

# Study Guide and Commentary

## Chapter 6, The Lessons of Love

### Introduction

#### Section I.1–7, The Message of the Crucifixion (1)

I want to deviate somewhat from my normal pattern as we begin this chapter, and spend a little time presenting an overview of the entire chapter. *If you can find time, I encourage you to read through all of Chapter 6 after reading this overview, before continuing with the detailed study of the Introduction and Section I.*

## Introduction

In my opinion, the Introduction to this chapter gives us a key to the entire chapter. Here, the Course presents us with *three premises of the ego* and tells us that we need to learn that these premises are insane in order to undo our insane conclusion:

"The way to undo an insane conclusion is to consider the sanity of the premises on which it rests." (T-6.In.1:6)

The three ego premises are given in 1:3, and the response of the Holy Spirit is given in 1:7. I juxtapose them here to point out the clear parallel:

Ego Premise	Spirit's Lesson
You believe that you have been attacked.	You cannot <i>be</i> attacked.
Your attack is justified in return.	Attack <i>has</i> no justification.
You are in no way responsible for it.	You <i>are</i> responsible for what you believe.

The journey back consists of the correction or undoing of our steps down the ladder of separation (see T-28.II.12:7 and T-28.III.1:2). In the ego thought system, attacking a brother rather than loving him is a foregone conclusion, an accepted way of being in the world. The ego's premises are the reasons it uses to justify anger and to prove that a brother is worthy of attack rather than of our love (1:4). They are, then, the rationale for the ego itself, since the ego is a belief in attack. Our journey back to God, once begun, can be seen as the Spirit's response to these three mistaken premises. These are the thoughts He must undo within our minds in order for our minds to return to the function of love for which they were intended.

The lessons of the Holy Spirit, I believe, consist in the reversal of these three ego premises. His teaching is simply the undoing of what the ego has taught us. The entire

chapter, which deals with these lessons, can be viewed in the light of those three reversals:

Section I, “The Message of the Crucifixion” is presenting the lesson that “you cannot *be* attacked.”

Sections II and III, “The Alternative to Projection” and “The Relinquishment of Attack,” are presenting the lesson that “attack *has* no justification.”

Section IV, “The Only Answer,” is presenting the lesson that “you *are* responsible for what you believe.”

Section V, in its three subsections, then recapitulates all three of these lessons in order.

If you are interested in some of the specific evidence I find for this overview, you can look up these references for each lesson in the corresponding sections:

“You cannot be attacked,” in Section I; 3:4–5; 4:1–4, 6; 6:4; 9:1–2; 13:2.

“Attack has no justification,” in Section II see 2:3–4; 3:5–6; in Section III see 3:1–2 and 3:7–8. For linking these sections to the second lesson of the Holy Spirit in Section V, see III.4:3–4; III.1:9 and III.2:1.

“You are responsible for what you believe,” in Section IV see 9:1–7.

We will discuss more details as we go through the chapter.

## Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>The relationship of anger to attack is obvious, but the relationship [Ur: inevitable association] of anger to fear is not always so apparent. <sup>2</sup>Anger always involves projection of separation, which must ultimately be accepted as [Ur: entirely] one's own responsibility, rather than being blamed on others [this final phrase was apparently composed by the editors]. <sup>3</sup>Anger cannot occur unless you believe that you have been attacked, that your attack is justified in return [Ur: the attack {on you} was justified], and that you are in no way responsible for it [the attack on you]. <sup>4</sup>Given these three wholly irrational premises, the equally irrational conclusion that a brother is worthy of attack rather than of love must follow. <sup>5</sup>What can be expected from insane premises except an insane conclusion? <sup>6</sup>The way to undo an insane conclusion is to consider the sanity of the premises on which it rests. <sup>7</sup>You cannot *be* attacked, attack *has* no justification, and you *are* responsible for what you believe.

**Note:** The Urtext version of this paragraph has a very different interpretation of the three premises of the ego: It presents the final two as referring to the perceived attack on you, rather than to “your attack in return.” This puts an entirely different spin on the passage and, indeed, on

the entire chapter! My interpretation, presented here, is based on the published version, which has the final two premises referring to our attack in return. I present Robert Perry's brief interpretation based on the Urtext, from his *Light on the Text, Volume 2*, in an endnote to this commentary<sup>1</sup>

The preceding sections have emphasized how the ego fosters guilt in order to keep us in fear. The discussion that begins this chapter assumes that if we are afraid, one symptom of that fear will be anger. It's easy to understand why anger is related to attack; it isn't as easy to grasp why anger should be associated with *fear* (1:1). But it *is* connected to fear, because anger means I think I have been attacked (1:3). I get angry because (so it seems) I have been attacked; I attack because I am angry. If I *have been* attacked, I can be attacked *again*. And if I attack, the ones I attack will get angry with me. Therefore, if I am angry I will also be afraid.

Fear is mentioned in the first sentence and then not again until the first paragraphs of the next section. Although this lead sentence is about the relationship between anger and *fear*, the discussion seems to veer off on another topic, more related to *attack*. The way all the points tie together only begins to come clear in T-6.I.3:3, where Jesus says, "Projection means anger, anger fosters assault, and assault promotes fear." Attack (or *assault* in this sentence) is the element that links anger to fear.

The whole discussion of the crucifixion that follows is intended to illustrate how our own projection and anger have caused us to read fear into something whose message, properly understood, can only bring us "release from fear" (T-6.I.2:6). If even this extreme example can be seen to be "devoid of fear" (T-6.I.1:5), anything can be seen without fear.

What happens when I get angry? It begins when I experience some kind of separation. Anger then places the blame for *my* separation on *you* or on someone else besides *me*. That is pure projection, because my separation is always my own responsibility (1:2). Nevertheless, that is what anger is: *projection*.

Jesus then breaks that process of projection down into three steps or three progressive beliefs (1:3):

First, *I believe I have been attacked*. That involves a very arrogant or biased interpretation of events on my part. It blindly presumes to know the true motives of the other person involved. The Course would have us believe that actual attack—by anyone—is literally impossible. (Minds cannot attack, only bodies (T-17.VII.3:4), and bodily conflict is ultimately meaningless (T-23.IV.5:8)). Whatever the situation might be, with the help of the Holy Spirit it can be interpreted as something other than attack. As we will see as we go along, our belief that we have been attacked is always wrong.

Second, since I have been attacked (or so I believe), *my counterattack is justified*. Most people, even most of *us*, subscribe to this belief. If you attack me, I have a *right* to attack you in return. If I refrain from counterattack, I am being merciful or even saintly. Some cynics might say I'm being a total wuss.

Third, I think that because my attack is justified, *I am not responsible for my actions*. My attack is *your fault*, because you attacked me first. We really do believe this! You hear children giving voice to it:

“Dad! Philip *hit* me!”

“It’s his fault. He hit me *first!*”

As adults, we may not give voice to the idea so easily, but we still *think* it.

These beliefs are actually “insane” (1:5). Because of “these three wholly irrational premises,” we inevitably come to believe that someone who is our brother or sister *deserves* attack rather than love (1:4). To think that *any* child of God is worthy of attack is insane, but we certainly do harbor such thoughts.

The Course sets out to undo the insanity of our attack thoughts. The way to do that, Jesus says, is “to consider the sanity of the premises on which [our belief in attack] rests” (1:6). In other words, is it really true that we have been attacked, that counterattack is justified, and that we are not responsible for such counterattacks? His answer is very concise: “You cannot be attacked, attack has no justification, and you are responsible for what you believe” (1:7). He will spend the rest of the chapter expanding on that answer. Indeed, that single sentence contains the complete content of the lessons the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us in this Course, and in the course of our whole life on earth.

• **Study Question** •

1. *As an exercise, think of some person you are angry with. (If no one current comes to mind, think of a past situation.) Examine your thoughts about that person and the situation involving them. Do you perceive them as attacking you? Do you believe some attack in return is justified? Do you think you are not responsible for the way you respond? Finally, are you willing to consider that your thinking about these questions has been wrong? Are you willing to see this person as not attacking you?*

•

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>You have been asked to take me as your model for learning, since [Ur: and we have often said that] an extreme example is a particularly helpful learning device. <sup>2</sup>Everyone teaches, and teaches all the time. <sup>3</sup>This is a responsibility you inevitably assume the moment you accept any premise at all, and **no one** can organize his life without some [Ur: *any*] thought system. <sup>4</sup>Once you have developed a thought system of any kind, you live by it and **teach** it. <sup>5</sup>Your capacity for allegiance to a thought system may be misplaced, but it is still a form of faith and can be redirected. [Ur: You have been chosen to teach the Atonement precisely *because* you have been *extreme* examples of allegiance to your thought systems, and therefore have developed the capacity *for* allegiance. It has indeed been misplaced. Bill had become an outstanding example of allegiance to apathy, and you have become a startling example of fidelity to variability. But this *is* a form of faith, which you yourselves had grown willing to redirect. You cannot doubt the *strength* of your devotion when you consider how faithfully you observed it. It was quite evident that you had *already* developed the ability to follow a better model, if you could *accept* it.]

• Study Question •

2. *If you think about the person and incident you selected in question #1, what lesson or lessons have you been teaching by your thoughts and actions in this situation?*

Section I of the chapter will be one in which Jesus presents himself to us as our model for learning (2:1) about how to think about and respond to apparent attack. His crucifixion is “an extreme example” (2:1) of such a situation. The way he chose to perceive it and respond to it serves to show us how we should think and behave in similar, less extreme, situations in our lives.

Just as Jesus taught a lesson by the way he lived, we all constantly teach lessons (2:2) by the way *we* live. My response to a person cutting me off in traffic or cutting in front of me at the grocery store, for instance, teaches everyone a lesson. The person who cuts me off, the people around who see my response, and the people I talk to about it all “learn” something from my words and behavior. In addition, because all minds are joined, literally every living being receives the lesson. “...there are no private thoughts” (WpI. 19.2:3). The question we all should be asking ourselves is: What lesson do I want to teach?

The way we “organize [our] life” (2:3) depends on the thought system we believe in—and we all believe in *something*. Whatever that thought system is gets reflected to others as we live by it (2:4). The Course wants us to examine what *our* thought system is, and—when we find it contains things we no longer want, lessons we do not want to teach and do not want to learn—it wants us to redirect our thinking (2:5; sentence 5 is actually a very good summary of the main point of the Urtext material that was addressed to Helen and Bill). No one *lacks* faith; we all have faith. The problem is with the *object* of our faith, what we choose to believe in and give allegiance to. With Helen, it was “variability,” with Bill it was “apathy.” To what do you give *your* faith? Jesus, here, finds reason to be encouraged by the fact that we *do* have faith, although in the wrong things. We have all the faith we need, we just need to redirect it!

This chapter undertakes a major reconsideration of the three ego premises stated in the preceding paragraph, premises that permeate the thinking of most people on this planet, including us. Jesus presents himself as the model for a different thought system, with different premises.

## Section I, The Message of the Crucifixion

As I pointed out above, I think it helps to think of this section as a response to and correction of the ego lesson, “I have been attacked.” It presents Jesus as a model for learning the opposite lesson: “You cannot be attacked.”

### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>For learning purposes, let us consider the crucifixion again [[this](#)

© 2010 by Allen A. Watson, Portland, OR • 503-916-9411

<http://allen-watson.com/>—[webmaster@unityportland.org](mailto:webmaster@unityportland.org) \* Page 5

sentence appears to have been composed by the editors]. <sup>2</sup>I did not dwell on it [Ur: the crucifixion] before because of the [Ur: its] fearful connotations you may associate with it [“you may associate with it” was added by the editors]. <sup>3</sup>The only emphasis laid upon it so far has been that it was **not** a form of punishment. <sup>4</sup>Nothing, however, can be [Ur: But we know that nothing can be really] explained in negative terms only. <sup>5</sup>There is a positive interpretation of the crucifixion that is wholly devoid of fear, and therefore wholly benign in what it teaches, if it is properly understood.

• **Study Question** •

3. *3. Jesus says that when he discussed his crucifixion before, he presented it "in negative terms only" (1:4), showing what it was not—"a form of punishment" (1:3). What earlier chapter in the Text opens with a discussion of the crucifixion? You may want to find that section, and re-read it now.*

We are now going to consider the crucifixion of Jesus as an example (1:1) of a lesson the Course is presenting. Previously, Jesus said his crucifixion “was not a form of punishment” (1:3), which explains it “in negative terms” (1:4). That earlier discussion dispels the idea that Jesus was crucified as some kind of sacrifice in order to purchase our Atonement. It declares, “Sacrifice is a notion totally unknown to God” (T-3.I.4:1), and “The crucifixion did not establish the Atonement; the resurrection did” (T-3.I.1:2). However, it does not say, in a positive sense, what the crucifixion *was*, or what it accomplished. He says he didn’t dwell on it earlier “because of the fearful connotations you may associate with it” (1:2). That certainly applied to the fears of Helen Schucman, fears some of us may also share. Apparently, however, he feels that, having been exposed to a certain amount of his teaching already, we are now prepared to think about the crucifixion again.

This section will go beyond discussing what the crucifixion *is not*, and will give “a positive interpretation of the crucifixion that is wholly *devoid of fear*, and therefore wholly benign in what it teaches” (1:5, my emphasis). Keep in mind as you read this that, because we are *filled with fear* rather than *devoid of fear*, we are constantly teaching guilt and attack—the exact opposite of a “wholly benign” teaching. There is a definite correlation made between *fear* and the belligerent thoughts and actions we all exhibit. Remember what was said in the last chapter: “The ego's purpose is fear, because only the fearful can be egotistic” (T-5.V.1:3). Jesus offers himself as a being who was devoid of fear, and therefore was able to respond without attack.

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The crucifixion is nothing more than an extreme example. <sup>2</sup>Its value, like the value of any teaching device, lies solely in the kind of learning it facilitates. <sup>3</sup>It can be, and has been, misunderstood. <sup>4</sup>This is only because the fearful are apt to perceive fearfully. <sup>5</sup>I have already told you that you can always

call on me to share my decision, and thus **make it stronger** [5.II.11:1]. <sup>6</sup>I have also told you that the crucifixion was the last useless [Ur: foolish] journey the Sonship need take, and that it represents [Ur: it should means {sic}] **release** from fear to anyone who understands it [4.In.3:1-2]. <sup>7</sup>While I emphasized only the resurrection before, the purpose of the crucifixion and how it actually **led** to the resurrection was not clarified then. <sup>8</sup>Nevertheless, it has a definite contribution to make to your own life, and if you will consider it **without** fear, it will help you understand your own role as a teacher.

• **Study Question** •

4. *According to sentences 2:3 and 2:4, why has the crucifixion been interpreted in a fearful way, as some kind of atonement by means of a sacrificial death?*

The Course departs significantly from traditional Christian teaching when it says that the crucifixion is “nothing more than an extreme example” (2:1) whose only value is “the kind of learning it facilitates” (2:2). Traditional Christianity claims that the crucifixion had a *salvific* value, that is, the power to bring about salvation. In conservative Christian theology, Jesus Christ took our place to bear the curse or punishment for sin (based upon such biblical verses as Galatians 3:13<sup>2</sup>; I Peter 2:24<sup>3</sup>), so that by his “blood” (his crucifixion) we are redeemed (Ephesians 1:7<sup>4</sup>). The Apostle Paul teaches that Jesus “made peace through the blood of his cross” (Colossians 1:20), which is quite a different thing from calling it “an extreme *example*” (2:1, my emphasis).

Having come to the Course from a Bible-centered Christian background, I am quite clear that the Course contradicts the New Testament on this point. This is no slight difference of interpretation; it is a blatant contradiction of a theological point that many Christians consider central and “fundamental” to their faith. “We preach Christ crucified” declared the Apostle Paul (I Corinthians 1:23). To those who believe the Bible is the inerrant “Word of God,” the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross is *the* “fundamental” in Fundamentalism. In this Course, Jesus dares to dispute this time-honored interpretation of his death. He says flatly that the crucifixion has been misunderstood (2:3), and that means misunderstood by his own apostles (T-6.I.14:2), including the Apostle Paul. Fearful people have perceived it fearfully (2:4).

We are not going to look at it in that traditional way. We are going to consider it, not as a vehicle through which God punished sin (a fearful thought), but simply as an example of how a mind that is devoid of fear responds to what appears to be attack, and responds *without attack*. Seeing it in this way will “help you understand your own role as a teacher” (2:8).

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>You have probably [Ur: You have] reacted for years **as if you were being crucified**. <sup>2</sup>This is a marked **tendency of the separated, who always refuse to consider what they have done to themselves**. <sup>3</sup>Projection means anger, anger

fosters assault, and assault promotes fear. <sup>4</sup>The real meaning of the crucifixion lies in the *apparent* intensity of the assault of some of the Sons of God upon another [Ur: a brother]. <sup>5</sup>This, of course, is impossible, and must be fully understood *as* impossible. <sup>6</sup>Otherwise, [Ur: In fact, unless it *is* fully understood as *only* that,] I cannot serve as a [Ur: real] model for learning.

• Study Question •

5. *Jesus begins sketching a positive meaning of the crucifixion, saying that its meaning lies in the apparent intensity of assault on a Son of God. In sentence 3:3, someone (we'll call him Person A) projects what he has done to himself (see 3:2) onto another person (Person B). Answer "Person A" or "Person B" to each of the following questions:*
- a. *Who is angry?*
  - b. *Who assaults whom?*
  - c. *Who is afraid?*

We can relate to Jesus' crucifixion, as extreme as the example is, when we recall that we often react to situations as if we were being crucified (3:1). We often see ourselves as people going through life suffering "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," as Shakespeare's Hamlet put it. We see ourselves as unfairly treated, objects of injustice, innocent but "victimized despite [our] innocence" (T-26.X.4:6). We are "good within an evil world" (T-31.V.2:9), where "every day a hundred little things make small assaults upon [our] innocence" (T-31.V.3:4).

Be honest. Don't you react much of the time as if you were being crucified? As though someone in particular, or the universe at large, has it in for you? Everyone does; it is "a marked tendency of the separated" (3:2).

Surprise! The Course tells us that this put-upon self-image is a bunch of malarkey. It's pure projection, because what we see as being *done to us* is really "what [we] have done to [ourselves]" (3:2). We simply are not often willing to even consider that *we* have been attacking ourselves.

Beware of the temptation to perceive yourself unfairly treated. In this view, you seek to find an innocence that is not Theirs but yours alone, and at the cost of someone else's guilt. (T-26.X.4:1–2)

The secret of salvation is but this: that you are doing this unto yourself. No matter what the form of the attack, this still is true. Whoever takes the role of enemy and of attacker, still is this the truth. Whatever seems to be the cause of any pain and suffering you feel, this is still true. For you would not react at all to figures in a dream you knew that you were dreaming. Let them be as hateful and as vicious as they may, they could have no effect on you unless you failed to recognize it is your dream. (T-27.VIII.10:1–6)



When we project our self-attack onto others, we see them as attacking us. Our own ego is attacking us, but we recruit other minds, seemingly external to ours, to play the role of attacker so that *we* can play the role of innocent victim. The Course repeats this teaching many times, in ever-vivid imagery:

Who sees a brother as a body sees him as fear's symbol. And he will attack, because what he beholds is his own fear external to himself, poised to attack, and howling to unite with him again. Mistake not the intensity of rage projected fear must spawn. It shrieks in wrath, and claws the air in frantic hope it can reach to its maker and devour him. (W-pI.161.8:1-4)

If you are like me, you will respond to this teaching, at first, with skepticism. You may think, “Perhaps *some of the time* the attack I am seeing is my projection. But there are other times where I don’t need to project: *They really are attacking me!*” In many cases, we are sure that there is no projection that is producing a *mistaken* interpretation. There is *real attack* happening. The other person is actively malicious and deliberately destructive. Perhaps they even *admit to it*. Yet, “No matter what the form of the attack, this still is true” (T-27.VIII.10:3). We are doing it to ourselves.

When we see others as attacking us we become, quite naturally, angry (3:3). That anger leads to “assault, and assault promotes fear” (3:3). It isn’t clear here who assaults who; I think the ambiguity is deliberate because the dynamic happens both ways. Seeing ourselves as attacked, we get angry. My anger leads me to assault, or attack, the person attacking me. And of course, my attack makes them angry and leads to more attack on their part. And both parties become afraid, fearing the attack of the other.

The crucifixion can throw a lot of light on all situations in which we appear to be suffering from unmerited attack. After all, if there was ever a clear case of unmerited attack, it was the crucifixion of Jesus. Besides being unmerited, the attack appeared to be truly *intense*; Jesus was tortured and horribly executed.

The apparent intensity of attack gives the crucifixion its real meaning (3:4). We must understand that it is *impossible* for a group of the Sons of God to assault another Son of God. Yes, we all seem to experience unjust attacks. Looked at with what we call “normal perception,” the crucifixion of Jesus also seems like an unmerited and unmitigated attack on an innocent victim. And it seems very, very real: He died! The miraculous shift of perception the Course seeks to encourage in us will enable us to see *even the crucifixion* as involving no attack whatsoever. We will come to realize that a situation in which one Son of God attacks another is, literally, *an impossibility*. If we cannot come to such an understanding, Jesus says, he cannot serve as our model for learning (3:6). On the contrary, if his crucifixion truly *was* an intense “assault of some of the Sons of God upon another” (3:4), it can serve only to demonstrate the lessons of the ego: namely, the reality of sin and guilt, and the justice of punishment. Such a radical change in our perception will not come easily, but it can, and will, come.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>Assault can ultimately be made **only** on the body. <sup>2</sup>There is little

doubt that one body can assault another, and can even destroy it. <sup>3</sup>Yet if destruction itself is impossible, anything that is destructible cannot be real. <sup>4</sup>Its destruction, therefore, does not justify anger. <sup>5</sup>To the extent to which you believe that it does, you are [must be] accepting false premises and teaching them to others. <sup>6</sup>The message the crucifixion was intended to teach was that it is not necessary to perceive any form of assault in persecution, because you cannot be persecuted. <sup>7</sup>If you respond with anger, you must be equating yourself with the destructible, and are therefore regarding yourself insanely.

• Study Question •

6. *6. If you respond to the destruction of your body with anger, what false premises are you accepting and teaching to others? (See entire paragraph, especially sentences 5–7.)*

The Course emphatically teaches that the mind cannot attack or be attacked; only bodies can do those things (4:1–2; see also T-17.VII.3:4; T-7.VIII.4:3; T-18.VI.3:5; T-8.VII.1:1–2; T-8.VIII.1:5). We cannot dispute the fact that bodies can and do destroy one another. The opening D-Day sequence of the movie, “Saving Private Ryan,” was a powerful depiction of mankind’s insane propensity for dismembering one another.

Although the existence of such destruction cannot be denied, the Course declares that destruction of bodies “does not justify anger” (4:4). Why? Because, in its view, “Nothing real can be threatened” (T-In.2:2), which is the same as saying, “Nothing real can be destroyed,” or as Jesus puts it here, “destruction itself is impossible” (4:3). There is no *real* destruction, only illusions of destruction. By simple extension of logic, then, if something *can* be destroyed, it isn’t real to begin with. “Its destruction, therefore, does not justify anger” (4:4). The body isn’t real, so destroying it isn’t really destroying anything, and therefore, does not merit anger.

No doubt this is hard for most people to accept. It helps me to think of it like this: Suppose I am having a dream. In this dream, for some reason, I kill someone. But, of course, the person I have killed only exists as a thought in my mind; therefore, I have not destroyed anything real. No one has cause to be angry with me. If we can accept that our earthly existence is just as much a dream as what we experience in nocturnal dreaming, nothing more than an imaginary world that exists in the mind, this teaching can make some sense. If the body is real, however, and, being real, *can* be destroyed, then its destruction is real attack that *does* merit anger, and guilt is real.

To the extent that we believe that destroying a body does merit anger—and we all believe that to *some* extent, I’m sure—we are accepting and teaching false premises (4:5). We are teaching the opposite of the premises just given as proof that anger over the body’s destruction is unjustified. That is, to the extent we think anger is justified, we are teaching that: 1) Destruction is possible; 2) the body is real; 3) you are your body and can be destroyed; and 4) it is just to attack those who assault our bodies. To that same extent, we are regarding ourselves insanely (4:7). If you read over that list a second time,

however, you will probably realize that *you would agree* with those statements, if asked outside the context of a *Course in Miracles* study group. To fully accept such a radical change in our thought system may take a while.

We must realize that, even while it declares that the apparent destruction of the body does not justify anger, the Course in no way condones the *thought* behind such destructive actions, and in no way makes light of the effects of such thoughts. In the Bible, the Apostle Paul was faced with a similar dilemma. Declaring that God could and would forgive *any* sin because His grace was unlimited, he discovered some people were saying, "Let's sin more so there will be more grace," using forgiveness as an excuse to do as they pleased. He replied: "By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (Romans 6:1-2). In Course terms, we could paraphrase that as: "Shall we kill and practice physical abuse, just because we are not destroying anything real? No way! If we have transcended our egos" (which is the only way we can realize the body's unreality), "how can we go on behaving like egos?" Furthermore, we cannot claim that bodies and destruction are not real to us if we are attaching any importance to killing and physical abuse. Our actions belie our words.

Sentence 6 states "the message the crucifixion was intended to teach," which is really the central point of this section: "...it is not necessary to perceive any form of assault in persecution, because you cannot be persecuted" (4:6). The rest of the section develops the details of this lesson. To tell us we cannot be persecuted must imply that we are not bodies, because bodies *can* be persecuted or assaulted (4:1). Therefore, to completely accept the idea that there is no need to perceive attack *in anything*, we must accept the unimportance of the body (see M-5.II.3:12<sup>5</sup>), and realize it is not part of our real identity, which consists in the spirit of love we share with God. That aspect of us alone is real, and that aspect of us is eternally safe and immune from all harm.

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>I have made it perfectly clear that I am like you and you are like me, but our fundamental equality can be demonstrated only through joint decision. <sup>2</sup>You are free to perceive yourself as persecuted if you choose. <sup>3</sup>When you **do** choose to react that way, however, you might remember that I **was** persecuted as the world judges, and did **not** share this evaluation for myself. <sup>4</sup>And because I did not share it, I did **not** strengthen it. <sup>5</sup>I therefore offered a **different** interpretation of attack, and one which I [*do*] want to share with you. <sup>6</sup>If you will **believe** it, you will help me **teach** it.

### • Study Question •

7. *7. Based on this paragraph, what do you think you could tell yourself the next time you perceive yourself as persecuted?*

•

Before expounding on his example, Jesus reminds us that we are fundamentally equal to him, and can therefore make the same choices he made. When we decide as he did, we will be demonstrating that equality (5:1).

We could choose to continue to perceive ourselves as persecuted (5:2) if we want to. Nothing is stopping us. God isn't going to strike us dead if we do! We might, though, when we react in anger, choose to remember how Jesus reacted to the world's persecution—or rather, to what the world thinks of as its persecution of him, because *he did not see it as persecution!* (5:3). He did not “share” the world's evaluation of the situation, and because he didn't share it, he didn't strengthen it (5:4). Remember, “...what you share, you strengthen” (T-5.III.3:5). The world was directing what it thought of as attack against him. By refusing to see it as attack, Jesus did not experience anger and therefore did not attack in return. He broke the attack cycle. It's very similar, I think, to the slogan from the Sixties, “What if they gave a war and nobody came?”

Instead of teaching attack, Jesus “offered a different interpretation of attack” (5:5). That is the interpretation he shares with us in this section (5:5), and in the entire Course. As we welcome this radical reinterpretation of attack into our minds, we will be helping Jesus to teach it (5:6). Let me remind you that, as I pointed out in discussing paragraph 4, to achieve this new perception we must learn not to identify with our bodies.

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>As I have said before, “As you teach so shall you learn.” <sup>2</sup>If you react as if you are persecuted, you **are** teaching persecution. <sup>3</sup>This is not a lesson a Son of God should **want** to teach if he is to realize [**learn**] his own salvation. <sup>4</sup>Rather, teach your own perfect immunity, which **is** the truth in you, and realize [**Ur: know**] that it cannot *be* assailed. <sup>5</sup>Do not try to protect it yourself, or you are believing that it **is** assailable. <sup>6</sup>You are not asked to **be** crucified, which [**Ur: because that**] was part of my own teaching contribution. <sup>7</sup>You are merely asked to follow my example in the face of much less extreme temptations to misperceive, and **not** to accept them as false justifications for anger. <sup>8</sup>There can **be** no justification for the unjustifiable. <sup>9</sup>Do not believe there **is**, and do not **teach** that there is. <sup>10</sup>Remember always that what you believe you **will** teach. <sup>11</sup>Believe with me, and we will become equal as teachers.

### • Study Question •

8. *8. a) Think of a situation in which you seem to have been unfairly treated. What lessons are you teaching yourself by your thoughts about the situation? What lessons are you teaching the other person or persons involved?*
9. *b) In sentence 8, what is “the unjustifiable” Jesus is referring to? (Hint: Read the sentence before and after.)*

The message of this paragraph could be summed up thus: If you want to learn salvation, “teach your own perfect immunity” (6:4). That is based on the idea that, “As

you teach so shall you learn” (6:1), words written earlier as well (T-5.IV.6:4), as Jesus reminds us. He will repeat them another time in T-6.III.2:7, so plainly, he wants us to absorb this idea. Whatever you teach you will learn. Therefore, decide what you want to learn, and then teach that. In the Manual for Teachers, Jesus describes this entire Course as “a means of choosing what you want to teach on the basis of what you want to learn” (M-In.2:5). We can also examine what we are currently *teaching*, and then decide whether we want to *learn* what we are teaching. If so, we can continue teaching that; if not, we need to change what we are teaching.

As we've already seen, if we insist that the destruction of a body deserves our anger, we are teaching insanity. If we see ourselves as persecuted, we are teaching persecution (6:2). We should ask, “Do I want to *learn* persecution?” The answer is obvious: Of course not! Not if we want to realize our own salvation (6:3). And if we do not want to learn persecution, then *we shouldn't teach it*—which means, stop reacting as if we are being persecuted. Stop accusing the world of being unfair to us. The illustration of the crucifixion is intended to help us decide that what we want to learn is love, and therefore, we will “teach only love” (T-6.I.13:2), as Jesus did.

Here, he tells you to “teach your own perfect immunity” (6:4). How do you teach immunity? By demonstrating that you haven't been harmed. If you can show that what happened to you did not hurt you, you are demonstrating immunity to the happening. “It,” that is, your immunity, “cannot be assailed”; that “is the truth in you” (6:4). The only part of you that is real cannot be threatened or assailed. That is what you want to teach yourself, and to teach immunity to yourself you must teach your immunity to others. How do you show someone they haven't hurt you? By forgiving them, by continuing to love them, or by not shutting them out of your heart.

Teaching your perfect immunity means *not* trying to protect yourself, because trying to protect yourself only shows that you do not believe in your immunity! (6:5). If you are immune you need no protection.

This is what Jesus did in the events of his crucifixion. As the Bible points out:

"He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth." (Acts 8:32, KJV, quoting Isaiah 53:7)

"Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly." (Matthew 27:13–14, KJV)

"... Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. "He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth." When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. “ (I Peter 2:21–23, NIV)

He does not ask us, however, to be crucified as he was. That was part of *his* “teaching contribution” (6:6). He simply asks us to follow his example, applying the same principles to “much less extreme temptations to misperceive,” so that we no longer “accept them as false justifications for anger” (6:7). Just as Jesus did not condemn those who crucified him but instead prayed for them, we must learn to *perceive no attack* in the much milder trials we endure, so that we can react to them with love in place of anger.

When someone betrays your confidence, for instance, learn to see it, not as an attack and betrayal, but merely as a *temptation to misperceive*. Seeing it as betrayal would be the misperception. If someone truly betrayed you, anger would be justified. But all such justifications are false (6:7). Jesus tells us later in the Course that “Anger is *never* justified” (T30.VI.1:1). He says as much here, also: “There can be no justification for the unjustifiable” (6:8), and in strong words tells us not to believe that anger can ever be justified, and not to teach that it can (6:9).

Teaching that anger is justifiable does not mean that we act like hate mongers, writing or preaching anger against some selected target, as racists or religious bigots do. Nothing that overt is required to make us teachers of hate. We cannot *help* teaching that anger is justified if we *believe* that it is, because “what you believe you will teach” (6:10). It comes out in our “attitudes...feelings and...behavior” (T-4.IV.1:2). So, what needs our attention is our belief. If we will believe with Jesus that anger is never justified, and that we never have any reason to *be* anything except what we *are*—love—we will become his equals as teachers (6:11). The lesson he taught in his crucifixion will be echoed in our own lives, with equal power.

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>Your [Ur: *Your*] resurrection is your reawakening. <sup>2</sup>I am the model for rebirth, but rebirth itself is merely the dawning on your mind of what is already in it. <sup>3</sup>God placed it there Himself, and so it is true forever. <sup>4</sup>I believed in it, and therefore accepted it as true [Ur: *made it true forever*] for me. <sup>5</sup>Help me to teach it to our brothers in the name of the Kingdom of God, but first believe that it is true for you, or you will teach amiss. <sup>6</sup>My brothers slept during the so-called “agony in the garden,” but I could not be angry with them because I knew I could not *be* abandoned. [Ur: *Peter swore he would never deny me, but he did so three times. It should be noted that he did offer to defend me with the sword, which I naturally refused, not being at all in need of bodily protection.*]

### • Study Question •

10. 9. *Spend a few minutes thinking about implications for you personally of what has been said so far in this chapter, and of Jesus' appeal in sentence 5 to help him “to teach it to our brothers.” Have you made it a personal goal to learn that you cannot be harmed or attacked, and to share that reality with all your brothers?*

The resurrection of Jesus as presented in the Bible was literal; he rose from the dead. *Our* resurrection is figurative; we “rise” from the deadness of our spiritual sleep by reawakening (7:1). Just as Jesus, by resurrecting, demonstrated that crucifixion had not harmed him, the reawakening of our minds to what is already in them (7:2) demonstrates to *our* persecutors that their actions did not harm us. His death and resurrection is our

model, but in following his example, we do not literally die and resurrect. Our resurrection is mental.

That mental resurrection consists in our recognition of what is *already in our minds* (7:2). We are awakening to the truth of what we are, the Self God created which is “true forever” (7:3). Jesus believed that truth about himself, and by believing, made it forever *true for himself* in his experience (7:4). The same thing is true of all of us, but it is not yet true *for us*. We don't experience ourselves as “wholly lovable and wholly loving,” yet that is how we must learn to think of ourselves (T-1.III.2:3–4).

We are all being called to join Jesus in teaching the truth about all of us: that Love, which created us, is what we are, as Workbook Lesson 229 teaches. But, before we can teach it, we must believe it is true for ourselves (7:5). What we believe, we teach, so if we don't believe it, we won't be teaching it. Our *words* may be teaching it, but what will get conveyed to the other person may be another message entirely. As Jesus points out in the Manual for Teachers, our words do not count, but the reality of our underlying beliefs does: “It is the teaching underlying what you say that teaches you” (M.In.3:6).

The sentence about Jesus' so-called agony in the Garden of Gethsemane seems a bit out of place, and perhaps belongs more with the paragraph following, which we are going to cover in the next class. We'll cover the sentence more thoroughly in the context of that paragraph. (In early versions of the Course, sentence 7 *was* part of the next paragraph.)

For now, just notice that “agony in the garden” is in quotes, implying that some people give the words a meaning that the author does not share; hence I say, “so-called agony.” In other words, as we have seen, Jesus did not see attack in his circumstances. Therefore, he could not have been in agony, nor did he feel betrayed because his disciples fell asleep while he prayed. In that sense, this incident is another illustration of the different way Jesus perceived things, which is the kind of perception he is teaching us.

## Answer Key

1. No written answer is expected.
2. If you have perceived the other person(s) as attacking you, the lesson you have been teaching them is that they are guilty. If you have withheld love because of your perception, you have taught them that they are not worthy of love but deserve attack. If you perceive yourself as not responsible for your reactions, then you have been teaching yourself that you are not in charge of your own mind, and cannot escape from your ego. Are these lessons ones you want to continue teaching?
3. Section I of Chapter 3, “Atonement without Sacrifice.”
4. Those who are fearful are apt to perceive things fearfully. Fearful people have, therefore, misunderstood the crucifixion in a fearful way. Those who are freed from fear do not need to see it that way any longer.
5. If Person A is projecting what he himself has done to himself onto Person B, then:

## Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

- a. Person A is angry.
  - b. Person B assaults Person A, but the reverse is also true.
  - c. Person A is afraid, and so is Person B.
6. The false premises you are accepting and teaching to others include: 1) The body is real; 2) you are your body; 3) attack upon your body destroys something real and is therefore real attack and a real sin.
7. I could remember that Jesus was persecuted as the world judges, but he chose not to view it as persecution. He gave it a different interpretation. Since I am like him, I can do the same thing.
8. a) No written answer is expected. The lessons we teach by harboring attack thoughts generally contain these ideas in some form:
1. I am a body.
  2. Those who have mistreated me are guilty.
  3. The harm done to me is real.
  4. I am vulnerable.
  5. My counterattack is justified.
  6. I am not responsible for what I do in response to such attack.
- b) “The unjustifiable” must refer to anger, since the preceding sentence just referred to “false justifications for anger.” What he is saying is that there cannot ever be any justification for anger; we should not believe that anger is ever justified; and we should not teach that anger is ever justified.
7. No written answer is expected.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Robert Perry's comments:* Editing changes have unfortunately changed the original meaning of this paragraph. It begins by saying that we all understand how anger leads to attack, but we probably don't understand how anger leads to fear. Here's how. To begin with, anger is always an act of projection—projecting onto others the responsibility for your separated condition, your condition of being alone and deprived. You yourself caused this condition, but then you projected this causation onto others. You see them as attacking you (first premise). You unconsciously see their attack as justified (second premise)—otherwise, why would you give it any power? And you see their attack as an objective fact, rather than a belief chosen by you (third premise). In this view, your fear of them is totally justified, and this is how anger/projection leads to fear. In this view, your attack on them is totally justified as well. Indeed, the idea that attack is justified is the only conclusion one can derive from those three premises.

Yet the paragraph ends by saying that this conclusion must be insane because all three premises are irrational. First, no one can attack you (we'll see why later). Second, their attack on you is totally unjustified—so why give it any power? And third, you—not your attacker—are responsible for your belief that you have been attacked. The real conclusion? This person deserves only love, not attack.

<sup>2</sup>Gal. 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”— NRSV



**Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles***

<sup>3</sup> 1Pet. 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross, so that, free from sins, we might live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. NRSV

<sup>4</sup> Eph. 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace. NRSV

<sup>5</sup> "Yet to accept this release, the insignificance of the body must be an acceptable idea" (M-5.II.3:12).