

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 6, Section V(A)

The Lessons of the Holy Spirit Subsection A: “To Have, Give All to All”

Overview of the Section

Once again, I will remind you of my theory that the three lessons presented in this section correspond at least roughly to the three ego premises given in the introduction to this chapter, and are amplifications of the Holy Spirit's response to them: “You cannot *be* attacked, attack *has* no justification, and you *are* responsible for what you believe” (T6.In.1:7). These three lessons, in my opinion, roughly correspond to three stages in our spiritual journey home. (I discuss these three stages in some detail in my booklet, *The Journey Home*.)

In any given situation, the Holy Spirit is teaching us all three of these lessons. Each one leads very logically to the next: if I cannot be attacked, then my attack is never justified, and I am the only one responsible for what I think and believe. The person I *thought* was attacking me and “causing” me to counter-attack did *not* cause the thoughts of counter-attack; *I* caused them.

And yet, over a lifetime, we are learning these lessons in a broad sequence. At first, most of our time will be spent learning that we cannot be attacked. Gradually, that will shift into a period in which we focus on learning that our attack is never justified. And finally, we will pass through a period of ever-increasing vigilance, taking responsibility for all the thoughts in our minds. This broader view is the one presented in “The Lessons of the Holy Spirit” (Section V).

The first subsection, which we cover in this study guide, is (in my view of the chapter) related to the first of the counter-premises of the Holy Spirit: “You cannot *be* attacked.”

Let me also repeat my disclaimer: This outline is not etched in steel. I don't claim it fits *perfectly*, just that it has helped me to a clearer understanding. I share it, not because I want to convince you that I am right, but because I think that it may also enhance *your* understanding.

The first four paragraphs of this section stand alone, not part of the first subsection. They could easily have been left as the final four paragraphs to Section IV, since they continue the closing theme of that section—the Holy Spirit as Teacher—almost without a noticeable break. They equally well serve as an introduction to the whole of Section V,

which deals with the *teachings* of the Holy Spirit. It makes sense to think about the teaching *goals* and teaching *style* of the Teacher before beginning to study *what* He teaches.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Like any good teacher, the Holy Spirit knows [*does know*] more than you do *now*, but He teaches only to make you equal with Him. ²[Ur: *This is because*] You had *already* taught yourself wrongly, having believed what was not true. ³You did not believe in your own perfection. ⁴Would [Ur: *Could*] God teach you that you had made a split mind, when He knows your mind only as whole? ⁵What God *does* know is that His communication channels are not open to Him, so that He cannot impart His joy and know that His children are wholly joyous. ⁶Giving His joy is an ongoing process, not in time but in eternity. ⁷God's extending outward, though not His completeness, is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him as one. ⁸So He thought, "My children sleep and must be awakened."

These four paragraphs (T-6.V.1–4) talk about the teaching technique of the Holy Spirit, or, in other words, His method for leading us from wrong- to right-mindedness. The discussion begins with a clear statement that the entire teaching process consists of correcting our errors (1:2). We were created perfect and we are still perfect; our mistake was that we "...did not believe in [our] own perfection" (1:3). The teaching of the Holy Spirit, therefore, is not presented as something coming from a greatly superior being to a vastly inferior one; His teaching is always "to make you equal with Him" (1:1).

God knows only our wholeness; He does not wish to condemn us for our mistakes, which would only validate our belief in our split mind (1:4). Knowing our wholeness, He nevertheless also knows that *something isn't right*. The outflow of His joy is blocked by our failure to reciprocate communication. The circuit is not complete. Therefore, He recognized that we were asleep, and created the Holy Spirit to waken us.

If you have read the preceding chapters of the Text, the statements about what God *does* know should sound familiar, since nearly the identical things were said back in Chapter 4, Section VII:

T-4.VII.6.4-7	T-6.V.1.5-8
"And this He does know."	"What God does know"
"His channels are closed"	"His communication channels are not open"
"[your joy] is incomplete. And this He does know."	"so that He cannot...know that His children are wholly joyous."
"The constant going out of His Love"	"Giving His joy is an ongoing process"

“His Love is blocked...when the minds He created do not communicate fully with Him”	“God's extending outward...is blocked when the Sonship does not communicate with Him”
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Clearly, in the Course's presentation of things, God *is aware* of the separation, or at least of our diminished joy, our lack of communication with Him, and our blocking of His outward extension.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹How can you wake children in a more kindly way than by [Ur: better and more kindly than with] a gentle Voice That will not frighten them, but will merely remind them that the night is over and the light has come? ²You do not inform them that the nightmares that frightened them so badly are not real, because children believe in magic. ³You merely reassure them that they are safe now. ⁴Then you train them to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking, so they will understand they need not be afraid of dreams. ⁵And so when bad dreams come, they will themselves call on the light to dispel them.

• Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 2 might give an explanation for why the Holy Spirit did not emphasize, in the Bible, that the world is an illusion. Can you find the reason?*

The Holy Spirit knows we are sleeping (1:8) and having a nightmare. The intention of the Holy Spirit is to waken us gently, in a way that will not frighten us (2:1). His way has three steps:

1. The process begins at a very simple level: assuring us we are safe now (2:3).
2. Next, He will train us to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking, that is, between illusions and the truth (2:4).
3. From that, we proceed to learn, by ourselves, to call on the light to dispel our bad dreams when they arise (2:5).

Is it coincidence that there are *three* steps describing how to gently waken children from a nightmare? I think not. It is easy to see that these steps are the same three steps we are discussing in our spiritual journey, as a response to the three ego premises.

- 1) Assuring the child it is safe now is comparable to the realization, “I cannot be attacked.”
- 2) Training the child to recognize the difference between sleeping and waking is comparable to training us to recognize the difference between truth and the

illusions that we have made, which allows us to make a rational choice. This is the second lesson, in which we realize that attack is never justified, because the attack we believe we are seeing is an illusion.

- 3) Reaching the point where the child has learned, when bad dreams come, to call on the light by himself, is comparable to our becoming independently vigilant only for God and His Kingdom, responsible for our own thoughts and beliefs.

How reassuring it is to realize that the Holy Spirit follows the same pattern in His teaching as a parent dealing with a child terrified by a nightmare! What a loving, caring, gentle Teacher we have!

Paragraph 3

3. ¹A wise teacher teaches through approach, not avoidance. ²He does not emphasize what you must avoid to escape from harm, but [Ur: as much as] what you need to learn to have joy. [Ur: This is true even of the world's teachers.] ³Consider the fear and confusion a child would experience if he were told, "Do not do this because it will [Ur: might] hurt you and make you unsafe; but if you do that instead, you will escape from harm and be safe, and then you will not be afraid." ⁴It is surely better to use [Ur: All of this could be included in] only three words: "Do only that!" ⁵This simple statement is perfectly clear, easily understood and very easily remembered.

The Holy Spirit teaches us "through approach, not avoidance" (3:1). His emphasis is always positive, on what we *should* do, rather than what we should avoid (3:2). In terms of what follows, He does not concentrate on trying to get us to *stop attacking* others; instead, He focuses on teaching us, "To have, give all to all" (T-6.V(A).5:13). The phrase "Do only that!" (3:4) is reminiscent of the message of the crucifixion, which was "Teach only love" (T6.I.13:2). The parallel between teaching only love and giving all to all is obvious. He urges us to act in a way that will demonstrate that attack is not real. When our lesson is put in such simple, positive terms, it is "perfectly clear, easily understood and very easily remembered" (3:5).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The Holy Spirit never itemizes errors because He does not frighten children, and those who lack wisdom *are* children. ²Yet He always answers their call, and His dependability makes them more certain. ³Children *do* confuse fantasy and reality, and they are frightened because they do not recognize [know] the difference. ⁴The Holy Spirit makes no distinction among dreams. ⁵He merely shines them away. ⁶His light is always the call to awaken, whatever you have been dreaming. ⁷Nothing lasting lies in dreams, and the Holy Spirit, shining with the Light from God Himself, speaks only for what lasts forever.

• **Study Question** •

2. *As our Teacher, what does the Holy Spirit never do?*
3. *As our Teacher, what does the Holy Spirit always do?*

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“The Holy Spirit never itemizes errors because He does not frighten children” (4:1). He doesn’t get all bent out of shape by our mistakes; He doesn’t waste time itemizing all the things we do that are wrong. “He merely shines them away” (4:5). They are just dreams caused by our fear, and by our inability to distinguish fantasy from reality (4:3). He brushes the errors aside, giving no significance to any of them (4:4–6), and returns to the positive lesson: wake up, and teach only love. If we listen to Him, we will not find the growth process fearful and difficult. He overlooks our errors, answers our every call for help, and rewards our successes. There is no reason to fear Him.

Subsection A, “To Have, Give All to All”

Before we embark on the details of the first lesson, we need to get an overall picture of what the three lessons are about.

In each of the three lessons of the Holy Spirit there are two layers: a layer I will call *surface content*, and another layer I will call *deep content*. The surface content teaches us through approach rather than through avoidance. Rather than being told, “Don’t perceive attack, and don’t counter-attack,” we are given positive rules that offer reward, and at the same time, indirectly teach us what to avoid. At the surface content level, the first two lessons appear to have little to do with the three premises of the ego. For instance, the first lesson is put into these words: “To have, give all to all.” That would not appear to have anything to do with the first ego premise, “I am being attacked.” The same is true of the second lesson.

I believe, however, that at the deep content level they are clearly connected. The surface content of the lessons covers a deeper content, a content that is almost subliminal. We may not even be aware of the deep content. Yet, as we learn the surface content, we are learning another, hidden lesson without even being aware of it. As I see it, the surface content and deep content of the three lessons are:

- Lesson 1.** **Surface content:** To have, give all to all.
 Deep content: This is the introduction of an idea radically contrary to the ego’s thought system. It is the beginning of thought reversal, the realization that there is an alternative. By demonstrating that giving is the way to have, it teaches that I am not a body and therefore cannot be attacked.
- Lesson 2.** **Surface content:** To have peace, teach peace to learn it.
 Deep content: This lesson identifies which thought system is *more*

desirable. I not only *see* an alternative to attack; I *want* the alternative. I realize attack has no justification, and choose to offer peace instead.

Lesson 3. Surface content: Be vigilant only for God and His Kingdom.

Deep content: This lesson contains the clear-cut choice for the Holy Spirit's thought system and the steadfast rejection of anything else. Vigilance is a state of mind that knows I am responsible for what I believe.

I believe these three lessons are more than just an outline of one "class" in the Holy Spirit's curriculum; they are an outline of the entire spiritual journey. In this spiritual journey, we transition from an allegiance to the ego and its premises, into an intermediate state of an allegiance divided between ego and God, and finally to full allegiance to God. The first lesson (or "step" as it is also called) begins to let in God's thought system, initiating the conflict between two ways of thinking. The second step is mainly one in which we come to *prefer* God's way of thinking to the ego's, but we still don't entirely let go of the ego. The third step completes our choice for God and against the ego. It ends the conflict; we steadfastly set our minds against the ego and its thinking.

Lesson One: To Have, Give All to All

When I first read this section, years ago, I was extremely puzzled by it. The first five paragraphs deal almost entirely with the subject of our bodies, teaching that the body is only a symbol of what we think we are, and not truly part of us (2:2; 3:3). I could not fathom, for years, what that had to do with the lesson: "To have, give all to all."

When I realized that these three lessons are the expanded response of the Holy Spirit to the three erroneous premises of the ego, I began to understand the connection between two ideas, "I am not a body", and "Giving and receiving are the same." I believe that the deep content of the first lesson is that I cannot be attacked. Bodies, however, *can* be attacked (T-6.I.4:1-2). Therefore, if I believe I am my body, I will believe I can be attacked. If I think I am my body, and you punch me in the face, I am going to feel attacked! To come to a realization of my own invulnerability, my identification with my body must be broken. I must realize that I am not a body; rather, I am mind, I am spirit.

After giving the lesson title, Jesus starts a long discourse about the body, which, as I have said, seems unrelated to the stated lesson. The opening lines of the lesson say:

When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone, you will know that you will last forever... The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who are life. (V.A.1:1,4)

In this discourse about the body he is revealing the deep content of this first lesson: We cannot be attacked because we are not bodies.

The Holy Spirit does not try to teach this lesson directly; it is simply too shocking. He begins with an indirect lesson: "To have, give all to all." He does not malign the body; instead, He "takes what you have made and translates it into a learning device" (2:4). He teaches us to use our bodies to communicate and to do miracles. He shows us, for instance, that the mind can heal the body, but the body cannot heal the mind (2:6); this

demonstrates that the mind is greater than the body, which, while not the final lesson, is a move in the right direction. "He always tells you that only the mind is real, because only the mind can be shared" (3:2). Mind, then, is what we share; what we give.

Only one equal gift can be offered to the equal Sons of God, and that is full appreciation. Nothing more and nothing less. (4:7,8)

When I learn that what I give, I receive, I am learning that what I *am*, really, is a mind, and not a body. When I offer peace to my brother and receive peace in the act of doing so, I am being taught, without realizing it, that I am not my body; I am learning that only mind is real because only mind can be shared. The Holy Spirit is very gently, very subtly undermining my body identification. He doesn't directly assault my belief in the body's reality; instead, He teaches me to use the body differently, for communication and sharing instead of attack, and in so doing He transforms my body into a learning device that teaches me its own unreality! The end result of this instruction is the slowly dawning realization that, if I am not a body, I cannot be attacked.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone, you will know that **you** will last forever. ²Perhaps you [*Ur: Many*] think this is accomplished through death, but **nothing** is accomplished through death, because death is nothing. ³**Everything** is accomplished through life, and life is of the mind and in the mind. ⁴The body neither lives nor dies, because it cannot contain you who **are** life. ⁵If we share the same mind, **you can overcome death because I did.** ⁶Death is an attempt to resolve conflict by not deciding at all. ⁷Like any other impossible solution the ego attempts, it *will not work*.

• Study Question •

4. *According to this paragraph, is the body alive, and does it die?*

We will reawaken to our eternal nature when we have broken the identification with our bodies, our egos, and our worldly dreams (1:1). To recognize what we *are* we must forget what we *think* we are. Many people have believed that such liberation from the bonds of earth comes with physical death; spiritual folk songs speak of death as laying down our burden, going home, or crossing over the River Jordan into the "promised land" of Heaven. But death accomplishes *nothing*, according to the Course (1:2). Why? Because death itself *is nothing* (1:2). We think the body dies; it does not die because it isn't alive to begin with! (1:4). Our life cannot be contained in a body; we *are* life expressing. So when a body "dies," what has happened? Exactly nothing. It is no more significant than a marionette's wooden collapse to the floor when the puppeteer releases his hold on the strings. The mind has stopped animating its fleshy clothing; nothing else has changed. Therefore, physical death *cannot* bring us release from our body, our ego, and our dreams. Death is a cop-out, a faint-hearted attempt to avoid conflict by running

away from it (1:6). The “conflict” referred to is the big one, between God and the ego. Death is no more than a faulty attempt of the ego to avoid that choice, and it will not work (1:7). The conflict *must* be resolved.

“Life is of the mind and in the mind” (1:3). Mind is where life happens. Mind is where change must happen, if change is to happen. If we link our minds with the mind of Christ, we can overcome death just as Jesus did (1:5). Overcoming death does not, in my opinion, mean that we will physically live forever. On the contrary, I believe it means we will no longer identify with bodies at all, but will fully identify with our life in and of the mind.

Paragraphs 2 & 3

2. ¹God did not make the body, because it is destructible, and therefore not of the Kingdom. ²The body is the symbol of **what you think you are**. ³It is clearly a separation device, and therefore does not exist. ⁴The Holy Spirit, as always, takes what you have made and translates it into a learning device [Ur: **for you**]. ⁵Again as always, He reinterprets what the ego uses as an argument **for** separation into a demonstration [Ur: **an argument**] **against** it. ⁶If the mind can heal the body, but the body cannot heal the mind, then the mind **must be stronger** than the body. ⁷Every miracle demonstrates this.

3. ¹I have said that the Holy Spirit is the **motivation** for miracles. ²[Ur: This is because] He **always** tells you that **only** the mind is real, because only the mind **can be shared**. ³The body **is** separate, and therefore **cannot** be part of you. ⁴To be of one mind is meaningful, but to be one body is meaningless. ⁵By the laws of mind, then, the body **is** meaningless.

• Study Question •

5. *God did not make the body, the ego did. But the Holy Spirit can reinterpret the body into the demonstration that separation is not real. How can the body demonstrate that separation is not real (see 2:6-3:5)?*

In a casual disregard for the Genesis account of creation, the Course declares that “God did not make the body” (2:1). The proof? The body can be destroyed, and “God created only the eternal” (T-11.VII.1:2); therefore it cannot be part of His Kingdom (2:1). The body, on the contrary, is “a separation device” that symbolizes “what you think you are” (2:2–3). Not a creation of God, the body is “what you have made” (2:4) to replace your true identity. This is why your identification with the body has to be undone before you can reawaken to your eternal Being in God.

The Holy Spirit does not thrust the body aside simply because we made it as a separation device, however. He takes it and “translates it into a learning device” (2:4).

The body was not made by love. Yet love does not condemn it and can use it lovingly, respecting what the Son of God has made and using it to save him from illusions. (T-18.VI.4:7–8)

The Holy Spirit is able to take the body, which the ego uses as evidence of separation, and transform it into something that demonstrates the very *opposite* of separation (2:5).

How is that possible? Our bodies are obviously separate things. We are not physically joined, and our physical separation surely seems to supply evidence corroborating that we are separate beings. How can our bodies supply evidence that we are *not* separate from each other and from God? That is the topic of the rest of paragraph 2 and paragraph 3, and the answer, in a word, is “miracles.”

Miracles show that the mind is stronger than, or superior to, the body. The mind can heal the body, but the body cannot heal the mind. When Jesus says, “Every miracle demonstrates this” (2:7), he is obviously referring to physical healing. When a miraculous physical healing occurs, it proves that the mind is more powerful than the body.

Furthermore, the mind can be shared, but the body cannot be shared; we can be of one mind, but we cannot be of one body (3:2, 3:4). So, bodies are separate from each other; that much is indisputable. The ego interprets that fact like this: “Your bodies are separate, and that proves *you* are separate.” But the Holy Spirit looks at the same evidence and concludes, rightly, that, *since you are not separate* and bodies are, then “the body... cannot be part of you” (3:3). The separateness of bodies proves nothing: “By the laws of mind, then, the body is meaningless” (3:5).

The discussion so far is not talking about the first lesson of the Holy Spirit; it is setting the stage for that lesson and presenting the deep content of that lesson. That we are not separate, that we are not bodies and therefore cannot be attacked—this is the deep content of the first lesson of the Holy Spirit. Jesus is setting the stage for the lesson objective, and will conclude this subsection by telling us that all of this is *why* the first lesson is, “To have, give all to all.” He has yet to make that connection. For now, he will continue with the discussion of the body, the Holy Spirit, and miracles.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹To the Holy Spirit, there is no order of difficulty in miracles. ²This is familiar enough to you by now, but it has not yet become believable. ³Therefore, you do not understand it and cannot use it. ⁴We have too much to accomplish on behalf of the Kingdom to let this crucial concept slip away. ⁵It is a real foundation stone of the thought system I teach and want you to teach. ⁶You cannot perform miracles without believing it, because it is a belief in perfect equality. ⁷Only one equal gift can be offered to the equal Sons of God, and that is full appreciation. ⁸Nothing more and nothing less. ⁹Without a range, order of difficulty is meaningless, and there must be no range in what you offer to your brother.

• Study Question •

6. *The concept that “There is no order of difficulty in miracles,” called “the first principle of miracle,” has come up repeatedly before (see T1.I.1:1; T2.I.5:5; T4.IV.11:9; and T5.VII.2:4). Now, in this paragraph, it is called a “crucial concept” (4:4). In your own words summarize what this concept means, and why it is so important.*

Miracles are the means by which the Holy Spirit uses the body to demonstrate that the separation is not real. To Him, all miracles are equally easy (4:1); the same needs to become true *for us* as miracle workers. We *understand* the concept by now, having had it presented to us several times already in the Text, yet because we do not yet *believe* it we cannot *use* it (4:2–3).

Let's summarize the line of argument here. The Holy Spirit wants to teach us to forget what we've made of ourselves and remember what we are in truth; in a phrase, He wants us to recognize that the separation never occurred (that is “the full awareness of the Atonement,” T-6.II.10:7). To accomplish that we must learn we are not separate bodies, but one mind. The means for demonstrating that are miracles of healing. For Him to accomplish such miracles through us, we must come to know that “there is no order of difficulty in miracles.”

This is why the concept is so “crucial,” why we cannot “let [it] slip away” (4:4). Everything the Holy Spirit is trying to accomplish depends on it; it is “a real foundation stone” of His teaching (4:5). When this idea has been accepted in our minds, we have come to believe in perfect equality. No one is better or worse than anyone else. “They are all the same; all beautiful and equal in their holiness”(T-13.VIII.6:1). All we can offer to any one and every one is “full appreciation. Nothing more and nothing less” (4:7–8). Just as “All expressions of love are maximal” (T-1.I.1:4), so all expressions of appreciation are full. We appreciate everyone equally; we see infinite value in every living being. There is “no range in what [we] offer” (4:9); that is, we give everything always (T-4.VII.5:8).

The miracle itself is but the witness that you have the power of God in you. That is the reason why the miracle gives equal blessing to all who share in it, and that is also why everyone shares in it. The power of God is limitless. And being always maximal, it offers everything to every call from anyone. There is no order of difficulty here. A call for help is given help. (T-14.X.6:10–15)

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The Holy Spirit, Who leads to God, translates communication into being, just as He ultimately translates perception into knowledge. ²You **do not lose what you communicate**. ³The ego uses the body for attack, for pleasure and for pride. ⁴The insanity of this perception makes it a fearful one indeed. ⁵The Holy Spirit sees the body only as a means of

communication, and because communicating is sharing it [communication] becomes communion. ⁶Perhaps you think [Ur: You might argue] that fear as well as love can be communicated; and therefore can be shared. ⁷Yet this is not so real as it may appear [Ur: as it sounds]. ⁸Those who communicate fear are promoting attack, and attack always breaks communication, making it [Ur: and therefore makes communion] impossible. ⁹Egos do join together in temporary allegiance, but always for what each one can get separately. ¹⁰The Holy Spirit communicates only what each one can give to all. ¹¹He never takes anything back, because He wants you to keep it. ¹²Therefore, His teaching begins with the lesson:

¹³To have, give all to all [Ur: To have, give all to all].

• Study Question •

7. *When the ego appears to communicate and to join with others, what is really going on?*

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The Holy Spirit is leading us back into communication with one another and with God. He uses our bodies to communicate, leading to communion (5:5). As barriers between us break down we are relearning our shared identity; what starts as *communication* between separate parts will translate into communion or *being*, a shared identity (5:1). What we communicate is not lost (5:2). Indeed, it remains ours (5:10–11) and incorporates, as part of our Self, the ones to whom we communicate. What we possess, we all possess *jointly* (5:10).

When the ego uses the body, it uses it “for attack, for pleasure and for pride” (5:3), which always results in fear (5:4), and thus separation. In the ego’s hands the body promotes attack and breaks communication (5:8). It may appear that the ego is “communicating fear,” but such communication is “not so real as it may appear” (5:7). Fear always results in attack and thus in broken communication (5:8). There may be temporary “joining” in alliances, but the purpose is what each can get *separately* (5:9).

Because the Holy Spirit only shares what each of us can give to all and keep at the same time (5:10–11), “His teaching begins with the lesson: To have, give all to all” (5:12). This lesson is what will, in the long run, bring us to believe that there is no order of difficulty in miracles, enabling us to accept and perform miracles, which will in turn teach us that we are not separate bodies but one shared mind. As Jesus said in paragraph 4, believing in “no order of difficulty” is “a belief in perfect equality” (4:6). Therefore, the Holy Spirit starts by teaching us a practice of perfect equality: To have, give all to all.

As in the example of the way a parent deals with a child having nightmares, the Holy Spirit does not concentrate on telling us all that we are doing wrong and what to avoid; He just gives us one simple, positive admonition: To have, give all to all. “Just do this.” If we will listen to this lesson and respond to it, it will precipitate all of the other related and

necessary effects. If we accept the concept, “To have, give all to all,” into our minds, this simple maxim will begin at once to undermine the ego’s thought system, and eventually cause its complete downfall and demise. Lessons 2 and 3 will ensue without fail, and indeed, the first lesson isn’t fully realized until the third lesson is reached. But it begins here. All we need do (as we shall see in the next paragraph) is to *start in the right direction*. Given that little willingness, the Holy Spirit can take us the rest of the way.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹This is a very preliminary step, and the only one you must take for [Ur: must take] yourself. ²It is not even necessary that you complete the step yourself, but it is necessary that you turn in that direction. ³Having chosen to go that way, you place yourself in charge of the journey, where you and only you must remain. ⁴This step may appear [Ur: appears] to exacerbate conflict rather than resolve it, because it is the beginning step in reversing your perception and turning it right-side up. ⁵This conflicts with the upside-down perception you have not yet abandoned, or the change in direction would not have been necessary. ⁶Some [Ur: people] remain at this step for a [Ur: very] long time, experiencing very acute conflict. ⁷At this point they may [Ur: Many] try to accept the conflict, rather than take the next step towards its resolution. ⁸Having taken the first step, however, they will be helped. ⁹Once they have chosen what they cannot complete alone, they are no longer alone.

• Study Question •

8. *What sort of experience is produced when we take the preliminary step of turning in the direction of the Holy Spirit’s teaching: bliss? Or turmoil and conflict? Why?*

Only in the last paragraph of the section does the Text turn directly to Lesson One itself. Here we learn a number of very interesting things about this complex and subtle lesson.

A Very Preliminary Step

This step is “very preliminary” (6:1). What does *preliminary* mean? According to my dictionary it means “prior to or preparing for the main matter, action, or business.” In other words, this step is just our *preparation* for the main journey out of darkness. This is like packing your bags before leaving for the airport; just the preliminary step. Jesus says it is *very* preliminary, so maybe a better analogy would be making up a list of what to pack! We haven’t even begun to pack our bags at this stage.

The full realization that we are not a body nor an ego obviously *is* something that comes at the end of the journey. “When your body and your ego and your dreams are gone” (1:1) is not a preliminary step! When that happens, *we know*; we have attained knowledge. The *preliminary* step is accepting the lesson into our minds: “To have, give all

to all.” This simple-seeming lesson is going to lead us to that final lesson because it contains the seeds of the destruction of the ego’s thought system.

Yet, how do we measure against this “very preliminary step”? Has the realization that to have something we must give it away become an integral part of us? Most of us, I think, are still in the *process* of learning this “very preliminary” lesson. “For you have barely started to allow your first, uncertain steps to be directed up the ladder separation led you down” (T-28.III.1:2).

We Only Need Turn

“It is not even necessary that you complete the step yourself, but it is necessary that you turn in that direction” (6:2). Well, thank goodness! Although this is a very preliminary step, it is also the most difficult and “hardest lesson to learn” (V(B).3:9). With such a difficult lesson, it is a relief to hear that we don’t have to do the whole thing by ourselves. All we need to do is make a turn in the right direction; just open the door a crack and let the idea in: “Maybe the way to have is to give. Maybe what I give is what I receive.”

The first step begins with a change of direction, just a little opening to the light. This part is entirely up to us. Of all three steps, this is “the only one you must take for yourself” (6:1). Until we turn, until we crack open the door, even God Himself will not force His Will upon us. He requires our willing cooperation.

We Are In Charge of the Journey

“Having chosen to go that way, you place yourself in charge of the journey, where you and only you must remain” (6:3). The Holy Spirit is our Guide, but we are the commander in chief (T-6.IV.9:4). He *suggests* (T-14.VII.5:14), always with perfect wisdom better than our own, but we must choose to accept His wisdom and follow it. We place ourselves in charge and we must remain in charge; the journey begins with our choice and is carried out through continued choices. Nothing is ever forced upon us.

The means of the journey, which is the decision making power of our own mind, demonstrates the journey’s end: that we are completely responsible for our thoughts. We have a Guide and we have a model, but only we can make the choices required for the journey.

The Initial Step Increases Conflict

This step may appear to exacerbate conflict rather than resolve it, because it is the beginning step in reversing your perception and turning it right-side up. This conflicts with the upside-down perception you have not yet abandoned, or the change in direction would not have been necessary. (6:4–5)

Our perception is upside-down. Our way of thinking is wrong-minded. That is precisely why a change in direction is necessary. When we introduce a thought of truth into such a mind, of course it seems to increase our mental conflict. The new idea is diametrically opposed to everything we have taught ourselves. The reality hinted at by

the experience of a miracle would turn our world upside down if we accepted it. So naturally, conflict seems to increase.

The initial lesson “seems to contain a contradiction, since it is being learned by a conflicted mind” (T-6.V(B).3:6) “How can *giving* be the way to *having* something?” asks our befuddled mind. Having seems to be the opposite of giving. So even though we may comprehend the lesson intellectually, we also doubt it, and our motivation becomes conflicted. Conflicting motives always generate a certain amount of fear (see “Fear and Conflict,” T-2.VI), so the initial step will involve both things: fear and conflict. “For a time, then, he [the learner] is receiving conflicting messages and accepting both” (T-6.V(B).4:6). The introduction of a spiritual thought initiates a conflict between the ego and the Holy Spirit, and the battle rages in our own minds.

Rather than bringing about peace of mind, which is one of the stated goals of the Course, the beginning steps may seem to completely destroy your peace of mind. “If you accept two thought systems which are in complete disagreement, peace of mind is impossible” (T-6.V.B.5:2).

It is extremely important for us, as learners, to understand this and to recognize what is happening when it happens. This, indeed, is the “ring of fear” we must pass through (T-18.IX.3–4:1 and T-16.IV.11:1–2); the fear is caused by the natural antipathy of two conflicting thought systems trying to occupy the same mind. This ring of fear lies just below the surface. It is one of the *first* things you encounter when once you have made the initial choice that turned you in a new direction.

This Step May Take a Long Time

This “very preliminary” step is, nevertheless, one that may take us a long time to get past.

Some remain at this step for a long time, experiencing very acute conflict. At this point they may try to accept the conflict, rather than take the next step towards its resolution. (6:6–7)

Our egos don't give up without a fight. What we are prone to do, the Course says here, is to “accept the conflict.” In other words, we just figure that this mental dichotomy is something we have to live with, and we try to adjust. Egos are very good at adjusting.

Dissociation is one of the ego's primary methods for coping with the conflict between the thoughts introduced by the Holy Spirit and the ego's thoughts. “Dissociation is a distorted process of thinking whereby two systems of belief which cannot coexist are both maintained” (T-14.VII.4:3). The thoughts are simply kept apart from each other. We have an expression for it: “I don't let my left hand know what my right hand is doing.” So, when we want to choose to listen to the ego, to be angry, judgmental, and attacking, we just temporarily block the Holy Spirit's thoughts out of awareness. We don't *bring them into association* with what we are doing; that's *dissociation*. Conversely, when we want to feel “holy” we wall off our attack thoughts and deny that we have them.

The healing for this conflicted condition is to allow the conflicting thoughts to come together. Like darkness and light, when the mutually incompatible thoughts meet in our

minds, the dark thoughts will disappear. To leave this conflicted stage, we must be willing to “bring...all you dark and secret thoughts to Him, and look upon them with Him” (T14.VII.6:8). We need to bring the darkness into the light; that is the only way it can be healed.

Jesus points out that the reason we remain in conflict is because we are afraid to take the next step (6:7). We are afraid to bring the ego's thoughts into the open and let them be healed. He also says, “The way out of conflict between two opposing thought systems is clearly to choose one and relinquish the other” (T-6(V).B.5:1). That is obvious if you even think about it at all. The way to move beyond this initial step (which is allowing a holy thought into our minds, thus generating conflict with the ego) is to make a clear choice for the Holy Spirit, and to relinquish the ego. The next stage will involve increasing our motivation to make that clear choice, and increasing our willingness to do so. The speed with which we move into that stage depends completely on how willing we are to pass through that “ring of fear.”

Acting on Faith

There is a fascinating comment made about why the beginning stage is so difficult:

Still strongly aware of the ego in yourself, and responding primarily to the ego in others, you are being taught to react to both as if what you do believe is not true. (T-V(B).3:10)

The beginning stage, then, can be seen as a period in which we are called upon to act on *faith*—faith that what we see of our own ego, and what we see as the ego in others, is not true. We are being asked to “give all to all” even while our eyes seem to be showing us both our own inability to do so, and the unworthiness of those to whom we are asked to give. Although we perceive attack coming at us, we are asked to react as if it were not attack at all.

The miracle is taken first on faith, because to ask for it implies that the mind has been made ready to conceive of what it cannot see and does not understand. Yet faith will bring its witness to show that what it rested on is really there. And thus the miracle will justify your faith in it, and show it rested on a world more real than what you saw before; a world redeemed from what you thought was there. (W-pII.13.4:1–3)

The new idea so recently entered into our mind comes, at first, without evidence of its truth. The idea has entered, and we have been made ready to conceive of something we cannot yet see. We are asked, then, to put the idea to the test. We are asked to try it out on faith, to be willing to react to apparent attack or lack of love *as if* it were not true. And as this passage says, if we are willing to do that, “...the miracle will justify your faith in it.” The evidence of its truth will be there. That evidence becomes the impetus that moves us into the next stage.

The evidence may be physical, but more frequently it is simply increasing joy and increasing inner peace. Impossible situations in relationships resolve miraculously, and

we know that something that we have previously been unaware of has been operating in our lives. The Voice within us is strengthened as we share it, by extending forgiveness and love to our brothers (T-5.III.4:1–3). “The Holy Spirit is invisible, but you can see the results of His Presence, and through them you will learn that He is there” (T-12.VII.3:1). As we see and experience the results of our faith in His lessons, we will increasingly see their value to us. We will want to align our minds with them. When we have shifted from simply *entertaining* the new thought system to actively *preferring* it over the ego, we have entered the area of the second Lesson of the Holy Spirit.

Addendum

Robert Perry has written some astute comments on an additional paragraph that occurs here in the Urtext:

[Ur: You, Helen, had taken this step, and because you believed in it, you taught it to Bill, who still believed in the solution of sleep. You were not consistent in teaching it, but you did so often enough to enable him to learn it. Once *he* learned it, he could teach *you* how to become more consistently awake, and thus begin to waken *himself*. This placed him, too, in command of the journey. His recognition of the direction it must take was perfectly stated when he *insisted on collaboration*. You, Helen, had taken a giant step *into* conflict, but Bill turned you both forwards *toward the way out*. The more he teaches this, the more he will learn it.]

In this additional paragraph, we can see that Jesus was actually talking about a journey that both Helen and Bill were taking together, in which leadership was passing back and forth. First, Helen decided to learn the way of giving. This woke Bill out of his slumber, and once he learned the lesson from her, he began to return it to her, so she could be more consistently awake. This, in turn, strengthened his own learning. He then grasped the direction they had to go in. He realized they had to go *together*. This was their way out.

Answer Key

1. Sentence 2 says that you do not inform children that their nightmares are not real, because they *believe* in magic. The world is our nightmare. Perhaps the Holy Spirit, in biblical times, did not emphasize that the world is not real because we believed so strongly in it. He did not want to frighten or confuse us.
2. He never itemizes my errors.
3. He always answers my call.
4. No, “the body neither lives nor dies” (1:4). It cannot contain the life we are. This is why “nothing is accomplished through death” (1:2).
5. The body can demonstrate that the separation is not real because its healing proves the mind is greater than the body, thus demonstrating that we *are* mind rather than body. Minds can join, and bodies cannot; therefore, we are not separate, but joined.
6. “There is no order of difficulty in miracles” is a real foundation stone of the Course, without which you cannot perform miracles (4:6). It means that no one miracle is any harder than any other miracle; “they are all the same...[all are] maximal” (T-1.I.1:3–4). Whether the problem is “big” or “small” is of no consequence; the miracle undoes them all with equal ease. Understanding this allows us to offer the same total appreciation to every brother (4:7).
7. When the ego appears to communicate fear, it is promoting attack, which separates—and real communication is joining. When the ego appears to join, it just forms temporary allegiances, based on what each one can get separately.
8. This step produces conflict because it introduces right-side-up perception, which conflicts with your current upside-down perception.