we listen to the Voice of Oneness, the Holy Spirit, we will awaken from the dream and there will be no more ego. So the ego made up a split mind—split off from the Love of the Holy Spirit—which became a symbol of being split off from the Love of God. The ego then made a split body—a body filled with thoughts of being separate—and a world in which everyone and everything appear to be separate from each other. And the body and the world are a smokescreen that camouflages the presence of love, light, and unity in the mind. So it is impossible that the split mind could ever be the teacher. We need a symbol for the oneness that can speak to us within our minds, yet is not limited by the split mind. And that symbol is the Holy Spirit.

**(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 3) And so What is within this mind, and does unite all things together, must be its [the mind's] Teacher.**

"What" is capitalized, so we know it refers to the Oneness of Christ or God, which the Holy Spirit represents. Since we have the illusion of being split off and of having listened to the ego's voice—which basically means we have the illusion that the ego is our teacher—we need the correction or the undoing of that illusion. And again, that is the role of the Holy Spirit. Here is probably the most important sentence in this passage:

**(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 4) Yet must It [Oneness, or the Holy Spirit] use the language that this mind can understand, in the condition in which it thinks it is.**

The Holy Spirit must speak the language of separation, using concepts and symbols, because that is what we understand since we believe we are separate from God. We have taught ourselves, by choosing the ego as our guide, that God is angry and vicious and vengeful and therefore has to be defended against. So we need an opposite set of symbols to undo that, represented by the symbols of the Holy Spirit's Atonement story—God is not angry, God is forgiving, and He loves us. Not that God loves us or Jesus loves us in the way we experience it. But this is the only way we can accept a love that is beyond our split minds. So the Holy Spirit must speak to us—and A Course in Miracles, as an expression of the Holy Spirit's Word, must speak to us—on a level that we can accept and understand.

**(Paragraph 7 - Sentence 5) And It [Oneness] must use all learning to transfer illusions to the truth, taking all false ideas of what you are, and leading you beyond them to the truth that is beyond them.**

That is the Holy Spirit's purpose, that is the purpose of Jesus and his Course—to lead us beyond all the false ideas. So we first take the false idea—that we are separate, and that attack and specialness are justified—and we correct it. We have one illusion—the illusion of forgiveness—that corrects and undoes the illusion of separation and attack. When all of the illusions of separation and attack have been undone by the illusion of forgiveness, both disappear. What remains is the truth. The Course is unique as a spiritual system because it is so clear about the absolute purity of God and His Love—God has nothing to do with anything unreal or illusory. At the same time, the Course gives us a very practical thought system and a very practical spiritual path that meet us where we believe we are—in the world of form.

The idea is to lead us beyond the world of form to a thought that, although it is still a thought of separation, has no concepts of attack or murder or specialness associated with it. So we still have an experience of a Jesus or a Holy Spirit in our minds to Whom we go. When we become that perfect thought of the Atonement, we become like Jesus. Jesus disappears, we disappear, and all that is left is the Holy Spirit's Love, which at that point disappears too.
. . . . . . .

Within the ego framework in which the Course comes to us, there are a couple of points worth commenting on further. First, although the ego is really a part of our one split mind, there is value in speaking of it as if it were separate from us. It is helpful to think that there are two voices within the mind. At times I have spoken about the split mind as having three parts—the ego, the Holy Spirit, and the part of our minds that chooses between them. In reality it is all one, because there is no time—no linear past, present, or future—and nothing really separate. But because we believe we are separate, and we believe there is a past, present, and future, it is helpful to think of the mind as a classroom in which we choose which teacher we are going to listen to.
Since we have all grown up, whether we have been conscious of it or not, believing only in the ego and believing that is who we are—a separated, sinful, guilty, angry, vicious, depressed, lonely person, it is helpful to have the illusion of another thought or another person within us that represents something else. So long as we believe we are within the world of illusion, dreams and symbols, we have to work with that—but not because they are real. In the end we will recognize that it is all one.

The second point is to understand that the Course's use of the word God, rather than only impersonal words like truth, reality, oneness, knowledge, etc., is deliberate. The whole point of the Course is to raise to our consciousness all the negative associations we have of God—God as a punitive male, as a punitive father, and the like, so that we can forgive them. That is why the Course comes in Judaeo—Christian language, where God is very much seen as a masculine father. And the identity of Jesus is central to the Course, because of all the unforgiveness people—both Jews and Christians—have with him. So the Course brings up all the prejudices and biases, all the all the hurts and all the fears, so that we can look at them.

I might add that the concept of God we are talking about is not what the real God is—we are talking about what the ego has made of the real God. And so the Course uses names that everyone in the Western world—whether Jew or Christian—has grown up with. Basically it is the false God that we have to forgive. In the Course, Jesus, referring to himself at one point, speaks of the bitter idols that were made of him (C-5.5:7). When we think about Jesus, all the bitter idols come up—the Jesus who believed in persecution, sacrifice and death, exclusion and specialness, etc. A wonderful line, closing a section on specialness, says, "Forgive your Father it was not His will that you be crucified" (T-24.III.8:13). Basically, we could say the same thing about Jesus—forgive Jesus it was not his will that we be crucified.

**Part IV**

I would now like to bridge what I have been saying with what I will be discussing next. Another major theme of this workshop, implied in what I have been talking about, is the idea that the Course is written on many different levels. In fact this is something I will be explicitly addressing later. As I have been saying, certain statements in the Course should be taken literally, while others should be taken metaphorically or symbolically. The idea that God weeps for us, or that God is lonely without us, or that Jesus or the Holy Spirit actually do things for us in the world are statements that ought to be taken as metaphors or symbols to correct the mistakes we have made. Jesus uses our symbolism, but gives it a different meaning and a different content.

The reason for discussing all this—and one of the major reasons for this workshop—is to make the point that we should not try to bring the Course down to our level, but rather grow to the level from which the Course is coming and attain the love that is the Courses true source. It is tempting always to try to bring the truth to the illusion. A major theme Jesus is always emphasizing in the Course is that our function is to bring the illusion to the truth, not the truth to the illusion. We do not bring the love to the fear—we bring the fear to the love. We bring the darkness to the light, not the light to the darkness.

Since we are the ones who made up this world and everything in it—and we made it as an attack on God and as a defense against His Love—it makes no sense, then, to try to drag God into the world and say, "Fix it." He basically would look at us and say, "Fix what?" Not that God has a mouth to say that—I am speaking metaphorically, of course. Rather, we should bring the thoughts that led to the making of the world to Him. And the Presence of God in our separated minds is what the Course refers to as the Holy Spirit. We are always tempted to make up our problems here, which really are attempts to exclude God. And then we want to drag this magical God into the world so that He will fix our problems here. That, as the Course explains, is bringing truth to the illusion. The Course is asking us instead to bring the illusion to the truth. Basically I am saying that we should approach the Course with a degree of reverence and respect, recognizing that it is coming to us at many levels. And the highest level is something that we want to aspire to, something that we wish to attain.

A little later, I will talk about the "ladder of prayer," the image used in the Song of Prayer pamphlet. A ladder has many rungs or steps, and we are at the bottom. The top of the ladder is the reality of God, which we discussed earlier (**above the purple line on the chart**). We will see as we discuss the opening of the pamphlet that Jesus major purpose is to tell us that it is fine to begin at the bottom rung of the ladder, because that is where we are—but that is not where we wish to end up. In the section from the Republic that I spoke about earlier, Plato asks why we would settle for the imitation, or the copy, when we can have the real thing?

I thought I would read a brief excerpt from a letter that Franz Liszt wrote, which is relevant to the point I am making. Franz Liszt, of course, was a great musical figure in the 19th century. He also became the father-in-law of Richard Wagner, a great German composer in the 19th century. Wagners operas, or "music dramas" as he called them, always tended to be rather lengthy. After a performance of one of these operas, Liszt wrote a letter to a friend, in which he made reference to a common criticism of Wagners works—that they were much too long and difficult. And this is what Liszt wrote: "Great works should be embraced entire, body and soul, form and thought, spirit and life. One ought not to carp at Wagner for his length. It is better to expand ones scale to his." Rather than try to drag Wagner down, one should try to grow into his genius.

This would be even more to the point in terms of the Course. One of the big mistakes that Christianity made with the message of Jesus two thousand years ago was that, rather than trying to grow into what he was teaching, the Churches attempted to bring Jesus and his message down to the level of the world—which, of course, was very much an ego response. And so the message of the Churches became very much a message filled with suffering and sacrifice, murder and death, guilt, specialness, exclusivity, ritual and form, etc. People thought they understood what Jesus said and taught. And so they began to preach his message without recognizing that they had missed his whole point. And it is very easy now to do the same thing with the Course.

One major way this error occurs is in the confusing of symbol with reality, the confusing of form with content. It is of great importance to understand that much of the Course is written on a symbolic level because of where we are. If we grow into the symbol, then we will recognize that at the end, the symbol disappears into the reality, into the love that is always there. This is a major theme of the workshop that I will be developing further.
. . . . . . .

Now let us turn to The Song of Prayer and read a few paragraphs from the first two sections. We will not be spending a great deal of time on this, even though what is contained here is extremely important. Our focus will be on the parts where, without actually using those words, Jesus speaks about the difference between appearance and reality, between symbol and truth. This is also a place where he expresses what appear to be contradictions in the Courses language, but he then goes on to explain why they are not really contradictions. This discussion will help lead us into considering Jesus specifically, both as the reality and as the symbol, and the importance of the symbol.

The metaphor used in this pamphlet, especially in the beginning pages, is that of a ladder. The top of the ladder is called the "song of prayer," a state identical to what is referred to in Lesson 183: "The universe consists of nothing but the Son of God, who calls upon his Father. And his Fathers Voice gives answer in his Fathers holy Name" (W-pI.183.11:4).

The "song of prayer" is the song of love and of thanks that the Father sings to the Son and the Son sings to the Father. But it is a soundless song without notes. The word song here is strictly a metaphor, just as it is in that wonderful section in the text called "The Forgotten Song" (T-21.I)—it is the same symbol. The song that we have forgotten is the song that links God and Christ. The song of prayer, or the top of the ladder, is really what is represented by the **purple line on our chart**. When we complete our spiritual journey, the whole ladder disappears, and we, in effect, disappear into the song of prayer—in fact, we become the song of prayer. So the opening pages of the pamphlet present this metaphor:

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-3) Prayer is the greatest gift with which God blessed His Son at His creation. It was then what it is to become; the single voice Creator and creation share; the song the Son sings to the Father, Who returns the thanks it offers Him unto the Son. Endless the harmony, and endless, too, the joyous concord of the Love They give forever to Each Other.**

Jesus says "it is to become" because we have fallen asleep, so prayer is a state that we have to re-attain. The song is an abstract song, a symbol Jesus uses, since songs, melodies, and music are such an important part of our world here. It symbolizes what cannot be understood in this world. As I quoted earlier, "nowhere does the Father end, the Son begin" (W-pI.132.12:4). That statement makes no sense to us here, because we are very much in a world of separation. As I read earlier from the first section of Chapter 25 in the text, that is why Heaven comes to us as if it were separate from us. That is why the Holy Spirit appears to be a Voice outside us that speaks to us. In truth, it is not like that. But within the dream that we have made to exclude God, we then need a concept of a God Who includes us, Who speaks to us, and Who calls to us. In reality, God and Christ have never been separate—that oneness is what the song of prayer represents.

We will skip down now to the second paragraph:

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 1) To you who are in time a little while . . .**

It is always helpful to keep in mind that Jesus view of time is much different from ours. What to us may be a time span of thousands or millions of years, to him is just "a little while." All of time exists and existed in one, tiny instant. Only within the dream does time appear to extend linearly over billions and billions of years, with a past, present, and future. In truth, it all occurred within one instant. And as long as we believe we are asleep, it is still occurring within that one instant. Time has already been undone. And to be even more precise, it never really happened at all. Jesus is speaking to us from that place in our minds where there is no time, so for him we are here just a little while. Thus:

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 1-2) To you who are in time a little while, prayer takes the form that best will suit your need. You have but one.**

This is very important, and will be elaborated on in the next section, "True Prayer." We have but one need—to remember that we never left home. A statement in the text says that "the only meaningful prayer is for forgiveness, because those who have been forgiven have everything" (T-3.V.6:3).

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 3) What God created one must recognize its oneness, and rejoice that what illusions seemed to separate is one forever in the Mind of God.**

"What God created one" is the Sonship. The Sonship now appears to be fragmented, and therefore it must recognize this oneness. We all remain one Christ within the Mind of God. We all remain as one Voice singing joyously that song of prayer, even though the tiny, mad idea of being separate from God appeared to have the power of separating us and fragmenting us.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 4) Prayer now must be the means by which Gods Son leaves separate goals and separate interests by, and turns in holy gladness to the truth of union in his Father and himself.**

Prayer is used here in two ways. On the one hand it is the top of the ladder, the song of prayer that we sing to God and that God sings to us. Within the dream, on the other hand, prayer is a process, a ladder. So it is both a process and the end of the process. In another context, a wonderful line in the workbook speaks about God as Love: "He the End we seek, and He the Means by which we go to Him" (W-pI.302.2:3). God is both the goal and the means by which we reach Him. Similarly, prayer, the song of prayer, is the goal, yet prayer also refers to the process. So prayer is both the ladder that we must climb, as well as the end of the ladder.

That is why the Course can be confusing at times. There are many instances in the Course where Jesus uses the same word in different ways. For example, the holy instant is used to refer to all the individual instants in which we choose love instead of fear, a miracle instead of a grievance, etc. But then the holy instant is also used at times to refer to the one great holy instant when everything of the ego totally disappears. Again, it is both the process as well as the end of the process.

The holy relationship is used both ways also. At times, Jesus quite clearly and specifically refers to the holy relationship as a process where we go back and forth between the special and the holy relationship. At other times, he uses it to mean the end of the process. We should read the Course as we would a great poem, where we do not analyze each and every word and try to deduce the whole context from it. Rather, we simply let the words speak to us.
. . . . . . .

Now let us turn to the first paragraph of the next section, **"True Prayer."**

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-2) Prayer is a way offered by the Holy Spirit to reach God. It is not merely a question or an entreaty.**

Jesus is talking now about prayer as a process. In other words, prayer is not simply asking God to do things for us. That is the very bottom of the ladder—a God, or a Jesus, or a Holy Spirit Who answers prayers, Who tells us what to do, where to go, whom to talk to, what to say, etc.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 3-5) It** [prayer] **cannot succeed until you realize that it asks for nothing. How else could it serve its purpose? It is impossible to pray for idols and hope to reach God.**

Prayer asks for nothing because we have everything. Praying for "idols" includes anything for which we ask help—getting a parking space, being healed of cancer, ending the conflict in the Middle East, getting a job we want, protecting a loved—one from being hurt, etc. All these are idols because they are substitutes for the Love of God.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 6) True prayer must avoid the pitfall of asking to entreat.**

True prayer is the top of the ladder. None of us is there, and Jesus is not demanding that we be there. Basically, he is making the same point I made earlier with regard to Franz Liszts comment about Wagner. Jesus is not saying that we should be where he is. He is simply reminding us that that is our goal, and that we should not be settling for far less than what we can really have. That is the point of all this. In true prayer we do not ask for anything, because we know not only that we have everything, but that we are everything. Having and being are the same in the Kingdom. What we have is what we are—what we are is what we have. We are the Love of God—we have the Love of God. We have the Love of God because we are His Love. We cannot understand this from our perspective as separate individuals, so Jesus talks about prayer as a ladder.

On the bottom rung, prayer is asking for help. And to jump ahead a little, asking for help is not wrong. One of the major themes of the Course is that we are supposed to ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for help. But this asking is a correction for the fact that right at the beginning we told the Holy Spirit that we did not need any help. So the Course meets us where we are with the idea of then lifting us to where it really is.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 7) Ask, rather, to receive what is already given; to accept what is already there.**

As we will see in the paragraphs that follow, this is the real meaning of prayer—this is what Jesus is really asking us to do. He is asking us to remember the love that we already have and that we are. I will give examples of that a little later.

**Part V
Continuation of "True Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.1)**

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 1) You have been told to ask the Holy Spirit for the answer to any specific problem, and that you will receive a specific answer if such is your need.**

This should be understood on two levels. The pamphlet originally began as a special message from Jesus to Helen—so on one level he was speaking directly and personally to her. And many times prior to the message, he said to her, "Ask me for help." Similarly, in the text, but on another level, he has said the same thing to all of us: "The Holy Spirit will answer every specific problem as long as you believe that problems are specific" (T-11.VIII.5:5). This is the reference that he is talking about here in The Song of Prayer—the Holy Spirit will answer all of our specific needs and requests. In the pamphlet, he continues:

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 2) You have also been told that there is only one problem and one answer.**

This idea is clearly expressed in two workbook lessons, "Let me recognize my problem so it can be solved" (W-pI.79), and "Let me recognize that all my problems have been solved" (W-pI.80). In both lessons, Jesus is very clear that there is only one problem—the belief in separation—and there is only one answer—accepting the Holy Spirit. In the review lesson based on those lessons, Jesus states it a little differently—the one problem is holding onto a grievance and the one answer is forgiveness, or the miracle (W-pI.90). But it is the same idea.

Clearly, these appear then to be contradictory statements. In one place, Jesus tells us that we have many problems and therefore there will be many answers—the Holy Spirit will give us the specific answer to meet our specific problem or need. Then elsewhere he tells us there is only one problem and only one solution for it. So he explains:

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 3) In prayer this is not contradictory.**

By this he means he is again referring to prayer as a process. The top of the ladder of prayer is the song of prayer, the very end of the process where we recognize there is only one need—the need to undo that one mistake, when we turned away from the Holy Spirit and turned towards the ego. That was our only error. Since that is the problem, the answer is to turn away from the ego and turn back to the Holy Spirit. As we ascend the ladder, it becomes clearer and clearer to us that all of our problems are the same. This is the experience of many people who work with the Course over a period of time. As the early workbook lesson says, "I am never upset for the reason I think" (W-pI.5). I am not upset because I just found out that I have AIDS or that my loved one has AIDS, or because the United States has declared war on another country, or because there is a recession, or I have lost my job, or my loved one has abandoned me, or I have caught a cold and do not feel well, etc. I have all kinds of reasons for being upset. But they are not really why I am upset. I am upset because I believe I have separated from God. And more specifically, within the dream, I am upset because I became afraid of God's Love in the person of Jesus and turned away from him. I turned my back on love once again, and that is why I am upset. If I had felt his closeness, if I had felt his love, if I had felt his peace and his comfort, nothing in this world would bother me. That, of course, is the lesson of the crucifixion.

As we grow and climb up the ladder, it becomes clearer and clearer to us that all our problems are the same. There is only one problem and one answer. But at the bottom of the ladder, that is not our experience. On the bottom of the ladder—where we believe we are—we experience God's help in the person of the Holy Spirit or Jesus meeting our needs as we perceive them. This is an extremely important way in which Jesus offers us correction at the level where we see ourselves. We believe that the Holy Spirit would never help us after what we have done to Him. We have told Him He is a liar. We have said, "I don't trust you. I don't want you anywhere near me." And we made up the world so we could run away from Him. We made up a body that has needs as on attack on Him. So why should He want to help us? The ego tells us there is no way that He would ever help us, no way that He would ever meet our needs.

Therefore, we need a correction on this level that tells us, "No, the Holy Spirit is not turning His back on you. It is not that He does not want to help you. He does help you." This is the same kind of symbolism as Jesus telling us that God weeps over us. The ego has told us that God is so happy that we are out of His house, because we have been such pains in the neck. So Jesus tells us, "No, He's not happy. In fact, He weeps for you and He feels incomplete and lonely without you." This symbolism serves exactly the same purpose as the symbolism reflected in Course statements that tell us that Jesus or the Holy Spirit will meet our specific needs. I will explain a little later how this works in our experience. So again:

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 3-4) In prayer this is not contradictory. There are decisions to make here, and they must be made whether they be illusions or not.**

It is not contradictory, because prayer is seen as a process, to state it once again. As long as we are here in a body, choices have to be made—for example, everyone had to make a decision to attend this workshop. Each of us had to make a decision this morning whether to wear green, or blue, or white, or black, or whatever. Everyone had to make a decision about whether to eat breakfast, what to eat, and what not to eat, etc. Decisions have to be made once we believe that we are in a body.

As the Course explains elsewhere, we must choose whether we will make the decisions of our lives with the ego or with the Holy Spirit. As long as we have the illusion of choosing, as long as we have the illusion of being here in a body in a dream, then we will have the illusion of choosing the ego or the Holy Spirit as our teacher. That is why the Course is written on the level that it is. Probably the most important message in the Course is that of "choose once again"—it is presented all the way through, and then ends the text.

The major theme of the Course is that of returning to our minds the power to choose. Not that our minds really have any power to choose—the Mind of Christ does not choose, because there are no choices to be made in Heaven. But we are not in Heaven—we believe that we are here. As the text tells us, we are "at home in God, dreaming of exile" (T-10.I.2:1). So within the dream, we do have a choice, which is an illusion. But as long as we have the illusion of choosing against God and against the Holy Spirit's Love and message of the Atonement in our minds, we need a correction on that level that says, "I made a faulty choice. Now I can make a better choice." That is the purpose of Jesus and the Holy Spirit—to help us make a better choice. Hence, as long as we are in this world, there are decisions that have to be made. The important thing—which is an issue that we will come back to again and again—is not the form of the decision. The important thing is the content: with whom we make the decision.

Now, that does not mean that we can simply ignore the decision. (I will elaborate on this a little later.) Not paying attention to our decisions would be an example of "level confusion," and of trying to believe that we are farther up the ladder than we really are. As long as we believe we are in this world and we are hassling with a decision, it is important that, within the role we have chosen, we pay attention to the decision. But it is also very helpful and relieving to know that, in the end, the decision itself does not matter. What matters is with whom we make it. And we can tell with whom we have made the decision by whether we are peaceful or anxious.

So I do the best I can to decide, within the scope of my classroom, which includes myself and my body and the specific context in which I believe I am. I do the best I can with that, but on another level, I realize that all I ever have to do is the best I can. Jesus made a statement to Helen, which I think is always very helpful and comforting. He said to her, "If you do my will, I will uphold it; and if you do not do my will, then I will correct it." Basically, this means we do the best that we can; either way, we cannot lose. So decisions have to be made here, whether they are illusory or not. In truth, they are all illusory, because there are no choices in Heaven. The important thing is not the decision, but, once again, the one with whom we make it. This is what we are leading up to. This is the importance of Jesus. He remains within our split minds as the shining symbol that calls us back—not so much to him but to the Christ that is in him as well as in ourselves.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 5) You cannot be asked to accept answers which are beyond the level of need that you can recognize.**

We can see from this statement just how helpful the Course is and what a powerful spiritual tool it is. It comes to us on many levels. On the highest level, it tells us that there is literally nothing here, that we are not here. At the same time, the Course translates the abstract love and truth of Heaven into a language and a group of symbols we can understand and relate to. So on the one level, Jesus tells us there are no problems. The one problem we believe we have and believe we are has already been undone for us, and, therefore, there are no needs. On another level, as long as we believe we are here and believe we have all these needs, we will experience Heaven's help with those needs. Not that Heaven is really helping us with those needs; rather, we will experience it that way. Again, as we read earlier, Heaven comes to us as separate, not because it is in truth, but because that is the only level that we can accept and understand (T-25.I).

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 6-9) Therefore, it is not the form of the question that matters, nor how it is asked. The form of the answer, if given by God** [which here means the Holy Spirit]**, will suit your need as you see it. This is merely an echo of the reply of His Voice. The real sound is always a song of thanksgiving and of Love.**

Let me elaborate on this—Jesus is saying that as long as we believe that we have many needs, we will receive the answer on that level. But the answer is really not the form—the true answer is beyond the form. The answer that we experience, that we believe we get, is "an echo of the reply of His Voice." His Voice is that soundless song of thanksgiving and love. The real answer is the Presence of Love that is beyond all form, that does not have or hear words. But we will experience that Love on the level of words and symbols, because we believe we are symbols.

Let me give a concrete example that might help. We can think of the water within a glass as an expression of God's Love. For the purposes of this example, we can think of water as formless, shapeless, and abstract. In fact, of course, it is not, but we will think of it that way. The glass, which has a definite shape and contour to it, represents the mind, which is a mind of fear that has identified with the ego. So it is a limited, separated mind that believes in guilt, attack, punishment, sin, etc. The love within our minds is abstract and formless. We are terrified of the true nature of love, because the ego has told us that if we return to that love, love will destroy us.

One of Helen's poems includes the line, "Love does not crucify, it . . . merely is" ("Amen," The Gifts of God, p. 91). Now the reason for that line is that we believe that love does crucify. Of course, the Christian Churches have been built on the idea that we know that God loves us because He crucified and killed His own Son. That is what love does: it crucifies and punishes. This makes perfect sense within the ego system. Remember, this is a "sinned-against" God—that is the concept of God **in the ego box on the chart**. And a sinned-against God translates into a God Who is vengeful, hateful, and insane, Who bargains with us and is angry. That is a God Who crucifies. So we have learned to be afraid of God's Love.

This explains why we always do the very things that keep us from being peaceful and happy. It is not the world that keeps us anxious and in conflict—we are the ones who keep ourselves anxious and in conflict. And this becomes the ego's insane defense against love. This is why we hold on to the past. This is why we hold on to our attacking thoughts towards others and towards ourselves, listening to the raucous shrieking of the ego. We are afraid of being peaceful. We are afraid of being love. A line in the text says that "the memory of God comes to the quiet mind" (T-23.I.1:1). To which my ego says, "Yes, that's absolutely true. If your mind is quiet, if you are peaceful and still, then the memory of God will return to you. But you don't want to go anywhere near this memory, because God is angry and vicious and cruel." So in order to keep the memory of God away, I keep my mind in a state of noise, a state of disquiet, rather than in a state of quiet. The raucous shrieking of the ego becomes a very comforting shield that protects me from the still, small Voice of the Holy Spirit.

The ego has taught us not to go near this Love because this Love will hurt us. We could think of the totality of God's Love as an ocean—it is immense and goes on and on with no boundaries, no limit. That is the Love of God, and that is what we are afraid of. There is no way that we could approach Love as it is, because the ego tells us if we do, we will be swallowed up and annihilated—God is so angry. Therefore, we are able to take only so much of that Love—we take it only in small doses. Basically, we go to Jesus or the Holy Spirit in our minds and say, "I'm terrified of the immensity and the infinity of your Love, because I'm afraid I'll disappear into it. I want your Love more than anything else, but all I can handle is a glassful." We go to this unending, unceasing, bottomless Source of Love in our minds with a little glass, or a little thimble, saying, "This is all that I can accept. I cannot accept your Love, but I can accept your giving me a parking space, or your telling me what to order from a menu in a restaurant." Now there is nothing wrong in any of this. However, all we end up with is a thimble instead of the ocean. Again, we are talking about the bottom of the ladder. It is certainly much better for me to ask the Holy Spirit rather than the ego for help with the parking space. But if that is all I am doing, I will end up with very, very little.

So the lines we just read are telling us that it is not the form that we want—it is not the contour of the love—not the structure of my mind that I hold up to Jesus to fill. I want the content—I want the love. The purpose of this pamphlet is to remind us of this. In a sense, the whole purpose of this workshop is to help us to know the difference between the form that the love takes for us and its reality. It is the reality that we want. So again, that is what is meant by: "The form of the answer, if given by God, will suit your need as you see it. This is merely an echo of the reply of His Voice. The real sound is always a song of thanksgiving and of Love."

**Part VI
Continuation of "True Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.1)**

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 1-2) You cannot, then, ask for the echo. It is the song that is the gift.**

The echo would be all the specific things that we are asking for. It could be something we feel is holy, important, and wonderful, or something we think is trivial and worldly, like a parking space. It does not matter. There are several lines related to this idea in the section called, "The Answer to Prayer," which is an extremely helpful section on prayer. In the beginning of that section, Jesus says,

Everyone who ever tried to use prayer to ask for something has experienced what appears to be failure (T-9.II.1:1).

This was not meant just for Helen. This is meant for everyone. We all get caught in this trap. And the something we have asked for could be something tangible. It could be advice, or it could be to have a feeling. It does not matter.

This is not only true in connection with specific things that might be harmful [we all want a lot of things in the world which in the end will be hurtful to us], but also in connection with requests that are strictly in line with this Course (T-9.II.1:2).

"Requests that are strictly in line with this Course" could be: "Jesus, please help me be peaceful." Almost no one would say that that is a bad thing to ask for. I am not asking for a million dollars or a Mercedes Benz. All I am asking is that I feel better. But people will still experience the same sense of failure and ask, "Where the hell is Jesus when I need him?" Knowing what our reaction is likely to be, Jesus continues,

The latter in particular [i.e., when we ask for things that are in line with this course and don't get them] might be incorrectly interpreted as proof that the course does not mean what it says (T-9.II.1:3).

The ego is very, very slippery, and it is always trying to trap Jesus and his Course in a mistake. We do not realize that unconsciously we have set him up. This pamphlet was written in 1977, a number of years after the Course, which was finished in 1972 and published in 1976. The pamphlet came as a correction for what was already being misunderstood in the Course. Students were confusing symbol and reality, thinking that the purpose of the Holy Spirit is simply to get us parking spaces or to heal cancer, or to answer all the other specific requests and needs that we have. And Jesus is saying, "This is not what I am talking about. This kind of asking is just the bottom of the ladder. My purpose is not to take your hand and give you everything you need. My purpose is to take your hand and remind you that what I am, you are too. That is my purpose."

And so Jesus is saying to us, "You don't want the echo. You don't want the specific answer to the specific request. What you want, what my gift to you is, is the song." And the song is the Love of God that Jesus represents. That is the content that we want. And even Jesus' love is not the final answer. But within the dream, when we take his hand and accept his love, that is the closest we come to returning home. Once we really identify with Jesus and accept our love for him and his love for us, everything else will be given to us, as the next paragraph states. But remember, he is telling us here that the gift is his love. That is the song. The gift is not the form, not the particular structure that the water takes. We say to Jesus, "I want you to get me a parking space,"—that is the structure of the glass that we present to him. And so we dip that glass into the ocean, and we get just a little water in a specific form.

And then we make the form real. It is as if we take the glass or the little thimble filled with water and stick it in the freezer and freeze it. And then we say, "This is Jesus, right here. He gives me a parking space. Isn't he wonderful?" That is what we end up with. We make that real and then we worship it. This is the same mistake that every religion has fallen into, whether Jewish, or Christian, or any other—we mistake the form for the meaning. And we end up worshiping the form, the ritual, and the structure. We hear a word from Heaven and we think the word is the gift. God does not speak in words. God does not understand words. Jesus does not understand words. The word that we experience is not the gift. The gift to Helen, and therefore to the world, would not be half a million or however many words there are in this book. The gift is that the words lead us to the love that transcends the book—that is the gift. The words are steppingstones, and they are extremely helpful. But the words are not holy.

This is not a holy book. As a book it is not holy. I can write on it, I can rip it up, I can step on it—it does not matter. What is holy is the love that inspired it. And the love that inspired this book is the same love that is in Helen's mind, and in your mind, and in my mind. It's no different. That is the lesson. We do not worship the book or anything associated with the book, such as any of the stories associated with the book. There could not be a more tragic mistake in terms of the consequences. Then we end up making a god of the form. We end up taking this little thimbleful of water, freezing it, and saying, "This is God," "This is Jesus," or "This is the Course." This is not what it is. The whole purpose again of this pamphlet was to correct the mistakes that were already starting to happen within the first two years of the Course's publication.

Again, Jesus is saying we want the song. We do not want the form in which the song comes. As long as we believe we are a form, and we believe that we are a separated being, we will understand the message in that context, in that form. But that does not make it real, any more than our perception that the sun rises and sets makes that a reality. The sun does not rise and set—the earth moves. The sun is perfectly stationary. The illusion is that the sun rises and sets—that is our experience. That does not make it true, however. Similarly, if I experience Jesus as getting me a parking space—and I will elaborate on what is really happening later—that does not mean he got me the parking space. It means I experiencedJesus' getting me the parking space. On the other hand, though, it does not mean that the experience itself is wrong. It is my interpretation that is wrong. If my interpretation focuses on form, equating symbol with truth, then I am wrong. But if I can see the experience as a steppingstone that points to the truth beyond the experience, then that is something else entirely.

Once again, words (the form) are not holy. The love (the content) is holy. The words are simply the reflection of the holiness. This is an idea which we find expressed many different times in the Course. The Course makes it clear that there is no holiness in this world, only the reflection of holiness. In fact, a section in the text is entitled "The Reflection of Holiness" (T-14.IX). Elsewhere Jesus says that love without ambivalence is impossible in this world (T-4.III.4:6). Love belongs to God. In this world we find not love but the reflection of love, which is forgiveness. So the goal of the Course is to teach us how to forgive, not how to love. Forgiveness undoes all the obstacles or barriers to love. In the section called "Heralds of Eternity" (T-20.V), the "herald of eternity" is the holy relationship. Eternity is not possible in this world. But what foreshadows Heaven, what leads us to Heaven, is the forgiveness that is expressed in a holy relationship. The Course also talks about the holy instant, referring to the instant in which we choose the Holy Spirit instead of the ego, which is the reflection of the Holiness of God.

One of the key concepts in the Course is the real world. But the two words, as Jesus mentions at one place in the text, are a contradiction (T-26.III.3:3). The world is illusion, how could it be real? The meaning of the term—an extremely important one in the Course—is that the real world is the reflection of the reality of Heaven. It is not Heaven. The real world is the Course's concept for the dream in which there are no thoughts of separation or sin. It is still an illusion, but it is the reflection of the reality of Heaven.

Jesus is telling us, "Don't mistake the reflection for the truth. Don't worship the reflection." That is what he means at the beginning of the text when he says that to experience awe in his presence is inappropriate, because he and we are equal. He says it is appropriate to experience awe in the presence of our Creator, because He created us—we did not create Him. But awe in response to Jesus is inappropriate, because he is our equal (T-1.I.3:1-6). He is telling us not to confuse the reflection of God's Love—which he is—for the real Love. That is the trap, and we will see all of its implications as we continue discussing this.

Let's read on, starting again at the beginning of paragraph three.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 1) You cannot, then, ask for the echo.**

Now, by that Jesus does not mean that we cannot ask for the echo—we ask for the echo all the time. He really means that we should not ask for the echo in the sense of believing that the echo is the gift. We are always going to ask for something, because we still believe that we are separate.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 2-3) It is the song that is the gift. Along with it come the overtones, the harmonics, the echoes, but these are secondary.**

The specific things we believe that we hear from Jesus are secondary. What is important is the experience of love when we join with him. He is not asking us to deny what we experience, but he is helping us to understand that the form of the experience is not what is important. It is the love underneath the form that is the gift—that is what we want.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 4-5) In true prayer you hear only the song. All the rest is merely added.**

The top rung of the ladder is the song of prayer—and that is a soundless, wordless song. That is our ultimate goal. None of us is at that level, and he is not asking us to be at that level. But he is reminding us that that is the reality. "All the rest is merely added."

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 6) You have sought first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all else has indeed been given you.**

This is taken from the famous passage in the Sermon on the Mount. Basically, that is the whole point of this. When we seek his love and his song and join with that, everything else will automatically come to us—sometimes in the form that we need it, sometimes in the form that we expect it, sometimes even in the form that we want it. But when we identify with Jesus' love and experience his love, his comfort, and his presence, the form will not matter to us any more.

**Part VII
Continuation of "True Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.1)**

Let's look now at the famous parking space example—I'll give another example after that. The parking space is a favorite one—you hear about it all the time in Course in Miracles circles: "A Course in Miracles gives me parking spaces." "The Holy Spirit gives me parking spaces." People's experience is that as they are driving downtown into a crowded area, they ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for a parking space, and, lo and behold, they turn the corner and there's a parking space. So they add up two and two, and get five—"The Holy Spirit gave me the parking space."

Aside from what has really happened, which I will get into shortly, the real mistake in all this is in settling for far too little. Even if Jesus did give us the parking space, what's the big deal? That's not going to get me one step closer to the Kingdom of Heaven—and that's what I really want. Getting a parking space is not going to awaken me from the dream. If anything, it could seduce me into wanting to be in this dream even more, because it shows me what a wonderful world this is—where the love of Jesus and the Holy Spirit comes down and solves all my problems for me. It makes much more sense to ask Jesus to help us with the anxiety that is engendered by not finding a parking space. That is something that he can help us with.

There's an instructive passage in the text that deals with this issue, without, of course, mentioning parking spaces. The immediate context of this passage, which came relatively early in the dictation, was Helen's asking Jesus to take her fear away. She was always in a state of high agitation and fear. And she figured that that was what Jesus was "paid to do": take away her fear. [laughter] Perhaps in part she felt that she was paying him by taking down his damned course, so the least he could do for her in return was to remove a little of her fear. [laughter] But that is not what he did. And so he said to her:

The correction of fear is your responsibility. When you ask for release from fear, you are implying that it is not. You should ask, instead, for help in the conditions that have brought the fear about. These conditions always entail a willingness to be separate. At that level you can help it (T-2.VI.4:1-5).

Jesus was telling Helen that whatever the specific thing was that she was afraid of, it had to do with some aspect of the body, some aspect of form. Helen was asking Jesus to help her not be so afraid of getting sick, or of her husband getting sick, or of this or that terrible thing happening. She was asking him to help take that fear away. And he was saying, "There's nothing I can do for this, because I am not here in the world. I am in your mind." On the **chart**, the upper level or box is the mind—which is where Jesus really is—and the level of form is where we experience him—which is in the body. He is saying, "I am in your mind. I am not in your body. And the problem is not the specific object of your fear. The problem is that you have separated yourself from me."

Again, as Jesus says here, the conditions that led to the fear "always entail a willingness to be separate." In the ultimate sense, it is the willingness or the choice to be separate from God. Within the dream, the decision to be separate from God is expressed in the decision to be separate from Jesus or the Holy Spirit—that's the problem. And so Jesus was telling Helen:

I cannot help you with the object of your fear. I cannot help you with your fear of not finding a parking space. But I can help you with the decision you made to be separate from me. And I help you simply by being alive and present in your mind. My presence will remind you that you are the one who chose to be separate from me. Therefore, you are the one who can choose to rejoin me.

The problem then was not that Helen was afraid. Whatever she thought she was afraid of, the real cause of her fear was being separate from Jesus—that was the cause. Jesus makes the same point again to Helen a couple of pages later in the text. (This was written down a day or two later, when she was still fearful.) He began this next section saying, "You may still complain about fear, but you nevertheless persist in making yourself fearful" (T-2.VII.1:1). Jesus was telling Helen, "Don't blame me because you're frightened." He said it much more gently than that, but that is basically what he was saying to her—"It's not my fault. You're the one who is choosing to be fearful."

Continuing with that paragraph, Jesus told her,

I have already indicated that you cannot ask me to release you from fear. I know it does not exist, but you do not. If I intervened between your thoughts and their results, I would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect, the most fundamental law there is. I would hardly help you if I depreciated the power of your own thinking. This would be in direct opposition to the purpose of this course. It is much more helpful [and this is a very important line that tells us what Jesus does] to remind you that you do not guard your thoughts carefully enough (T-2.VII.1:2-7).

In the previous section he had said, "You are much too tolerant of mind wandering" (T-2.VI.4:6). So Jesus is reminding all of us that the problem is that we are the ones who have wandered from him. We have wandered away from the thought of love that he represents and symbolizes in our minds, and we have wandered into the ego's thoughts of fear, separation, guilt, anxiety, pain, and suffering, etc. Therefore, Jesus shines like a lighthouse in our minds, simply calling all those ships—all those thoughts in our minds—that are wandering in the darkness, back to him. That is how he helps us.

Now our parking space: So here I am driving downtown to a meeting and I begin to get concerned about not having a space to park my car. Maybe I'm already a few minutes late, and I'm feeling that something terrible will happen if I walk into the meeting late. Or maybe I'm thinking that if I ask Jesus for a parking space and get it, I can tell my Course in Miracles group tonight what a wonderful Course in Miracles student I am, how very special I am to the heart of Jesus, because the heart of Jesus opened up to me and showed me where to go for a parking space.

The specifics of my concern about finding a parking space do not matter. Once I am asking Jesus to get me the parking space, I have very nicely done an end-run around him. I have walked right into the ego's trap. What I really want help with is not that I find the parking space and undo the fear of not finding a space. But rather, I really want help with the fact that I obviously believe I am driving downtown alone, and that Jesus is no longer in the car with me. That is the problem. If I knew he were in the car with me, what difference would a silly parking space make? How could any of us in this world, experiencing the Love of God within our minds, have any possible concern, anxiety, or wish to find a silly parking space? The parking space becomes very important when we forget that there is someone with us. We have dropped his hand and kicked him out of the car, and now we believe we are on our own—that is where our anxiety is coming from. My concern for not having a parking space for my car is nothing more than the reflection of my real concern that I have lost my "parking space" in Heaven, and that when I finally get back home, God will say, "I'm very sorry—all the spots are filled." [laughter] That is the fear. Otherwise, no one on earth would ever be concerned about a parking space, or a place in line at the supermarket, or anything else that we get crazy about.

Our concern for there not being enough space or room for us, or for somebody pushing ahead of us, etc., is really the symbol of our anxiety and fear that somebody has stolen our place in Heaven. This is exactly what the ego tells us—God is so angry at us because of what we have done and what we have stolen from Him, that He will never let us back in. So we really want help with undoing the cause of the anxiety about the parking space, not with the form of the parking space. That is what Jesus is saying in this passage. "You don't want the echo, you don't want the overtones, you don't want the harmonics. You want the song. You don't want the parking space. You want to re-experience my love, which you believe you have thrown away." So we do not ask for help with the parking space. We ask for help in letting go of the anxiety that automatically comes when we feel separate from his love. That is the problem.

Now to be separate from Jesus' love and to experience his love is also an illusion, because the Love of Christ is not separated into Jesus and me. However, within the illusion, within the dream, this is the most helpful thought I could ever have. Experiencing his love more and more of the time will help me realize ultimately not only that I am never separate from his love, but that I am that love. And how could I be separate from my own Self? There is a passage in the text where Jesus speaks of how ridiculous it would be for nature to roar at the wind, declaring that it no longer is a part of itself. The wind is part of nature. So how could part of God be at war with itself (T-23.I.4:7-9)? Joining with Jesus, while it is a symbol, is the only meaningful symbol for us in this world that reflects what the Love of God is. And that is what we want. That is the whole point—not to ask for specifics, but to ask for the love that is beyond the specifics.

Let me say something now, in the context of this example, about a concern students have expressed with regard to what they experience as failure in prayer. Suppose I do not get the parking space today. When I drove downtown yesterday, I got this wonderful parking space. But today I didn't get one. And I feel awful. And not only do I feel awful, but as a good healthy ego I don't blame myself. I don't even blame the other cars. I blame Jesus. Thus my thoughts are: "Where are you? You helped me yesterday and it was great, but now you're not here." The problem in all this is that my whole attention is focused on the form. And I begin to think that the only way I'll know that I am loved by God, that I'm a worthwhile person, and that I'm not guilty, is if something good happens to me. So I'm now using the parking space as a way of proving that I'm either a worthy person or a worthless person. Maybe the value for me today of not getting a parking space is that I would realize that my self-worth does not depend on whether I get the parking space—that the love of Jesus is with me whether I get the parking space or not. But the ego is always ready to jump in and tell me that I'm a failure, or that I'm a success because of what has happened.

As a way of elaborating on this, let me tell another story, involving Helen. This is a helpful story for contrasting our experience of Jesus' help with the reality of that help. It will also help us to understand what is really happening with the parking space, with physical healings, or whatever.

The story is about Helen and an eyelash. Many years ago—around 1975 or 1976—Helen, Bill [Thetford], Judy [Skutch], and I were on the West Coast. One afternoon, Helen and I went to a church—Helen liked to go to churches. This was a lovely chapel built by the brother of a good friend of ours, a nun. Our friend had told us that when we were in San Francisco, we should see this chapel that her brother, an architect, had built. So we went. We sat down on one of the benches and were about to pray. Suddenly Helen stopped and said, "I have an eyelash in my eye." And she added, "Jesus always takes the eyelash out for me." Now Helen was not a simple-minded person—she was in fact rather brilliant—and her spirituality was not on a simple-minded level. But that is exactly what she said: "Jesus takes the eyelash out for me all the time." And I said, "Oh, that's interesting." Then she explained, "What I do is I close my eyes, and I ask him to remove it. And then I open my eyes and the eyelash is always out." So I said, "Well, that's great. Let's do that." So we did. We closed our eyes and then, within a few minutes, we opened them. And sure enough, there was an eyelash on Helen's cheekbone. "That always happens. He always does that for me," she said. And that is the end of the story.

If we simply take the story at face value—if we simply take what Helen experienced as fact, it would mean that Jesus stuck his finger into her eye and took the eyelash out. For, sure enough, one minute there was an eyelash in her eye, the next minute it was on her cheekbone. Obviously, though, Helen did not really think Jesus did that. I did not think he did that. But that was her experience. She experienced herself as having nothing to do with the eyelash—which is our usual experience exactly. We think we have had nothing to do with getting the parking space, with healing our bodies of cancer, with anything that has happened to us. Jesus has done it for us, we think.

Now I want to explain what really happened. This example with Helen is particularly instructive for contrasting the experience of what happens with what truly happens—the difference between the symbol and the reality. We don't want to confuse the two. But in order to explain this, I have to say a little about how Helen would defend herself against Jesus. One of her favorite ways was to attack her eyes. In the Course—and this is true for many other spiritualities—vision is a major symbol. The Course has a tremendous amount about sharing perception with the Holy Spirit, looking through His eyes, seeing with the vision of Christ, etc.

In her mind, Helen not only could hear the voice of Jesus, but she also had all kinds of visions, from the time she was a little girl. Vision for her was always a very powerful symbol. Helen expended a great deal of energy and effort in her life trying to separate herself from Jesus and from God. In one way or another, she was always trying to resist Jesus and his message, trying not to do what she was told—before, as well as during and after the time the Course was coming through. There was always a theme in her life of resisting Jesus. One of the ways in which she expressed this resistance was by attacking her eyes. At one point when Helen was taking down the Course, she went through two or three days when she literally could not see. She actually lost her physical vision. She was very concerned and so went to the Eye Institute, which was part of the Medical Center where she worked. They did a thorough checkup of her and found nothing physiologically wrong with her eyes. Within a day or two her vision returned.

The Psychotherapy pamphlet talks about how understanding the form that a symptom takes will help in understanding the form of unforgiveness that is in the mind (P-2.VI.5:1-3). That idea is not new to the Course—psychoanalysts have known for years that the form that a symptom takes physically will often mirror the conflict in one's mind. Since Helen was afraid to see what Jesus was showing her in the Course and to share his vision, obviously, one way of expressing that fear and resistance was to attack her physical sight. One of Helen's morbid fears all of her life—and certainly in the last period of her life when I knew her—was the fear of getting a detached retina. Then in the last couple of years of her life, she actually did have a detached retina. A part of her mind was always tempted to attack her vision as a way of expressing in form her attempt to attack Jesus by keeping him away.

Jesus often tried to help Helen look at him on the cross. As I've said, she was a very visual person. Many times he would say to her, "Look at me on the cross." The whole point was that if she looked at him on the cross, she would not see a suffering, dying person. She would see someone who was not in any pain at all. Jesus' suffering on the cross was something we made up. Obviously, that is a major theme in the Course. But Helen could never look. I remember many times being with her and trying to help her look at him head-on. But instead she would take the image of Jesus on the cross and quickly shift it to the lower left-hand area of her visual field, so that she could not look at him directly. She was afraid of what she would see. Her ego told her that she would see some expression of hatred, guilt, and murder. Of course, she really would have seen an expression of God's Love.

The fear of looking is another major theme of the Course. Two sections in the text address it—"Looking Within" (T-12.VII) and "The Fear to Look Within" (T-21.IV). The latter section says that "the ego tells you not to look inward [within your mind], for if you do, your eyes will light on sin, and God will strike you blind" (T-21.IV.2:3). And then it explains that the ego is really afraid that we will look within and see there is no sin (T-21.IV.2-3). That is the real fear. That was Helen's fear. And that is everyone's fear.

So Helen would attack her eyes as a way of expressing this fear of looking—not only of looking at Jesus as he really is, but also of looking at his message. The major way she expressed this fear was in getting a detached retina or having a kind of psychological blindness. The minor way was in having an eyelash fall into her eye—her eyelashes were very long and were often falling out. All of these problems with her eyes expressed this impediment to really looking at and accepting Jesus' message.

Returning now to our story of Helen—the thought that underlay her getting the eyelash in her eye was her fear of, and resistance to joining with Jesus. So before we sat down on the bench to pray, a part of Helen's mind that she had repressed said to Jesus, "I'm too afraid of you. I'm too afraid of feeling your love. I'm going to keep you away." That thought then became expressed in the form of the eyelash falling into her eye. In other words, the eyelash in her eye expressed the decision her mind made to separate from the love of Jesus. She was the one who put the eyelash in her eye. She was the one who had the thought of wandering away from the love of Jesus—a love which she was always very, very close to.

If we paraphrase Jesus' message to Helen that we read earlier, in this situation Jesus is telling Helen, "Don't ask me to take your eyelash away from you—out of your eye. Ask me rather to help you remove the conditions that have led to the eyelash in your eye." Helen was the one who made the decision to turn away from Jesus, resulting in the eyelash falling in her eye. When she then said to me, "But I know if I ask Jesus for help, he will take the eyelash out," she was changing her mind. She was saying to Jesus, "Now I will join with you. However, I cannot join with your love as it is. I can only join with a part of your love. I can only experience an eyelash worth of your love, not the totality of your love, because that's too frightening. The only way I can accept your love is to hold up this little glass to your love to fill." And the form it took for Helen was removing the eyelash.

So Helen made a decision to rejoin with Jesus on the level of form, with the express desire and specific need to have the eyelash out of her eye. But she was the one who made the decision to join with him. When she did that, she undid the cause of the eyelash in her eye—dropping Jesus' hand. Asking him for help was taking his hand again, in a form she could accept. In that instant, she undid the cause of the eyelash in her eye. She then opened her eyes and the eyelash was on her cheek. She did all the work. Jesus did nothing. What was there that had to be done? He remained as he always is—a loving, constant, steady presence of love and light in our minds. Helen wandered off and then came back. That process occurred on the level of thought in her mind. There is nothing else. But since Helen believed she was a body, her thought of wandering away from him expressed itself in the eyelash coming into her eye, impeding her relationship with him. Her decision and change of thought—returning to him and taking his hand—then expressed itself in that same symbol. The eyelash had been in her eye by her choice. Now by her choice the eyelash was out of her eye. Jesus did absolutely nothing. She did everything. She wandered away. She wandered back. That is the reality.

Helen's experience however was totally different, just as our experience every day, as I mentioned earlier, that the sun rises and sets is not its reality. We all know that the earth rotates around the sun—the sun does not rotate around the earth. But that does not stop us from perceptually experiencing the sun rising and setting. Knowing in a part of our mind that the reality is different does not stop us from writing beautiful poems about it, or painting beautiful paintings of it, or having wonderful spiritual or religious experiences around a sunrise or a sunset. Similarly, the challenge in working with the Course is to be faithful to our experience, because that is where we believe we are. At the same time, however, we continue to grow towards our reality.

The cause of all of our unhappiness is not the form—it is not anything external. The cause is that we have forgotten Who we are because we have forgotten the one who reminds us of Who we are. That is the problem. And once we are clear about the problem, the solution is obvious. I simply remember Who I am by taking the hand of the one within my mind who symbolizes Who I am—that is the role of Jesus. He is simply the reminder or the symbol within our dream of Who we are—just as the Holy Spirit is. But the Holy Spirit is abstract. Jesus is a form we can relate to and identify with in the dream, where we believe we are.

This explanation does not invalidate Helen's experience with the eyelash, which was extremely important for her. But it would have helped her if she had been able to recognize consciously what was really happening. And it can help all of us if we generalize from her experience to our own and realize that Jesus is available to us all the time. It is also instructive to see how Helen encapsulated her experience of Jesus into very specific categories. She would let him help her get an eyelash out of her eye. She would let him help her by telling her where to go to shop, or what street corner to stand on to get a taxicab. She accepted his help with things that were very circumscribed and very specific—almost all of them having very much to do with the body.

Helen was not able to let Jesus' love become the only thought in her mind, which would have taken care of all her anxieties, concerns, and fears. Instead, she would say to him, "I will accept your love in a little thimble, because I'm too afraid of the immensity of it." This pamphlet began as a special message for Helen, in which Jesus says to her, "What you have done is not wrong, but I could help you even more." And then Jesus basically said, "We will now have a series of lessons in this." The pamphlet became the series of lessons. Similarly, the Course began twelve years earlier with Jesus telling Helen and Bill, "I will now give you a series of notes—[He always referred to the Course as notes] a series of notes which will answer your question, 'What is the other way of relating?'"

The Song of Prayer pamphlet was a microcosm of that same process. But it was not meant just for her, any more than the Course was meant just for Helen and Bill. Its purpose is to help us recognize that we do not want the form, we want the content. We do not want the echo or the overtone, we want the whole song.

**Part VIII
Continuation of "True Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.1)**

As a point of clarification, I would like to note that there is an assumption that I am making with the example of Helen's eyelash that may not be true of the parking-space example. (See Part 7 for an explanation of these examples.) I am assuming that the eyelash in Helen's eye came from a thought to separate from Jesus, which I think was true for her. It does not necessarily follow that not finding a parking space represents a decision to be separate from Jesus. If not having a parking space is accompanied by anxiety, then it must be coming from a decision to be separate from him. So joining with him will undo that block. But this need not be so. It may not be in my best interests to find a parking space. Maybe if I get the parking space I want, a truck will run a red light and hit my car. How do I know what is best or what is not best for me?

That's the whole point of this discussion. I want to be free—not from the eyelash in my eye or the need for a parking space—but from the thought of guilt in my mind that is the real cause of my pain, anxiety, and distress. Jesus makes the point in the workbook, as well as in the text, that the aim of any good teacher is to help the student to generalize across specific lessons. For example, I learn how to do the multiplication tables by first memorizing certain operations so that I can then generalize those basic operations and multiply any number in the world. The Course is teaching us to recognize that by asking Jesus for help in specific circumstances—whether it is help with shopping, removing an eyelash, getting a job, or whatever—I am learning that he is available all the time. But his availability is not so that he can help me in form—that is just the way that I have chosen to experience his love. I really want to feel his presence all the time, so that no matter what happens in my life—whether it is minor or major—it will have no effect on the love and peace inside me.
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As another point of clarification, I would like to address the misperception many people have that Jesus had some kind of special relationship with Helen, as if Jesus chose to join with Helen at this level but ignores others who pray for the same level of personal contact. The point is, Jesus did not join with Helen. He did absolutely nothing with Helen. Helen did everything. Helen experienced Jesus' taking out an eyelash because a part of her mind allowed herself to get very close to him.

But whether we are talking about removing an eyelash or knowing where to stand to get a taxicab in New York City, Jesus had nothing to do with the form of the help. It had nothing whatsoever to do with anything divine. God has nothing to do with this world. The Holy Spirit has nothing to do with this world. We are the ones who made up the world.

To understand more clearly what is really going on in these examples, we have to step back from this whole world of time and space and realize that everything has already happened. Everything within our minds is totally accessible, because we are all one mind. An analogy I often use when I talk about time is the idea of videotapes. There's a videotape of Helen with an eyelash in her eye and a videotape of Helen with an eyelash outside her eye. There's a videotape of standing on Madison Avenue and 40th Street and getting a taxicab, and there's a videotape of not getting a taxicab there. This has nothing to do with the Holy Spirit or with Jesus. We are speaking of an ego-based psychic ability and not divine intervention.

In the section in the teacher's manual on psychic powers and abilities (M-25), Jesus explains that what is important is who guides us with a psychic ability—the ego or the Holy Spirit. Psychic ability has nothing to do with God or the Holy Spirit. It simply enables people to let go of some barriers within their minds. We can do that either for an ego purpose or for the Holy Spirit's purpose. So when Jesus seemed to be telling Helen where to shop, it was not really Jesus telling her. Jesus' real value to us is as a presence in our minds that allows us to feel safe all the time because we feel his love.

The crucifixion demonstrates this principle as well—that it's not about the external form. In the eyes of the world, he was not safe. So the point is, once I identify with Jesus' safety in my mind, whatever happens externally is irrelevant. I could be hanging from a cross, I could be in Auschwitz, I could be caught in a traffic jam at Times Square, or I could be lying comfortably in my own bed. None of this would have an effect on me if were identified with Jesus in my mind. The world may judge the situation I am in to be unsafe, but I would feel safe.

So safety in the mind—which is where we are—has nothing to do with safety as defined in the world. If I am identifying with the safety of my mind with Jesus, then I know that I am not a body, because he is not a body. He is a thought of love within my mind and within everyone's mind. By identifying with that thought of love, I am that thought and I am perfectly safe. I am not a body. If, however, I expect my safety to be reflected in the world of bodies, then I am saying that my safety has to do with the situation my body is in. The point of the crucifixion was to demonstrate that Jesus knew he was not his body. His body may have been in trouble, but since he knew he was not his body, he had no fear.

Now an onlooker seeing Jesus on the cross might have said, "He isn't a holy man. Look at what's happening to him," just as New Age followers today might say, "How could this person be a holy person? Look, he just lost $10,000 in the stock market. A truly advanced spiritual person would never do that." We are always judging according to form. Because something does not work out right on the level of form for someone, we conclude that something is not right in the mind of that person. If that principle holds, then Jesus was a New Age failure.

The whole point is that the meaning of an event depends on its purpose. For him, his crucifixion served a purpose of love. For most of us, being crucified would not serve a purpose of love. But we cannot judge by the form. That is the point I keep making. The form of what happened to Jesus at the end of his life was not loving or safe—it was murderous. But because there was a thought of love in his mind—and only a thought of love—his crucifixion was an act of love from his point of view, although not from the point of view of someone who did not share his thought system.

Now joining with Jesus really reflects joining with our true Self, Christ. But we do not believe that we are Christ—we believe that we are this other self, that we have taken a thought of Christ which is perfect love and have turned it into a thought of separation—a body. So we need a thought of Christ that represents this other part of us. That's what Jesus represents for all of us. As long as we have the illusion of being this separate self that we think we are, then we need the illusion of a Jesus. He is as much an illusion as we are. And when the time comes, as I said earlier, when we truly know that we are not the ego, and we truly know that we are part of Christ, at that point we disappear, and Jesus disappears. Until that point though, we need him.

As we have seen, we can think about Jesus on two levels: the level of reality and the level of symbol. On the level of reality, Jesus is outside time. But he is still within the split mind, because he is a thought within the mind of the Sonship. Each of us is a thought within the mind of the Sonship, and we are all joined. All minds are joined. All thoughts are joined. The difference between Jesus and us is that he knows the whole idea of separation is an illusion, and we do not.

Because we think of ourselves as separate selves, we do not identify ourselves each as a mind, or as a thought, but rather as a body. So that thought is symbolized in this body that we call ourselves by name. Similarly, because we think Jesus is separate from us, that thought is also symbolized by a body that we call Jesus. So on the level of symbol, we will experience him next to us. We will experience him as a presence who is guiding us and helping us and loving us. But that is a symbol. The point I am making, still once again, is that this will be our experience here. But our experience here is simply a symbol of a symbol.

There is another point I would like to clarify about Helen and the eyelash. My explanation was that Helen first dropped the hand of Jesus and then she experienced the eyelash in her eye—the cause of the eyelash in her eye, thus, was her separating from Jesus. If that was the cause, then joining with him would undo the separation and the eyelash would have to disappear. However, if the cause of the eyelash in her eye had been something else—say a decision to show me or someone else something, then the eyelash would have remained in her eye because it was teaching a different lesson.

We always have to be careful not to confuse the form with the content and the cause. As we discussed earlier, love was the cause of Jesus' hanging on the cross. For just about anyone else, the cause would be guilt. You don't necessarily know the cause just from observing the form, which is the effect. In other words, the cause leads to the effect and not the reverse—the effect does not lead to the cause. That's why it is always difficult to judge from the form. In the text, Jesus says that basically we cannot understand anything—some of what we have judged to be failures have really been our greatest advances. And what we have judged to be successes have really been our greatest setbacks (T-18.V.1:6). We don't really know.

So that is the problem when we try to evaluate our progress by the form, by the external—I think that I'm holy and spiritually advanced because I get parking spaces. But I really know that I'm holy and advanced when I am at peace regardless of what happens.
. . . . . . .

Let me now apply what I've been talking about to the Course. Using the same basic idea that we have just discussed with respect to Helen, Jesus, and the eyelash, let me talk about Helen, Jesus, and the Course. This will follow logically from everything else that we have been talking about. It will also help a great deal in clarifying again the difference between form and content, between symbol and reality. The symbol is A Course in Miracles—three books with a specific teaching, structure, and form. The reality is the love of Jesus.

I remember once many years ago a woman coming up to Helen and saying, "How could Jesus have dictated the Course? He didn't know English." When we step back and think about it, her question has a certain logic—but she was mixing up levels. She was confusing the form of the Jesus who lived in Palestine two thousand years ago, who did not know a word of English—with the Jesus who "dictated" the Course to Helen. From the point of view that Jesus' form two thousand years ago was his reality, her question made very good sense.

But it is very risky to try to say that Jesus who dictated the Course is the same Jesus who lived in Palestine. The thought of love that was reflected as Jesus in Palestine is the same thought of love that is the source of the Course. But the person is not the same person—that's confusing body with thought—symbol with reality. That's how we can really get caught. And that is why there is nothing in the Course about Jesus' life. He talks only about the crucifixion and resurrection, and simply in order to change our thought system. He does not talk about where he was born and where he lived, whether he liked chocolate or vanilla ice cream, or any other specifics of his life—it makes no sense to consider them.

When Jesus says, "Take me as your model for learning" (T-6.in.2:1), he does not mean we should comb our hair the way he combed his hair. He does not mean we should answer a question in the same form in which he answered the question. He means we should take his thought system as our model. His thought system was one of being defenseless in the face of attack, of being the expression of perfect love that is not affected in any way by any of the thoughts around him. He is not talking about behaving like him. In fact at one point he says, "You are not asked to be crucified" (T-6.I.6:6). He does not want us to emulate him in terms of form, because there is no form. This is clearly implied in a number of passages in the Course (e.g., T-19.IV-A.17:5-7) that are aimed specifically at the Roman Catholic Church, which made the mistake of making Jesus' body into a big deal.

In effect he is saying, "Why would I tell you to take my body and eat it? I don't want to share my body with you. That's silly. I want to share my mind with you. And I want to share the love in my mind—not my personality, not whether or not I had a good sense of humor." None of that is real. It might have been real when he lived in Palestine, but that body does not live anymore. The thought of love that was reflected in that body is what is real. That thought is the source of the Course. And that thought is inside all of us—we want to join with that thought. Again, don't confuse the symbol for the reality.

So the answer to the woman's question—"How could Jesus have dictated the Course—he didn't know English?"—is that he did not dictate the Course in English. He is a thought of perfect love. The content of the Course came from him—that is the content of love. The form of the Course came through Helen's mind. Helen's mind then, using my earlier analogy, is the glass. Her mind became the vessel through which the water poured, or the love flowed. If we look at the form of the Course and look at Helen's mind, or actually at the specific forms reflected in her brain, we see exact parallels:

Helen was English-speaking—the Course is written in English. Helen was American—the Course has many references to Americana (e.g., a reference to the Declaration of Independence) and there are figures of speech that are particularly American. Helen was a lover of Shakespeare—the Course's language and meter are Shakespearean. Helen was an educator—the Course comes in curricular terms. Helen was a psychologist—the Course comes in psychological terms. Helen was a keen student of the Bible, not that she believed in the Bible as such, but she loved the biblical language—the Course has over 800 biblical references and allusions. Helen was a lover of Plato and understood Plato very well—there are many allusions to Plato in the Course. Helen was a keen student of logic, and her mind was incredibly logical—the Course develops its arguments in a very logical manner.

This was the form of the Course, reflecting the structure of Helen's brain, through which the love of Jesus poured. The Course is what it is, not because it is in English, not because it is psychological or educational, and not because it is beautifully written. It is the love that comes through the words that makes the Course what it is. The love is the content. That is the meaning, that is the song. The echoes and the overtones and the harmonics came from Helen's mind. But the song did not come from Helen's mind, unless we identify Helen's mind with the Christ Mind, which is the mind that Jesus represents, that we are all a part of. It is for that reason that when people would come up to Helen and say, "Could you please ask Jesus for me what I should do?" she would respond, "You ask Jesus. I will pray with you now [which she would sometimes do] to reinforce the power of your mind to do what I do. It's no big deal."

So, just as it was Helen who took the eyelash out of her eye, in that context it was Helen who wrote A Course in Miracles—not its content, not its message, not the love that is in the Course, but the form in which it came. What makes the Course what it is is the love in those pages that people recognize as not coming from this world. Within the western world, Jesus is the symbol we use to denote a love that is not of this world, although it is experienced here.

This distinction is important to understand so that, as I said earlier, we do not make an idol out of the Course as a book. And so we do not feel that Helen did something special that no one else is capable of doing. We are all channels, we are all scribes, because none of us is in the body anyway. The Course makes it clear that the mind is not in the body, but the mind projects itself into a body. That is what a channel is. People these days make a big deal about those who channel. We are all channels. At any given moment, we are either speaking for the Holy Spirit or speaking for the ego—it's no big deal. If we start to make a big deal about the voice, we know we're trapped in the ego, because we are making the form real, we are making the form into a big deal.

Remember again, it is not the echoes or the harmonics that we want. We want the song, we want the source. We do not want the forms in which it comes. Everybody channels all the time. Simply being in a body is channeling—the body is a channeling of the ego thought, it is the ego thought taken form. Whenever I open my mouth and say something or write down something, I am channeling—it's no big deal. No one does it any better or any worse than any one else. All that matters is whom I am asking to be the source of my "channeling."

What made Helen different within the dream was her ability to join her mind fully with the Love of Christ in her mind, which for her, as for most us, was symbolized by the person of Jesus. But it is not Jesus whom we want—we want the love that he symbolized for us in the world. When Helen was scribing the Course, she was able to bring her glass to him and not keep it small. In contrast, when she was living her usual life, she held up only a thimble, which then became an eyelash, or questions such as "Where do I go to buy pantyhose?" or "What street corner should I stand on to get a taxi?" But when she was taking down the Course, Helen opened up her whole mind to him, so that her mind became his mind. And then the love that he symbolized flowed through her, through the structure of her brain—which again was American, psychological, educational, English-speaking, etc.—and came out in the form of these three books. Her brain structured the form of the books, but that is not their content, that is not the content of their message. The form is not why these books have had such a powerful effect—whether it has been positive or negative—on most people who have seen them. It is because we experience a presence through the pages that transcends the words.

And it is a presence of love. Helen joined her mind with Jesus, or really with her Self—Jesus is the symbol of that Self for all of us. From that joining with him the Course had its birth, which for her began with her experience of joining with Bill. And her joining with Bill, with each of them setting aside any separate interests, became the reflection of what the Course refers to as the "greater joining"—the joining with the Holy Spirit or Jesus in our mind. It is from that joining that the Course came. The mistake again is in confusing the form for the content.

Now Helen's experience, as many of you have heard in the stories that I tell, was very much of herself as a separated being talking to this other separate being in her mind. She had dialogues with Jesus that were conversational, and she experienced her relationship with him as very real and very personal. He was someone whom she both loved—more than any other person—and hated—she would often yell and argue with him. But all of this was simply part of the symbol, part of the form. In reality, it was like one part of her mind talking to another part. That experience was extremely helpful to Helen, just as it would be for any of us.

A major part of the Course's process is to develop a personal relationship with Jesus or the Holy Spirit. Because we are so split off from our true Self, we need someone within our split-off dream, a symbol who can reflect to us a different thought system from our thought system of separation, guilt, and anger. Whatever Helen might have thought of Jesus at those times when she was angry at him, she basically trusted everything he said. She knew to whom she was talking and that whatever he told her was loving. She was also aware that at any given moment she might decide not to pay any attention to him. She was also aware, in some part of her mind, of the consequences of that decision—she would feel terrible. But this relationship was all a symbol, as another part of her mind knew. Occasionally—very, very occasionally—Helen would have an experience after which she would say to me, "This was different from the usual voice." What she really meant was that the experience went beyond Helen talking with Jesus or Jesus talking with Helen—she had reached a part of her mind in which there was only one voice. And that was relatively rare.

A somewhat parallel experience occurred when Helen was helping others. She would not usually ask Jesus what to say—she would just speak. Basically, if we have the experience of having to ask Jesus what to say or do, we are still coming from a dissociated mind. When we are living in the real world, we do not ask—the Voice of the Holy Spirit, the Love of God, simply comes through us, and we are aware that we are that voice. Most of the time we are not in that state. We may go in and out of it. But most of the time we are within a split-mind framework, and so we need the illusion of a separate mind within our minds who tells us what to say and do. In much of the Course, Jesus addresses us at this level because this is where we are.

But when we are in the real world, we do not ask anymore because we are that voice and that wisdom. When Helen was helping others, she often spoke and acted from that level. Basically, therapists do that when they are in their right minds. If, as a therapist, I were to stop every minute and say to Jesus, "What should I say now?" the patient would experience the therapy as very disjointed. After each time lag of five or ten seconds while I am asking, the patient would be thinking, "Come on, guy, get on with it." And I would be thinking, "Hold on, I'm not ready, I still have to check." That is not what happens when a therapist is right-minded—then the wisdom and the love and the help just come through. And basically, that would be our experience in the real world, except in the real world it happens all the time.

So to ask Jesus what street corner to stand on for a taxi is still on the lower level of the ladder. And there is absolutely nothing wrong with that—that is where we all are. The workbook begins with us on that level. The purpose of the workbook, which is a one-year training program, is to train us, first of all, to hear the Voice of the Holy Spirit rather than the voice of the ego. When we really learn how to do that and let go of all of our fear of the Holy Spirit or of Jesus, then we become that Voice as well. But that happens much, much later, when we become what in the teacher's manual is referred to as an advanced teacher of God. The teacher's manual distinguishes between teachers of God and advanced teachers of God.

As an advanced teacher of God, we ask less and less of the time, because we become the answer. But it is the arrogance of the ego to think that we are already farther along than we really are. The Course comes to us at the bottom level of the ladder, on the level of form and symbol—that is why Jesus refers to himself so often and emphasizes our joining with him. We are all like little children. None of us is grown up in a spiritual sense. The Course is written for little children—not chronologically young children, but little adult children.

**Part IX
Continuation of "True Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.1.3)**

I would like now to finish what we have been reading from The Song of Prayer Then we will discuss the importance of having Jesus as a symbol in our minds, to whom we turn for help. We will spend enough time on this later, so that we end up in a place where most people feel comfortable. One thing that I will emphasize is that there is nothing sinful or wrong in seeing oneself on the bottom rung of the ladder. Again, that is where Jesus in the Course basically assumes we are. And it is only the arrogance of the ego that would have us feel that we are at a level different from where we really are.

Let's continue, then, from where we left off in **The Song of Prayer-"True Prayer" (S-1.1.3)**. I'll reread the final line of paragraph three.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 6) You have sought first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all else has indeed been given you.**

When Jesus says that all else will be given us he does not mean that we will get all the abundance that the material world has to offer. He means that all of our anxiety will be gone, and that, regardless of what happens in our external world, we will be at peace. This is not a promise that if we take Jesus' hand we will get hundreds of thousands of dollars, and every relationship that we want will be given to us, etc.—it has nothing to do with anything external. It means that when we take his hand and feel his love and his peace, that love and peace will not be affected by anything that occurs in the world around us.

On the other hand, if our focus is on the material things of this world—the expressions in form that we feel taking Jesus' hand gives us—then we may get what we want today, but we could always lose it tomorrow. So, for example, I may get the parking space today, but I am not sure that it will be there the next time I go. Or I may recover from a physical illness and feel better today, but that does not mean that tomorrow I may not get sick again. However, as I begin to identify more and more with Jesus' love and his peace, then no matter what happens, I will not be concerned. That gives us tremendous freedom, for we no longer feel the need to control what other people do or what happens to us. Such a need always comes from the fear that if I am not careful, the little I believe I have will be taken from me.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 1) The secret of true prayer is to forget the things you think you need.**

I think I need a parking space. I think I need to be healed from cancer or AIDS. I think I need ten thousand dollars. I think I need a relationship. I think I need something.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 2) To ask for the specific is much the same as to look on sin and then forgive it.**

Let me explain briefly what this means. A major theme in the Course itself is the understanding of forgiveness. As the world has understood it, forgiveness takes the form:

I forgive you for the terrible thing that you have done. Yes, you have done something that you should not have done and it was a terrible thing. However, out of the goodness and the kindness of my heart, and as an indication of the holiness of my soul and the sacredness of my mind, I forgive you.

Later in this pamphlet, this approach is called "forgiveness-to-destroy" (S-2). Forgiveness according to the Course, as we know, means that we forgive each other for what we have not done. This does not mean that we overlook or deny what one body has done to another body. It simply means that what your body has done to me, or what your body has done to those with whom I identify, has had no effect on the Love and the peace of God within me. Forgiveness is for what someone has not done (T-17.III.1:5). When I feel upset or angry at you, and have accused you of anything, I am really accusing you of taking the peace of God from me. But you are not able to reach into my mind and take the hand of Jesus from mine and separate us—only I can do that.

Therefore nothing you have done has had any effect at all on my relationship with Jesus. Only what I do has an effect on my relationship with Jesus. Again that is the meaning of the principle that we forgive each other for what we have notdone. However, when I say that you have indeed done something—that you have caused me or a loved one of mine to suffer pain, then I am giving you a power that you do not really have. That is what the Course means by "making the error real" (e.g., T-12.I.1:1)—I am saying there is a problem out there. So if I then "forgive" you, the problem has not gone away, it is still real, but I choose to overlook it.

Jesus is telling us that asking God for something specific is in principle the same thing. I am saying that I have a need for a parking space, or for a thousand dollars, a relationship, a cure for cancer, etc. If my need is not satisfied, I will not feel happy. I will not feel at peace unless I turn the corner and find a parking space. Or turn the corner and find the love of my life. Or turn the corner and find a thousand-dollar bill waiting in the street for me—just what I need to pay all my bills. That makes the error real. The reason I am anxious and feel the scarcity—that something is lacking inside me—has nothing whatsoever to do with any external lack. The scarcity or the lack I am feeling comes from my belief that I have separated myself from the Love of God—that is the problem, that is the mistake in asking for specific things.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 3) Also in the same way, in prayer you overlook your specific needs as you see them, and let them go into God's Hands.**

In the context of what we have been discussing in this workshop, we do not actually let our needs go into God's Hands—we let them go into Jesus' hands. Within the dream, the hands of Jesus are the symbol for the Hands of God. In fact, God obviously does not have hands. So Jesus is reminding us here that we want the song—and not all the overtones or the forms in which the song comes to us.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 4-5) There** [in God's Hands] **they become your gifts to Him, for they tell Him that you would have no gods before Him; no Love but His. What could His answer be but your remembrance of Him?**

The remembrance of God, within the context of the Course, is the Holy Spirit. He is the memory of God within our minds, and Jesus is the specific form or manifestation of that memory—the answer. The answer is not "Go to the left" or "Go to the right." "Have this meal instead of that meal." "Stand on this street corner instead of that street corner." None of these is the answer. The answer is the memory of God's Love. But since we are afraid of the purity and the totality of that Love, we are the ones who place that Love in a little thimble—and out comes a street corner or an eyelash, or some other specific thing.

And then comes this extremely important line:

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 6) Can this** [the remembrance of God's Love, the experience of His peace] **be traded for a bit of trifling advice about a problem of an instant's duration?**

Remember, The Song of Prayer was a specific answer to a discussion Helen and I had about the issue of asking for specific things. So Jesus is saying, "You want an experience of my love for you and your love for me—that is what you want. Would you really be willing to trade that for a piece of trifling advice about a problem that doesn't last for longer than an instant?" We ask not for too much, but for far too little (T-26.VI.11:7). Our egos tell us that we are not worthy of having an experience of God's Love—that we are worthy only of being told where to go for breakfast, or something like that. Or it could be something that seems more important, involving, for example, a relationship, or work, or one's health. But none of these lasts for more than an instant. Each of them involves only our bodies, and none of them involves the peace of God. And yet we are so willing to settle for the specific things. Students of the Course often are willing to settle for so little, seeing the Course only as an extension of New Age paths which teach how to get things in this world. They are willing to settle for an experience of the Holy Spirit telling them specific things, rather than allowing Him to train their minds so that they can have everything. This is not a course in problem solving on the level of minutiae. It is not a course in living better in this world. It is a course in changing our minds about our relationship with God—in changing our minds from the guilt that the ego has made to be our mind's reality to the forgiveness and the love that is waiting for us there.

To learn that lesson and accept the love, we have to deal with symbols. We have to accept the love in whatever forms symbolize that love for us. But the point is not to settle only for the forms but to allow the forms to lead us farther up the ladder so that we can begin to have a deeper experience of Jesus' love. That is the goal.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 7-8) God answers only for eternity. But still all little answers are contained in this.**

God is only eternity—His Love is eternal. We have to begin with the little answers—the bottom rung of the ladder. But we do not want to forget that the little answers are only symbols. And we want what is beyond the symbols, as the section towards the end of the text, "Beyond All Symbols" (T-27.III), reminds us.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentences 1-2) This is not a level of prayer that everyone can attain as yet. Those who have not reached it still need your help in prayer because their asking is not yet based upon acceptance.**

Jesus is speaking here of the top of the ladder. Usually when we ask for help, we are not asking for help in accepting Who we are. Rather, we are asking for help to fix something. For example, we ask for help that our terrible burden of fear, or guilt, or depression, or pain be lifted from us, which means, of course, that we are not accepting responsibility for choosing it. We saw the same idea earlier in our discussion of Helen's asking Jesus to take her fear away. Such a request denies the power of the mind that has chosen the fear. Jesus is saying here that there are people who are still afraid of the power of their minds. These lines were meant specifically for Helen, because one of her questions to Jesus asked about how to deal with people who were asking her for help, and whether or not to give them the specific help they wanted. She decided most of the time that it was not helpful, and instead she would join with them to remind them of the power of their own minds.

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 3) Help in prayer does not mean that another mediates between you and God.**

If you have a problem and I think I can help you with that problem by being an intermediary, that is not help. Jesus has often been seen this way, but that is not how he sees himself in the Course. His view of his role is reflected in the next line:

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentence 4) But it does mean that another stands beside you and helps to raise you up to Him.**

That is what Jesus does. And he asks us, as his manifestation in the world, to do the same thing. A wonderful passage in the teacher's manual (M-5.III.2) discusses healing in terms of what it means to be a teacher of God. And it says that the teacher of God does not do anything, he does not heal. The teacher of God simply reminds those who believe they are sick that they have the power to make another choice. Again, that is what Jesus does. He does not choose for us. He does not do anything for us. And we should be grateful he does not do anything for us because, if he did, he would be part of the same insane system we are all a part of—and that would not be helpful. He stands outside the insane system in our minds, and reminds us by his very presence that we can make another choice.

Now, we may experience him as doing something, just as Helen experienced him taking an eyelash out. But the reality is that he simply remained within her mind until she came back to him. It was her mind that interpreted that experience as Jesus doing something for her. Again, that is why it is important to keep the distinction between the appearance and the reality, between the form and the content perfectly clear.

**(Paragraph 6 - Sentences 5-6) One who has realized the goodness of God prays without fear. And one who prays without fear cannot but reach Him. He can therefore also reach His Son, wherever he may be and whatever form he may seem to take.**

That, of course, is what Jesus is able to do, being a thought of perfect love within the mind of the Sonship. Since minds are joined and all thoughts within the one mind are joined, then the thought that he is is always available to all of us. We are the ones who have to choose it, but the choice is always there.

I would like to clarify the line, "And one who prays without fear cannot but reach him." Why, you might ask, would one pray if there is no fear? But this does not mean prayer in the usual sense. When I pray without fear, prayer becomes acceptance. But if I ask for things, then obviously I am in a state of fear, because I believe that I lack something. Why would I pray for something unless I feel I do not have it? And further, I must feel that if I do not have it, something terrible will happen to me. When my fear is gone, my prayer is simply an acceptance of the love that not only Jesus has and is, but that I am with him.

**Part X
"The Ladder of Prayer" (The Song of Prayer, S-1.II)**

Let's skip now to the beginning of the next section and read just a little. This section, **"The Ladder of Prayer**," presents the image of the ladder that we have been using. The top of the ladder is God and Christ—what is above the **purple line on the chart**. Everything below it constitutes the ladder. The same image is used in the text, where it says the Holy Spirit will lead us up the ladder that separation has led us down (T-28.III.1:2). The meaning of the image is that we have fallen from Heaven and into the ego's world, and now the Holy Spirit will retrace those steps with us, step-by-step.
The bottom of the ladder is where we all have fallen and now find ourselves, believing that we are bodies living in a world that is real and that is our home. And we have all these physical and psychological needs that have to be met—otherwise we cannot exist. Basically all of them, in one form or another, represent our specialness needs. That is the bottom of the ladder.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 1-2) Prayer has no beginning and no end. It is a part of life.**

This level is the top of the ladder—the song of prayer.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 3) But it does change in form, and grow with learning until it reaches its formless state, and fuses into total communication with God.**

The formless state is the song of prayer—the absence of anything related to duality or need. Nonetheless, our fear of the formless love is so great that we have placed many layers of filters between ourselves and that love. And so the love is filtered through, and then is expressed in specific experiences that we see as meeting our needs. These experiences are not the reality of love or Jesus' reality—they are simply what our fear has reduced the love to. We are so afraid of being in Jesus' presence that we have to diffuse his power, his love, his light. But then we make the mistake of taking the diffusion to be the reality, instead of simply an aspect or a reflection of it.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentence 1) These forms of prayer, or asking-out-of-need, always involve feelings of weakness and inadequacy, and could never be made by a Son of God who knows Who he is.**

Once we forget Who we are, we identify ourselves as a limited, fragmented, separated, sinful self. This self begins as a thought that is then projected from the mind and is experienced as a body—a limited, separated body that has all kinds of needs and inevitably will die. Certainly, even on the grossest physical level, we have tremendous needs. If we do not eat every day, we will get sick and die. If we do not have enough to drink or to breathe, we will die. These physical needs reinforce the sense of feeling weak and inadequate. Then all of the psychological needs we believe we have reinforce that sense even further.

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 2-3) No one, then, who is sure of his Identity could pray in these forms. Yet it is also true that no one who is uncertain of his Identity can avoid praying in this way.**

That includes all of us. We all believe that we really are the person whom we look at in the mirror. We believe we are this personality to whom we give a name and a history. We believe we are this body, which we can describe, and which is in relationship with other bodies—that is a given. Yet this means all of us are insane. All of us believe that we have needs that must be met. None of us believes God is a loving Creator because, if we did, none of us would have run away from home and stayed away. The very fact that we are here witnesses to our belief that the ego thought system is real. That does not make it real—that does not mean that we are really here. But we believe that we are here.

Once we believe that we are here, we also believe that we have needs. And we either believe that God will ignore our needs because He is very angry at us, or we believe that He will magically take care of all of our needs. Remember—looking at the **ego column on the chart**—the ego's god in the world of form is someone who will pay no attention to us and, if we get anywhere near him, he will destroy us. Consequently, since we believe we are in the world of form, the correction is in the **adjacent column**—God is Someone Who cares for us, Who loves us, and Who answers our prayers and meets our needs. That is the very bottom of the ladder.

Skip now to the next paragraph.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 1-4) It is also possible to reach a higher form of asking-out-of-need, for in this world prayer is reparative, and so it must entail levels of learning. Here, the asking may be addressed to God in honest belief, though not yet with understanding. A vague and usually unstable sense of identification has generally been reached, but tends to be blurred by a deep-rooted sense of sin. It is possible at this level to continue to ask for things of this world in various forms, and it is also possible to ask for gifts such as honesty or goodness, and particularly for forgiveness for the many sources of guilt that inevitably underlie any prayer of need.**

Jesus is now speaking of moving slowly up the ladder. At the bottom of the ladder we simply ask for the things of the world that we think we need. As we begin to grow, we still ask out of need, but we begin to ask for things that seem to be on a higher level. So we ask for release from fear or for forgiveness. But we are still asking of someone who is perceived outside us. So I pray to Jesus, "Please take away my fear." Last year I might have said to Jesus, "Please send me ten thousand dollars." Now I am saying, "Please take away my fear." Within the dream of this world, that would certainly be an improvement. But such a prayer is still based on the idea that he and I are separate, and that he has something that I do not have. The truth is that what he has, I have. The only difference is that I have forgotten it.

His role as my older brother who loves me is to remind me that I can make the same choice he did—I, too, can experience the peace and the Love of God. And he does not give it to me—he simply reminds me of the choice. But I begin first without any idea of Jesus, or with an idea of a Jesus who is angry at me. From that view of him, I grow into a view of a Jesus who is there for me, a Jesus who is not angry—but a Jesus who is different from me. He is a magical figure who can give me what I want—because he has it and I do not.

The Course explains in many different places—it is one of the most important ways of understanding special relationships—that it is impossible to love anyone whom I perceive as different from me. If I perceive you as different from me, then you must have what I do not have. We don't have time now to go into the dynamics of this, but the main point is that if you have something that I do not have, it's because you took it from me. That is what the fourth and fifth laws of chaos are about (T-23.II). I lack something, you have it, and I know why you have it and I do not: you took it from me. How could I possibly love someone who stole the Love and the peace of God, and the innocence of Christ from me?

This means that for all these centuries, the love that people have been professing for Jesus has really been hate, because they have seen him as having something they did not have—he is the only true Son of God, the only one whom God truly loves, the only one who is truly innocent and holy. We are all second-class citizens at best. And, at worst, we do not even deserve to be here. There is no way that we can love him. That is why the world had to kill him, and then, as if killing him were not enough, they had to destroy his message. And that certainly is why Catholics have to kill him every day on the altar at Mass. There is no love in this, which explains why, for all of the lovely words and good intentions, Christianity for the most part has ended up being a religion of hatred, murder, and death. That was its very root, because it saw Jesus as different from us.

Now, to see Jesus as different from us, in the sense that he is someone who loves us and is available to help us, is certainly a step above not believing in him at all, or believing he is someone who is angry and wrathful. But if we simply stop with that, we have not gained all that much. We have taken only a few small steps up from the bottom rung. As long as we see him as different, we will see ourselves as second best, and we will feel justified unconsciously, if not consciously, in hating him—he has what we do not have. That is why in those passages I read earlier, he says, "Don't ask me to take your fear away from you. I can't do that. All I can do is remind you of the power of your mind to choose to be loving and peaceful instead of fearful." That is what he does.

So again, when this passage speaks of "a higher form of asking-out-of-need," asking to be reminded of the choice we have is the higher form. But it is still asking-out-of-need.
. . . . . . .

We will conclude our reading from The Song of Prayer with the last paragraph in this section.

**(Paragraph 8 - Sentences 1-2) God is the goal of every prayer, giving it timelessness instead of end. Nor has it a beginning, because the goal has never changed.**

This is reminiscent of the line in the text that tells us that we are on "a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed" (T-8.VI.9:7). True prayer is timeless, because true prayer is the song that the Father sings to the Son and the Son sings to the Father.

**(Paragraph 8 - Sentence 3) Prayer in its earlier forms is an illusion, because there is no need for a ladder to reach what one has never left.**

Forgiveness is an illusion. The miracle is an illusion. Salvation is an illusion. A Course in Miracles is an illusion. Jesus is an illusion. The Holy Spirit is an illusion. Everything here is an illusion, because we are not here. We have never left home, and so "there is no need for a ladder to reach what one has never left."

**(Paragraph 8 - Sentence 4) Yet prayer is part of forgiveness as long as forgiveness, itself an illusion, remains unattained.**

As long as we still believe that we are sinful and separated, we have a need for an illusion to correct our illusion. That is what forgiveness is.

**(Paragraph 8 - Sentences 5-6) Prayer is tied up with learning until the goal of learning has been reached. And then all things will be transformed together, and returned unblemished into the Mind of God.**

That basically is all of us.

**(Paragraph 8 - Sentences 7-8) Being beyond learning, this state cannot be described. The stages necessary to its attainment, however, need to be understood, if peace is to be restored to God's Son, who lives now with the illusion of death and the fear of God.**

These are the stages that constitute the ladder of prayer. The Song of Prayer speaks of a progression from praying for others, including our enemies, to realizing that we are really simply praying for ourselves. Although this issue takes us away from the theme of this workshop, we can understand the stages of prayer in terms of how we look at Jesus. We see Jesus, first, either as nonexistent or as a harsh judge who is angry at us or demands things from us. Next, he is seen as an elder brother who loves us, a magical figure who does things for us. Finally, we recognize that Jesus is simply the reminder of Who we are. At that point, Jesus as a separate identity disappears, we as separate identities disappear, and we all become one. These are stages that we can understand.

As long as we live "with the illusion of death and the fear of God," we need prayer in its lower forms. We all have the belief in death, we all believe we are going to die, and we fear God. None of us would be here in this body if we were not afraid of God. Why would we leave our home in Heaven? Why would we leave the reality of being at one with our Source and His Love and totally at peace with Him unless we were afraid of Him? In the delusion, we somehow believe that we are safer here, even though our experience is hardly that.

Everyone dies. Everyone's body dies. Our bodies suffer pain throughout our lives. So a part of us knows that this world does not work, this body does not work. Yet we continually persist in the belief that this is who we are and where we are, as if there is no other choice. The Course, thus, can be understood as the Love of God expressing itself within the illusion, meeting us where we believe we are, telling us that there is another way of looking at this, and providing us with a context and a framework with which we can make our way back up the ladder step-by-step. But we have to begin with the idea that we are at the bottom of the ladder, and not take that as an insult.

It is helpful as we read through the Course to keep in mind how often Jesus refers to us as children, or as little children. He does not call us adults, or wonderfully mature people. Over and over again, he says we are children. The Course is written for us as little children, in the form of Jesus as a wiser, older brother, who understands the difference between reality and illusion, and is trying to teach his little brothers and sisters something about which they do not have the foggiest idea. It is extremely humbling and helpful to accept the fact that, yes, we are as little children. It is not meant as an insult. If we can accept that, then we can begin to accept the help that is there.

When we deny that we are like children, we are reproducing the original error when we turned to God and said, "I don't need You any more. I can do it on my own. I can do it my way. I know better than You what I need and what I want. If You're not going to give it to me, I'll do it on my own." And so we did. We split off within the dream and made up a world and a self—an identity of which we say, "This is who I am." And somehow, in the insanity of our minds, we really believe this is better than the Heaven that we threw away. This obviously is not humility—it is the height of arrogance. And it certainly is not sanity. It is the height of insanity. Jesus is always asking us in the Course why we persist in believing in something that frankly does not work, and that we know does not work.

There are two lines in the text—a few hundred pages apart—that, if put together, read, "Resign now as your own teacher? for you were badly taught" (T-12.V.8:3; T-28.I.7:1). We steadfastly, stubbornly, and tenaciously refuse to do that. We say, "No, I am my own teacher, and I know what I'm doing," even though it is obvious that we do not at all know what we are doing, and that nothing that we have ever done on our own works. So basically Jesus is saying to us in the Course, "What you have done doesn't work. Why don't you at least give me or the Holy Spirit a try, because you can't lose anything? You've already lost everything. And nothing here is ever going to work or bring you happiness or peace."

But we are so terrified of love—we are so terrified of Jesus and of God—that we continually resist what Jesus says, putting up one barrier after another to keep his love away. The beginning of turning it around comes when we are able to recognize what we are doing and can then say, "You know, there's something really wrong here. Maybe, just perhaps, there's a slight chance that I have been wrong." That recognition is the invitation to the Holy Spirit that the Course talks about. That opens the door.
. . . . . . .

Before moving on to the next part of the workshop, I would just like to say a few more words about the fear of God, insofar as it is so central to everything the Course teaches, and, invariably, people will say that they never really experience that fear.

It is true that most people are not aware of their fear of God, but yet, this is what leads to their resistance to Jesus' message. I would say that 99.99% of us are not aware of that terror, because we have all done such an effective job of denying it. This whole world was literally made as a cover for that terror, as I have said so often. And everything within the world, including our bodies, was specifically made to be the cover for that terror. So it makes sense, then, that none of us would be in touch with it. What follows, however, is that we all then deny or react against what we really believe at a deeper level. In psychology, this is what is known as reaction formation.

Thus, while we all believe that God is going to destroy us, and that is why we are here in the world, we cover that with a concept that says, "No, God is Someone Who loves me." That is why so many religions—and certainly it has been a hallmark of Judaism and Christianity—spend so much time telling God how much we love Him, and in praising and glorifying Him. Recall the famous line in Hamlet: "The lady doth protest too much, methinks." If we stepped back and really looked at how much energy we expend in telling God how wonderful He is, we would have to question why we do it. As Jesus tells us in the Course, God does not have an ego with which to accept our praise (T-4.VII.6:3). So, obviously, we are not praising God for His benefit. But, just as obviously, our praise does a great deal for us. It is simply our attempt to convince ourselves that we really love God, that we are not angry at God, and that God is not the enemy.

This, then, is the Course's argument. Why would any of us in our right minds come here, if we were not afraid of God, and were not trying to hide from Him and His Love? This world is a place of death. The Course says that the body was made as a limit on love (T-18.VIII.1:2-3). In fact, that is such an important point that Jesus clarifies it and says, "Think not this is merely allegorical." He means very literally that the body was made as a limit on love. But why would anyone want to encase love, containing it in this narrow, ugly, smelly cylinder that we call a body, and then say, "This is who I am. This is love," when I could be totally at one with Who I really am as spirit, as Christ, Who is Love. Thus, the very fact that we believe we are here in the body is telling us that we are willing to settle for this much love instead of an oceanful.

**Part XI
Jesus as a Symbol**

I would now like to discuss Jesus as a symbol, and his importance as a symbol. I had mentioned earlier that the Course is written on the level of children—not chronological children, but children insofar as we do not understand the difference between appearance and reality, between truth and illusion. We are like children whom Jesus takes to the puppet show, who think things are really happening on the stage. So we become upset, we become glad, we laugh, we cry, we become frightened, etc. Jesus, as our loving older brother, is sitting there beside us, reminding us that what we see on the stage is not what we think it is. And this is a symbol for the fact that he is really in our minds, reminding us of what is not real. We can see the parallel to the prisoner in Plato's cave, who escapes from his bonds and comes back to remind all the prisoners that the shadows they perceive on the wall in front of them are not the reality—the reality is in back of them. In fact, there are a couple of references in the Course to Plato's cave (T-20.III.9:1-2; T-25.VI.2). Jesus is telling us the same thing. He addresses us in the Course at the level of little children because we do not understand what is real. Most of the time the Course is pitched on that level, although there are many statements throughout all three books that let us know that we are not separate, time is not real, the world is an illusion, God does not even know about us, etc. And so we get different levels in the Course. That makes the Course a powerful spiritual tool—no matter what level people come in on, it is written in such a way that they can relate to it and benefit from it.

In other words, if I study the Course and get nothing from it except the idea that God is loving and not hateful, that is pretty good. Or if I get nothing else from the Course than the idea that I will feel better if I let go of my grievances, that is still a lot. It is not what the whole Course is about, and many other spiritual paths teach the same thing. But if I do not get anything other than one of these ideas, I still can gain a great deal. But if I enter into the process that is the Course, then I will be led up the ladder, step-by-step, at whatever pace I can accept. Then gradually I will recognize what the Course is teaching on the highest level—that absolutely nothing is going on here, that all that is necessary for me to find the peace of God is to choose it, and that the means for me to attain that peace is forgiveness.

The entry level for the Course is the bottom rung or level. The workbook is pitched on that level, and it is an integral part of the curriculum of the Course. But it is a one-year training program. That is all it is. It is meant to help us begin a shift that is outlined for us in the text. The beginning of the workbook states that its lessons will be meaningful only within the theoretical context of the text (W-in.1:1). But the workbook starts from the premise that we do not know anything about anything—we do not know how to meditate or pray. And so the workbook on one level can be understood as a series of lessons in how to meditate or pray.

The workbook, thus, has a much greater emphasis than the text on asking the Holy Spirit for help and on asking to hear God's Voice. In fact, one workbook lesson specifically says we should ask God what we should do (W-pI.71.9), even though the text and other places in the workbook make it clear that God does not even know about us. In the last part of the workbook (W-pII.221-365), each lesson consists in part of a prayer addressed to God the Father from us—even though, in the teacher's manual (M-21.1:7) and also in Lesson 183, Jesus makes it clear that God does not even hear or understand words. And yet here are all these wonderfully inspiring words that we say to God.

This only makes sense when we understand the content that lies beneath the form, beneath the symbol. The great emphasis in the workbook—which is a mind-retraining program—is on listening to the Holy Spirit's Voice as a correction for what the ego has been telling us about the Holy Spirit. At the lowest level in the **ego column on the chart**, the ego's message basically is, "Don't ask God for help because God will destroy you. And even if the Holy Spirit is a kind Voice, there's no way He'll pay any attention to you, because you're so unworthy. The Holy Spirit will only speak to certain people." And so, if I am Roman Catholic, for example, those certain people are the priests. But every formal religion has its hierarchy of special people. So Jesus attempts to correct this error on the level at which we experience it, by telling us that the Holy Spirit speaks to all of us all the time. God does not play favorites. God does not love one person more than another.

Near the beginning of the text, Jesus tells us: "All my brothers are special" (T-1.V.3:6). He does not say that some are more special than others. He says that all of his brothers are special. But we all want to be more special than others. An important passage in a section in the text on special relationships speaks about how we demanded special love from God but did not get it (T-24.III.6). And we have been trying ever since to get it. We demand special love from Jesus, and we believe that either we are the recipients of it, or other people, far more worthy, are the recipients of it. Obviously, many in A Course in Miracles' world have seen Helen that way. Certain people are more worthy or more advanced or in some way better than I am because they can hear Jesus or the Holy Spirit in a way that I cannot.

So one of the purposes of the workbook is to correct our misunderstandings at the level where we believe we are. Jesus as an older brother is talking to us as very little children who do not understand. And he is telling us, "Yes, Daddy is not angry at you. Daddy hears all your prayers. In fact, here are all these wonderful prayers I have written for you to say to Him. And yes, Daddy will tell you what to do and where to go. And Daddy's Voice is within you and will tell you what you should do all the time. He loves you just as much as He loves everybody else." What is important is that we begin to undo the specialness—both in its positive and negative forms—that tells us that God's Love is only to be dispensed to certain people at certain times. One of the Course's major teachings is to have us realize that God loves us all the same, and His Voice speaks to us all the time.

That is the correction on the level of form, on the level of the symbol. In other passages, Jesus makes it clear that this is not the reality. In fact in the manual he says, "Very few can hear God's Voice at all" (M-12.3:3), even though the workbook tells us that "God's Voice speaks to me all through the day" (W-pI.49). If it were really that easy to hear the Holy Spirit, none of us would be here. The whole world was literally made to silence His Voice. The Course, borrowing from the Old Testament, refers to the Holy Spirit's Voice as "the still, small Voice for God [which] is not drowned out by all the ego's raucous screams and senseless ravings to those who want to hear it" (T-21.V.1:6).

The ego makes up its "raucous shrieks" (W-pI,49.4:3)—all the clutter and clatter in our minds and all the clutter and clatter in the world that simply mirrors our minds—to drown out this Voice. We obviously have a tremendous investment in this raucous shrieking, because we believe we are bodies. Bodies make a hell of a lot of noise, especially if we do not feed them on time, if we do not rest them or recreate them, and especially if we do not give them oxygen so they can breathe. And our bodies are always making internal noises, too—our hearts are always beating, our stomachs growl. Everything makes noises. All the sounds are just symbolic expressions of the noise of guilt in our minds whose purpose is to drown out that still, small Voice that basically says nothing at all—the song of prayer has no words, no notes. And in that quiet nothingness the Love of God is found.

And yet it is that quiet that we are so afraid of. Therefore, doing 365 days of lessons is not going to bring us into that place in our minds where we can hear the Holy Spirit's Voice. If you can do it that quickly, I assure you A Course in Miracles is not for you—you do not need it. For most of us it is not that easy. That is why that line I just quoted is there in the manual: "Very few can hear God's Voice at all." It is the text that gives the basic teaching of the Course—its theory, its theology. That is not the purpose of the workbook, even though it has many beautiful and profound passages. The workbook's purpose is to retrain our minds, starting at ground zero. We all believe that, if there is a God at all, He is hateful, He is vengeful, and He is not our friend. And so the purpose of the workbook is to teach us that we are all worthy to hear God's Voice, which speaks to us all through the day.

The text, though, makes very clear how fearful we are of this loving Voice, and how fearful we are of Jesus. That is why Jesus speaks in a few places in the text of our need to forgive him (T-19.IV-A.17:1; T-19.IV-B.6,7; T-20.I.2:8; T-20.II.4,6). He does not need our forgiveness for his own Atonement—he is beyond that. But he cannot help us—his love will not be accessible to us—as long as we are afraid of him or angry at him because he has something we do not have. That is why he talks about our need to forgive all the bitter idols we have made of him (C-5.5:7-8). But even more than the bitter idols, we have to forgive him for being the truly loving brother that he is—that is what we really hate him for. We are all quite comfortable with a Lord who believes in sacrifice and judgment and punishment. It is much more difficult to accept a brother who simply loves us.

But if the love of Jesus within our minds is true, then everything the ego has taught us is false. The world made Jesus to be an awful symbol of either special hate—all the bitter idols—or special love—someone who has something we do not have. Since Jesus then became the symbol of God for us in this world—and it is not a very nice symbol—the Course uses that symbol as part of the correction process. And that is why the presence of Jesus is so important and so manifest in the Course—in terms of the first-person references that make it clear that he is the source of the material, as well as all the references to his crucifixion and resurrection, and, above all, the many references where he speaks of himself as our loving brother who wants to help us, encouraging us in one way or another to take his hand and go home with him. The world made of Jesus a symbol of hate and specialness, and so we need a correction.

We need a Jesus who is always present to us, who meets our needs, who answers our prayers, who speaks to us all through the day, just as the Holy Spirit does. This Jesus, as we have seen, is also an illusion. But it is the only illusion we can relate to that can lead us beyond all illusions and back to the Love of God that is abstract and formless. Jesus is as real as you or I are real. To whatever extent we believe that we are real, that we are bodies and separate personalities, to that extent he also is real. So we do not want to throw out the baby with the bath water. If you say, "Well, he's an illusion" that's fine, but just be clear that if you say that and mean it, then you also must really know that you are an illusion as well. And no one in this world knows that. If you dismiss Jesus as an illusion but continue to believe you are real, you are confusing levels.

Jesus is an illusion, but so are all of us. As long as we believe that we are here and have all the needs that we have, then Jesus is just as real as we are. He is a symbol, but we are also a symbol. He is a symbol of the Love of God. We are a symbol of the hatred, the fear, the separation, and the guilt of the ego. We are a symbol within the separated mind. He is a symbol within the separated mind. We are a symbol of guilt that has taken form. He is a symbol of love that also has taken form. So he is no different from us.

Jesus is an illusion—that is true—but on the same level that we are all illusion. On a practical level, since we obviously all believe that we are here and have bodies and personalities with needs, on that level Jesus then becomes incredibly important. In fact, in terms of the Course process, there is no way of undoing the ego thought system without forgiving Jesus and accepting his love. I have always thought it is a cute ploy on his part that he does not make belief in him mandatory. In fact, in a passage near the end of the manual, he says that we can still be helped even if we do not believe in him (C-5.6:6). On the other hand, he does ask us to forgive him. And it is very difficult to forgive someone whom you do not believe in.

Accepting Jesus as my teacher and taking his hand is the way to receive the help he represents. In that sense, he is "the way, the truth and the life" (T-6.1.10:3). He obviously is not the only way and truth and life. But for students of the Course, he is. And certainly for most people who have grown up in the western world, I think he is. That does not mean, by the way, that there is anything wrong if you find yourself more comfortable relating to the Holy Spirit than to Jesus. The Course gives a student a choice between the Holy Spirit and Jesus as our internal teacher. But we definitely need an internal teacher. The very fact that we think we are here is the proof that we have listened to the wrong teacher.

Early in the text, Jesus tells us that he can "control... everything that does not matter" and "direct everything that does" (T-2.VI.1:3). In other words, we turn our egos over to him—which means we look at our egos with him—and that is how he controls "everything that does not matter." We bring our egos to him. We bring the darkness to his light, and when the darkness is gone, his light simply works through us. That is how he guides us.

Therefore, we need another teacher who represents another thought system—not a thought system of fear, hatred, and defense, but a thought system of love, unity, and forgiveness. Jesus becomes the symbol of that other thought system, just as each of us has become a symbol of the ego thought system. What we seem to experience as our reality here is simply an outward expression or symbol of an ego thought in our mind. Hence, as long as we believe we are here, we need someone who symbolizes a different thought—and Jesus represents that for us.

**Part XII
Jesus as a Symbol (cont.)**

Jesus is of great importance as a symbol within our dream. Since we are symbols that represent separation, hatred, murder, guilt, and death, we need a correction symbol within the dream that represents the opposite of what we have made real for ourselves. Jesus is that answer and that symbol for us. We will look at a number of passages in the Course later which beautifully express this idea. But first we will begin with the poem I mentioned earlier called "A Jesus Prayer" (The Gifts of God, pp.82-83), a wonderful poem that Helen wrote. Before I read it, let me make a couple of comments.

The core thought in the ego system is the thought of differences, which logically follows from the thought of separation. It is important enough that I want to discuss it here. The original thought that began the whole dream was that God and His Son were not only separate, but they were different—God had something that the Son did not have. From that perception, the Son believed he had to compensate for the lack by stealing from God what he felt was lacking in himself. That was the origin of the dream. And the fear of God's retaliation for our attack then led to the need for a defense—the making of the world and the body. At that point we were off and running—that is how the world of time and space began.

The idea of differences is also the key theme in understanding how special relationships operate. The initial idea is that I am different from you, I am lacking, and you have what I want. The principle of scarcity always leads to the principle of deprivation. Therefore, if I lack something, it must be because you have deprived me of it. This means that if I feel that you have something I do not have, my ego tells me the reason for the inequality is that you have stolen from me what is rightfully mine. That is why I no longer have it, which justifies my stealing it back from you. And again, we are off and running, now on the individual rather than the collective level. That basic dynamic characterizes all of our interactions and relationships in the world.

Any time I perceive a difference between myself and someone else, I must hate the person who is perceived as different. That cannot be avoided within the ego system. If I perceive you as different from me, it is because you have something I lack. And I hate you because the fact that you have it means you took it from me. That is how the ego thought system works, and there are no exceptions. So it is imperative—and this is another one of the major themes in this workshop—that we not see Jesus as truly different from us. Obviously, within the dream he is different from us. But once we see Jesus as different and that difference becomes an important reality for us, we must hate him. And we hate him because he has what we lack, and we understand where he got it: he took it from us.

So the world had to murder Jesus and his message, and the Roman Catholic Church has to symbolically murder him every single day at mass as an attempt to get what he has so we can have it. It is extremely important to understand that when we talk about Jesus, we are talking about a symbol. And we must be equally clear about what this symbol represents. If Jesus represents the correction for ourselves and our thought system of separation and differences, then he must represent the thought of unity and love that is our true reality. So to see Jesus as different from us, and to make that difference reality misses the whole point. To emphasize the historical Jesus and how his life was different misses the whole point. To discuss whatmade Jesus different from us, and to analyze his person, his personality, and his history, questioning when he knew who he was and how he came to know it, etc., is to make him different.

Jesus is emphasizing to us in the Course the same thing he was emphasizing when he was here: what he is, we are also. And so our prayer is to become like him. As I mentioned at the beginning of the workshop, the purpose of any good teacher is to make himself obsolete. That is Jesus' purpose. He is a symbol who represents for us Who we truly are. We do not want anything from him. Rather we want to grow up to become like him. That is extremely important. When I ask him to do things for me—a theme that we will come back to later—I obviously believe he has something I do not have. He has a magical power, and he will do something for me that I cannot do for myself. I must hate him for that. It is impossible to love anyone whom I perceive as unequal. That is extremely important. What distinguishes a holy relationship from a special one is the recognition of our equality. I cannot love you if I perceive you as having something I do not have. I can only love someone who reflects back to me the same love and truth that I already have. I can only love what is alike—I cannot love what is different.

Jesus makes the point right at the beginning of the text (T-1.II.3) that the experience of awe in relationship to him is inappropriate. Awe is only appropriate when we are in the presence of someone who is not our equal, and that can only be God. Jesus does speak about being entitled to our obedience, respect, and devotion as an elder brother who has only our best interests at heart. That comes from a perception that he is helping us become what he is—so we are not different.

We want to pray to Jesus, not that he do things for us, but that we accept the love that he reflects back to us. The love, the truth, the holiness that he is, is simply a mirror. If we look through the proper eyes, the same love, purity, and holiness that are in us will shine back unto us. That is Jesus' purpose—to remind us of Who we are.

We are now going to read "A Jesus Prayer," a wonderful poem that expresses the hope and the prayer that we will become what he is and remember Who we are. As we read it, you may want to think of yourself saying these words to Jesus—that is how the poem is written. The first person in the poem is ourselves—this is a prayer that we say to him. The prayer is that we will become like him, again, not that he will do things for us—not that he will save us from our terror, not that he will give us trivial things, like parking spaces or good health or $100,000, all of which are trivial when we compare them to the peace of God. Our prayer is that we become like him, which means it is really a prayer to ourselves. Jesus cannot make us like him, because we already are like him. We are the ones who made ourselves different, at least in our perception—therefore we are the ones who have to change that. This poem, then, is our introduction to what we will be discussing next—what Jesus' role really is and how important he is for us in that role. The poem is from the book of Helen's poetry called The Gifts of God. These poems were inspired. Helen's experience was that they were dictated to her the way the Course was. However, she always felt that somehow her voice was intermingled with Jesus' in a way that was not the case with the Course—that she had a part in their writing.

Just a couple of other things before we read the poem. It begins with the line, "A Child, a Man and then a Spirit." These words are capitalized, as are all references to Jesus in Helen's poetry. In the Course, words associated with Jesus are not capitalized to emphasize the fact that he is like us. But in the poetry, Helen felt she had more of a license to capitalize as she wished. And her preference always was to capitalize words associated with Jesus. It is actually helpful in the poetry—otherwise it would not always be clear who the reference is. So the poem's opening words, "A Child, a Man, and then a Spirit," refer to the course of Jesus' human life here, and are capitalized.

Two stanzas later, the same words appear: "A child, a man and then a spirit." Now they are not capitalized, for they refer to us—that we want to become like Jesus and emulate him. Obviously, this does not mean imitating his life on the level of form, but rather wanting to have the same awareness of Christ's Love and Christ's Identity that Jesus had. The poem ends with the words, "As they look up let them not look on me, but only You," which is borrowed from the beautiful prayer of Cardinal Newman, a famous Catholic convert of the nineteenth century. Our prayer is that as people look on us, they will not see us, they will see only Jesus—we will become like him. Here then is the poem:

**A Jesus Prayer**

A Child, a Man and then a Spirit, come
In all Your loveliness. Unless You shine
Upon my life, it is a loss to You,
And what is loss to You is also mine.

I cannot calculate why I am here
Except for this: I know that I have come
To seek You here and find You. In Your life
You show the way to my eternal home.

A child, a man and then a spirit. So
I follow in the way You show to me
That I may come at last to be like You.
What but Your likeness would I want to be?

There is a silence where you speak to me
And give me words of love to say for You
To those You send to me. And I am blessed
Because in them I see You shining through.

There is no gratitude that I can give
For such a gift. The light around Your head
Must speak for me, for I am dumb beside
Your gentle hand with which my soul is led.

I take Your gift in holy hands, for You
Have blessed them with Your own. Come, brothers, see
How like to Christ am I, and I to you
Whom He has blessed and holds as one with me.

A perfect picture of what I can be
You show to me, that I might help renew
Your brothers' failing sight. As they look up
Let them not look on me, but only You.

Let me recapitulate briefly the key points that we have been discussing. When we fell asleep and began our dream of separation, in effect, we forgot Who we are. The memory of God, the memory of the Love of Christ—which is Who we are—is a Thought within our minds. In the Course, that Thought is referred to as the Holy Spirit. For whatever strange and insane reason, we chose to dismiss that Thought, not to pay any attention to it, and instead to identify with the other thought in our dream. And that was the thought that the separation is real. At that point, for all intents and purposes, we buried the memory of God, forgot Who we are, and assumed an identity that was not ours. That identity, in all of its development, is that of the ego thought system—of a separated and limited self, and of a body that reflects that. These are really symbols of that original thought of being separate from God, of being something other than Who we really are, since Who we are as Christ is that perfect unity of our Self with the Self of God—of the Mind of Christ with the Mind of God.

So the thought of being separate became expressed in symbolic terms in the thoughts of sin, guilt, and fear that we associate with the ego system, as well as with our physical and psychological being—what we call our body and our personal identity. All of these are symbols. The memory of God's Love is also in our minds—the Holy Spirit is present in our minds. Even though we have buried that Thought, it nonetheless is still there. And its Presence is experienced in any given moment that we choose to return to it. As we have seen, within the dream, and certainly within the part of the dream that is the western world, Jesus is the great symbol and manifestation of that Thought.

As I was pointing out earlier, we are also a symbol, except we are a symbol of the ego. Jesus is a symbol, but he is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. Therefore he represents the exact opposite of what we have made real. So he becomes that memory of Love within our minds, now given form, that reminds us of Who we truly are. As I mentioned before the poem—and it is obvious in the poem—Jesus' function is simply to be the reminder of Who we are. We desperately need that, because we have forgotten.

To say that Jesus is a symbol is not to relegate him to an unimportant role. His role is absolutely central, which is why, as I mentioned already, his role in the Course is so clear. It is not hidden. The Course is not written in some kind of abstract language. It is written in a very personal language that is directly relevant to anyone who has grown up in the western world. Within this dream, for those of us who study the Course, he becomes "the way, the truth and the life" (T-6.I.10:3). He is not the only way, as a passage later in the Course makes clear (C-5.6). He is not the only way, but for us he is the way. And because we have made him part of the ego's negative symbolism, we have to forgive him, letting go of these negative symbols so that we can accept him as he is.

Jesus has nothing to do with what the Christian Churches or the Bible or Judaism have made of him. He totally transcends all of that. His reality is beyond all symbols. And so what he helps us do in the Course is undo all the old symbols and replace them with a new set of symbols that will finally lead us beyond all of them entirely. The symbols that the world has given Jesus have been symbols of the ego. Whether they have been symbols of special love or special hate, they have been the same, because they are based on a perception of him as different from everyone else. And those who want to perceive him as nonexistent are basically saying that they are nonexistent, too. Jesus is nonexistent, but only to the degree that we are nonexistent. And since we all believe very much in our own existence, then his existence is just as real. He then becomes our way home.

By joining with Jesus, which is what we will be talking about at length later, we really are learning to join with our Self. Not the self that we call by name, but our true Self. Without his hand and his guidance, though, we could never do it. As Jesus explains in a passage I alluded to earlier in the workshop (T-27.VII.13:4), we do not go from nightmares to reality. We need an intermediate step—the happy dream—and Jesus is the great symbol of that happy dream.

**Part XIII
Commentary on "Does Jesus Have a Special Place in Healing?" (M-23)**

Let me read now the section in the manual that deals specifically with Jesus, "Does Jesus Have a Special Place in Healing?" (M-23). The answer of course, as we shall see, is yes. It is a wonderful section for a number of reasons, one of which—as we shall see right at the beginning—is its discussion of the difference between magic and a miracle in terms of Jesus.
. . . . .

**Paragraph 1 - Sentence 1) God's gifts can rarely be received directly.**

The reason is that we are terrified of them. This is the same reason we cannot go from nightmares to reality. We do not suddenly jump from the bottom rung of the ladder all the way to the top. Over and over again in the Course, Jesus speaks of this as a process. We are terrified of God's Love—our very existence is predicated on the belief that, in the presence of God's Love, we would be annihilated.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 2-3) Even the most advanced of God's teachers will give way to temptation in this world. Would it be fair if their pupils were denied healing because of this?**

In other words, Jesus is saying that we need an intermediate step. We need someone who can guide us gently back, so that, step-by-step, our fear will be diminished.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentences 4-5) The Bible says, "Ask in the name of Jesus Christ." Is this merely an appeal to magic?**

Most of the time the use of Jesus' name has been an appeal to magic. People have felt there is something sacred in the name Jesus Christ, that his name must not be uttered in vain. Doing so, many Christians have thought, would be blasphemy, as if there were something holy in the name. It is similar to how, as we talked about earlier, people think there is something holy in this physical book called A Course in Miracles. It is what the name points to or represents that is holy—the meaning, not the form; the reality, not the appearance. If we feel that asking in the name of Jesus Christ will get us something we want, that is magic—we believe we are lacking something; Jesus has it, and he will give it to us.

So, for example, if we pray for good health—that our cancer, or AIDS, or some other condition be healed—we are saying, "I lack good health. There is nothing I can do about it. But this wonderful Jesus will now take care of it for me." If Jesus intervened, as we discussed earlier, he would be tampering with a basic law of cause and effect, rendering our mind impotent. And then there would be no way we could be saved. The only way we can be saved is by allowing his love to remind us that we can make another choice, for love instead of guilt. The guilt is the cause of the sickness—the sickness is simply the physical expression of the guilt. So Jesus heals by reminding us that we can choose against guilt.

As we shall see later in this section, to "ask in the name of Jesus Christ" does heal, as long as we understand what it means. It means asking in our own name, too. As we call upon his name, we are calling on the love that is represented by that symbol, which then reminds us that that same love is in us. That helps us to recognize that he may be different from us in time, but we are exactly the same in eternity.

**(Paragraph 1 - Sentence 6) A name does not heal, nor does an invocation call forth any special power.**

Jesus has no special power. The Holy Spirit does not have any special power. Sometimes people talk about the Holy Spirit as if He were a physical power they can feel coming through them. They believe, for example, that they can hold out their hands so others can feel something like a blast of hot air, and they call that the Holy Spirit. But the Holy Spirit is not a blast of hot air—He is not an energy. All that is being felt through the hands is an electromagnetic field that has become excited. There may be a feeling of heat, but it has nothing whatsoever to do with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is a Thought in the mind. Remember, as I mentioned earlier, one of the core Course teachings is that the mind is not in the body. If the Holy Spirit is a Thought in our minds, He is not in our bodies.

If people are trembling with the kundalini energy or with the "power of the Holy Spirit," it is the electromagnetic force field around them that is trembling—it is their own nervous agitation. The Holy Spirit does not tremble or get excited. He has no special power that comes into our bodies—the power is in our minds. And Jesus represents that power for us. The power is not in his mind alone, nor is it in our minds alone—the power is in the collective mind. And, as we shall see later on, the power is ours through our joining our minds with the mind of Jesus. It is not only Jesus who has all power in Heaven and earth—we have it as well.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 2 - Sentences 7-8) There is now no limit on his power, because it is the power of God. So has his name become the Name of God, for he no longer sees himself as separate from Him.**

God does not have a name. Obviously, once we give God a name we do not know His name. To talk about the Name of God is to talk about a symbol—a symbol for a reality that is totally one, a symbol for a Love that is not of this world that we are part of. As the workbook says, "I call upon God's Name and on my own" (W-pI.183). We share the same Name because we share one Self, one Love, one Being, one Will. So someone like Jesus—who has totally transcended his ego, knows that all this is a dream, knows the separation has never happened, knows that God's Love can never be split or attacked or killed, and so knows that he is one with Christ and one with God—shares that one Name. And he also knows that all of us who still believe the dream is real share that same Name. And there is no way we can awaken ourselves from that dream. We need that intermediate step—someone who reflects back to us the truth and the light and the Name.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 1-3) What does this mean for you? It means that in remembering Jesus you are remembering God. The whole relationship of the Son to the Father lies in him.**

In remembering Jesus, we are remembering God, because Jesus is now one with God. He is the symbol of the Atonement principle. He is the symbol that we never left God. The Holy Spirit is also that symbol, but the Holy Spirit is abstract. Jesus is specific and concrete, because we live in a specific and concrete world. And so in identifying with Jesus, in calling upon his name—not as a magical incantation or formula or mantra—we are remembering that his name is ours. That remembering is the key—the bridge that leads us back home. In remembering Jesus, we are not only remembering God, we are also remembering Who we are as Christ. That is why it is so important that we not accentuate the difference between him and us. And that is why Jesus always plays down that difference in the Course. He is different only in that he has awakened from the dream, and so he is wiser than we are. But he has no power that we do not have. He can not heal sickness. All he can do is remind us that we have the power to heal sickness, because we are the ones who made the sickness.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentence 4) His part in the Sonship is also yours** [there is no difference]**, and his completed learning guarantees your own success.**

The fact that Jesus completed his part and is a thought within the mind of the Sonship means that we all will also succeed. His purpose is to remind us that the Atonement is not a dream. The ego turned everything upside-down, telling us the separation is reality, and the Atonement is the dream. This world then becomes the seemingly living proof that the ego is right—the Atonement is a dream. The world seems very real and obviously is a world of fragmentation, separation, and death, which seems to prove that the ego's story is correct and the Holy Spirit is a liar. Jesus shows us that it is the other way around. The separation is the dream, and the Atonement thought—namely, that the separation never happened—is the truth.

Jesus is exceedingly important for us within the dream, but only because he reminds us that we are all the same. It is so important to keep in mind because, as I have taught so often, we cannot love someone we perceive as different—it is impossible. It is really hatred. In fact, in one line in the text Jesus says, "What is not love is murder" (T-23.IV.1:10). If we cannot love someone who is different, what does that mean? It means we hate him, and want to kill him and steal from him what we believe he took from us.
So, again, Jesus represents for us the reminder that we are all one in Christ. And our prayer is that we change our minds so that we can see in him a reflection of ourselves.
. . . . . . .

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 8-9) Can God fail his Son? And can one who is one with God** [and that would be Jesus] **be unlike Him?**

If God cannot fail His Son because God's Love does not fail—God's Love is perfect and always is—then we must believe we are the ones who have failed God: we are the ones who have been ungrateful to Him, betrayed His Love, walked out on Him, rejected Him, and abandoned Love. Of course we project those thoughts out and believe that God or Jesus or others have done those things to us, are doing them to us now, and will continue to do so. But God has not failed us—His Love is all there is and we are part of that Love. Since Jesus is now one with God—he is the symbol of God's Love—then, obviously, his promises are just as sure. But each of us always wants to prove either that he is a liar who does not keep his promises, or that he keeps his promises to everyone but me, because I am so terrible.

And so we set him up to fail us. We do that when we call upon his name for magical purposes—"Please, Lord Jesus, do this for me." Sometimes we may get what we ask for, but sometimes we do not. And when we do not, a part of our minds is ebullient, leaping for joy and saying, "Ah, I finally caught you." My ego wants to catch Jesus, because that proves my ego is right. It is always a setup when we ask Jesus or the Holy Spirit for things. If we get what we ask for, then we feel the same kind of warmth and happiness and ecstasy that we feel when our special love partner gives us what we want and need. But underneath that, of course, is the hate when we do not get what we want. That same idea underlies the psychological axiom that dependency breeds contempt. We end up hating those people we are dependent on. Jesus wants us to be dependent on him only as a reminder that we are alike and that we already have everything that we need, which is totally different from saying that we lack something and he is going to supply it for us.

**(Paragraph 3 - Sentences 10-11) Who transcends the body has transcended limitation. Would the greatest teacher be unavailable to those who follow him?**

This is Jesus' way of assuring us that he is always there for us. We are not always there for him—and that is why our guilt is so great. Jesus only wants us to be honest about our fear of him—we are always dropping his hand and running away from him. He wants us to look at that without being afraid or upset or guilty. In other words, we want to be able to look with his love next to us at the fact that we are afraid of him. The more we can do that, the clearer we will be that we are forgiven for our sins, which never happened. But our guilt is so enormous because, not only have we rejected God's Love, but we have also rejected the symbol of His Love within the dream. That is the major reason people have so much difficulty with the person of Jesus.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentences 1-2) The name of Jesus Christ as such is but a symbol. But it stands for love that is not of this world.**

His name is not the reality. A symbol is not reality. Reality—the Love of God—is **above this purple line on the chart**. Everything underneath that is a symbol. And the Love of God can be symbolized either by the ego or by the Holy Spirit. The name of Jesus Christ is actually a symbol of a symbol. His name becomes a symbol of the concept of the Atonement thought, so it is twice removed from reality. Jesus is not the Love of God. His name is not the Love of God. They are symbols for the Love of God. And it is the Love of God that we want. We want the song, not the echo or the reflection of the song. We want to experience His Love, which transcends everything of this world. But we cannot go from the special love of the ego to the Love of God. Again, we need an intermediate step. Jesus then becomes for us that intermediate step, that symbol. But in the end it is not the symbol that we want, we want what the symbol points to. Someone once said that Jesus came and pointed his finger to Heaven where God is. And then people started worshipping his finger.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 3) It is a symbol that is safely used as a replacement for the many names of all the gods to which you pray.**

So Jesus becomes a symbol that for us represents the real God. And by calling upon his name, identifying with his name and taking his hand, we are really dropping the hand of the ego and letting go of our identification with all the names we have given to the little gods we have made as substitutes for the real God. One meaning of specialness is that it is the worshipping of idols. An idol is a substitute for God, one of the terms used in the Course to define a special relationship. A special relationship is a substitute. We are saying to God, "What you give me is not enough. This other person gives me more." And we are telling Jesus, "Your hand to hold is not enough—I want another's hand. Your love is not enough—I want this person's love."

So that person, or an object or substance in the world that we believe we need, becomes an idol, which we say will give us the love, the peace, the comfort, and the security that God or Jesus cannot give us. And that is where all of our guilt lies. Specialness is a powerful weapon in the ego's arsenal. By worshipping others for what we can get from them, or worshipping things in the world, we are reinforcing the original guilt over telling God that we did not need Him, that we could make things up for ourselves to satisfy our own needs because He would not do it for us. So each time we become attracted to, or identified with, or addicted to someone or something in the world, we are sticking our hand in God's face, pushing Him away, and saying, "I will take over for myself." That is why the guilt is so great. And so the way out of guilt is to drop the ego's hand and take Jesus' hand instead.

**(Paragraph 4 - Sentence 4) It** [the Name of Jesus Christ] **becomes the shining symbol for the Word of God, so close to what it stands for that the little space between the two is lost, the moment that the Name is called to mind.**

The Word of God is a phrase in the Course that refers almost always to some expression of the Atonement. It is used for the idea of the Atonement, the plan of the Atonement, the Holy Spirit, forgiveness, salvation, etc.—anything that represents the expression of the truth (within the dream) that we have never separated from God. So Jesus becomes a symbol of the Word of God, of the Atonement principle. In him the Love of God is clearly experienced, telling us that we have not separated from that Love. The love is not experienced in the body of Jesus—it is experienced in his mind. And we are all part of that mind.

So recalling the name of Jesus to mind is a way of taking him as our model for learning. By identifying with him, we are identifying with the principle that the separation from God never happened. Thus, for example—and we will elaborate on this later—if something occurs in my day and I begin to feel upset or anxious, obviously I am feeling separated. I am feeling that something "out there," which I perceive as real, can affect me. Clearly, I believe the something out there is separate from me. Or if I feel guilty, it involves some aspect of separation, something I have done wrong. It will be something associated with my body—whether my physical body or my personality—something I have done or said or thought.

If, however, I can remember at that moment to turn to Jesus, join with him, and experience his love, I am undoing all the thoughts of separation that were the cause of my distress. Remember, the Atonement principle is that the separation from God never happened. By joining with Jesus, who represents God's Love for me, I am joining with that principle and saying that it is true. And that undoes the cause of all the anxiety, distress, and upset. Again, this passage is not about calling upon Jesus' name as an affirmation or as a magical formula. We call upon his name to remind ourselves of the truth that his name represents. And that truth is not in him or in me—it is in both of us. But because I have forgotten it, Jesus functions as a symbol to remind me.

**Part XIV
Commentary on "Does Jesus Have a Special Place in Healing?" (M-23) (conclusion)**

**(4:5) Remembering the name of Jesus Christ is to give thanks for all the gifts that God has given you.**

This is not referring to any gifts that we receive within the world of form, but rather to the gifts that God has already given us—the gift of God's Love, the gift of God's eternal life, the gift of God's Spirit, the gift of God's freedom. We already have all these gifts. Truth is already present in us. You may recall that at the beginning of the workshop we discussed how education for Plato involved helping the student remember what was already present in his mind. Jesus' approach is the same. He reminds us of the gift that we already have and already are. If I see that gift only in him and not in me, I have missed the whole point of his message. I am then seeing him as different and making him into an idol. And a part of me will want to destroy him—but that thought of destroying him is so horrid to me that instead I pretend I love him. I tell everyone how much I love him—all I ever think about is how much I love Jesus. If I really love someone, I do not have to say it all the time. I simply experience it. My always having to affirm and reaffirm my love is reminiscent of the line I quoted earlier from Hamlet, "The lady doth protest too much methinks."

**(4:6) And gratitude to God becomes the way in which He is remembered, for love cannot be far behind a grateful heart and thankful mind.**

Gratitude is another major theme in the Course. We should feel grateful to Jesus, not because of what he gives us but simply because of what he reminds us of. And if I feel grateful to Jesus, I must feel grateful to God—which is how we undo the ego thought system. The ego is never grateful to God. The ego said to God, "I can do better than you did. Why should I be grateful for the gifts and the life that you offer me—they're second best. You're the best, and I'm only second best. Why should I be grateful for that? So I will take matters into my own hands—I will make up a world and a self and I'll be first in my world. And I'll be grateful then to myself for what I've done. I don't have to be grateful to you."

Our egos do not feel grateful to Jesus. In our ego minds we hate him, because we are in competition with him. He seems better than we are, and so we hate him for it. As I said before, we cannot love or be grateful to someone we perceive as separate or different from us. Being grateful in this world for the gifts others give us is an attack. We should be grateful for the love that is the content of the gift. I am not saying that you should not feel grateful for an exchange of material gifts, for example, at Christmas time. But we really want to be grateful for the love that is the content of the gift—a love that mirrors the love already within us. So it is a joining of love with love.

This idea is reflected in the section in the text entitled "The Attraction of Love for Love" (T-12.VIII). The love in you is attracted to the love in me, and vice versa. The love in you is sharing that love with me. We do that sharing through material form while we believe we are bodies. So I am not saying anything is wrong with giving or exchanging gifts, or with being grateful for gifts. But be aware that we are really grateful for the love that underlies the material form. If I perceive the love to be in you and not in me, then I am really perceiving hatred in you, masquerading as love. I can only be grateful to you if I see you mirroring the love that is in me. It is love sharing with itself. It is impossible really to understand what that means in Heaven. Basically, God is sharing His Love with Christ and Christ is sharing His Love with God—that is the song that goes back and forth. But, since we believe we are bodies in this world, we need a symbolic way of expressing that love. So we have the illusion of giving love in various forms to one another.

But the content underlying the form—the reality underlying the appearance of the gift-giving—has nothing to do with the form of the gift. The content is the love, which is the source of the gift. And so we are grateful to Jesus that he reminds us of the love that is in both of us.

It is important to remember, though, that we first must become aware of the ways in which we block recognition of that love. The idea is simply to look at the differences, the specialness, the hatred and say, "What's the big deal?" And when they stop being a big deal, we stop calling them sin in our minds. We stop feeling guilty about them and let them go. To put this another way, we stop making Jesus into a big deal. People make him into a big deal. Everybody and his brother wants to channel Jesus, because he is the big Macho—you have everything then [laughter]. So there is a hierarchy of who channels whom, and it misses the whole point. Everybody wants to make Jesus into a big deal, but in the Course he really tries to help us not see him as a big deal.

Now, calling on the name of Jesus does not mean actually saying the words "I call upon the name of Jesus Christ." The words are irrelevant. We just have a thought. The idea of calling on Jesus' name or taking his hand is not to be taken literally. An example may help: I am driving home, getting upset or anxious as the weather worsens or getting angry at another driver who cuts me off. And then I think of the workbook lesson, "I could see peace instead of this" (W-pI.34). That is the same idea—we are only talking about words and symbols. The thought underneath—"I can make another choice"—is what I want to get to. That underlying thought is what we want to call to mind, whether we do it by saying, "I can make another choice," "I could see peace instead of this," "I could see Jesus instead of this," or "I must have dropped Jesus' hand because I'm feeling anxious, so I can take his hand again." I simply use whatever set of symbols works for me.

And looking objectively at my reactions to an event really means looking at them with Jesus. It is just one group of symbols, so it means watching myself drive home, getting upset and realizing that my upset is not a result of the conditions of the road or what another driver has done, or the fact that I am two hours late, or whatever. I am upset because I feel separated from God. And then I displace that anxiety and guilt onto the external situation.

Whatever process helps us recognize the choice we have is what we should use. And what I use will be different from what you use. We do not want to get caught in the form. That is why we want to see Jesus as a symbol and see the words we use as symbols. We want to get to the meaning underneath—that we are responsible for what we are feeling, and we can change it. Whatever words we use become irrelevant.

Back now in the manual:

**(4:7) God enters easily, for these are the true conditions for your homecoming.**

The true conditions for our coming home are our experiences of gratitude. So we are grateful to Jesus—not because he gives us what we want, not because he saves us from sin, not because he is a magical figure who does all these things for us, but because he reminds us of Who we are. We are grateful to him because he reminds us that we are the cause of all of our distress and, because we are, we can change the cause. That is what our gratitude is for. And then we are able to let go of all of our feelings of competition, separation, and differences, which allows us to experience our gratitude to God as our Creator and our Source.

None of us in this world is grateful to God. If we were, we would not be here. The very fact that we are here is saying to God, "I can do this better than You," which is basically how the authority problem began. We thought we could make a better world than God, or we could do better at saving the world than Jesus. And in our lives here, we think we can be better parents than our parents, and better bosses than our bosses—always better than everybody else.
So experiencing our unity with Jesus and being grateful that he reminds us of that unity undoes all the barriers of guilt, separation, and competition that prevent us from feeling really grateful to God as our Source. And with that undoing, the whole thought system of the ego disappears.

**(5:1-2) Jesus has led the way. Why would you not be grateful to him?**

Again, no one in this world is grateful to him. If we were grateful to him, we would become like him—and we would not be in this world. But we believe we are here and take seriously our being here—we feel that life and death, pleasure and pain, are a big deal. Everything that goes on in our world—all the specialness in our lives that is such a big deal—is telling us we are not grateful to him, because he stands for the end of specialness. And so, as he explains earlier in the text, we feel threatened by him. By threatening our thought system—he represents its opposite—we believe he is threatening us (T-6.V-B.1:5-8).

As long as we have an investment in specialness and in being right rather than happy, we cannot be grateful to Jesus and we cannot love him. We can only love him by seeing that we are the same as he is, which means that our thought system is the same as his. When we realize that, we gladly let go of what we had believed to be our thought system, because it is not loving and it is not bringing us peace.
. . . . . . .

**(5:5) But in his eyes your loveliness is so complete and flawless that he sees in it an image of his Father.**

That is why we hate him—our whole identity is built upon a self that is not the Self of Christ. It is an identity filled with flaws, filled with guilt and sin and ugliness, and hidden in darkness. Yet, as miserable as that identity might be, we are comfortable with it, because it is what we believe we are. And Jesus, simply by his very being, shines a light into that darkness, which threatens it. The darkness then masses against the light, which is why Jesus, his message, and his love have to be killed. Forgiveness and healing—letting go of our ego perceptions—are threatening because they represent the end of the self we believe we are.
. . . . . . .

**(5:7) To you he looks for hope, because in you he sees no limit and no stain to mar your beautiful perfection.**

Obviously, this is not how we think of it—no one in this world believes it. We think we look to Jesus for hope. We believe that only Jesus—and no one else—is perfect. But this is just one more way we hold onto our own guilt. The ego calls it humility but, as the Course explains in many places, it really is the height of arrogance—the arrogance of believing that I could make myself different from the way that God has created me and that I know better than Jesus. So Jesus says, "I look at you and I see the mirror of myself—the mirror of God and the perfection of His holiness." And we say, "You must be doing something wrong. You're looking at this wrong." We believe, in our arrogance, that we know better than he does. Except it does not look like arrogance—it looks like humility. Everybody wants to bow down at Jesus' feet.

At the climax of a wonderful vision Helen had, she saw Jesus step out from behind an altar and come towards her. Her first inclination was to bow to him. He stopped her and instead came to her side, where he knelt with her and Bill before the altar to God. But Helen's first impulse, which would be our first impulse too, was to bow before him. That is not loving—it is hateful. As part of the same Christ, we want to bow down **with** him before the One Who created us.

**(5:8-11) In his eyes Christ's vision shines in perfect constancy. He has remained with you. Would you not learn the lesson of salvation through his learning? Why would you choose to start again, when he has made the journey for you?**

Very often we have the arrogance of believing, "I can do this by myself. I don't need him." And so we say, "I don't need a symbol. I don't have to take anybody's hand. It's all in me anyway." We want to jump from the nightmare right into God's Arms. And Jesus is saying here, "Don't try to do this without my help because, if you do, you would really be separating yourself, not only from me, but from the love that I represent for you." What seems to be humility is really the ego's arrogance.

Jesus' plea is, "Don't try to jump from hell into Heaven. You need an intermediate step. And for you, I am that intermediate step. I am that bridge." It makes no difference whether we think of Jesus or the Holy Spirit or any other symbol we want to use as that bridge. Near the beginning of the text, when Jesus says that he stands beneath God and above us (T-1.II.4:3-5), he means he is like a bridge between God and this world. And the exact same idea is expressed in the Course's teaching on the Holy Spirit as the Communication Link between God and His Sons. The Holy Spirit is the Bridge between perception and knowledge, and we need a bridge.

The Holy Spirit is an abstract thought and Jesus is the manifestation or the symbolic expression of that thought. Jesus is telling us that we need something or someone to bridge the gap from our nightmare world of illusions to the reality of God—he is that bridge. So he asks, "Why would you not want to take my hand? Why would you not want to let me teach you? And why would you not let my love be the intermediate step so you learn gradually and gently and peacefully not to be afraid of God's Love?"

It is a real trap to say, "I can do it on my own." Obviously this is nothing more than a reflection of the original ego thought, "I can do it on my own." If we could do it on our own, none of us would be stuck here. And we are stuck here because we did think we could do it on our own—this is just another expression of the authority problem. We are saying that we don't need any authorities—we can learn everything by ourselves. But we need authorities—and especially a loving authority like Jesus—to reflect back to us what we have denied and repressed, and do not know is there. We need Jesus to reflect back to us the truth about Who we are—a truth we are terrified of. So this is a plea from him that we not see him as unimportant or irrelevant. Let me read that last line again: "Why would you choose to start again, when he has made the journey for you?" Taking his hand and learning from him will speed us on our path.

Eventually, we would realize that when we reach out for help, we are really reaching out to ourselves. But the point I making now is that we do not know that we are reaching out to our Self. So we need someone who represents that Self for us, because we are so terrified of It. If we try to do it without Jesus, pretending to ourselves that we are really much more adult and mature than we are, then we are really doing it, not with the Christ Self, but with our ego self. But we think it is really the Christ Self.