

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 12, Section III

The Investment in Reality

Legend:

blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~striketrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

This section, “The Investment in Reality,” explores the reason why it seems so difficult for us to look at our fear-based interpretations and to let go of them: We have a strong investment in the world as we see it. In other words, we want to see it this way; we want to see the world as a battleground. We want to see sin and guilt and fear and attack, and so we do. Yet, unless we are willing to recognize that the battle is within our own mind and nowhere else, we will never see the real world: “You must relinquish your investment in the world as you project it, allowing the Holy Spirit to extend the real world to you from the altar of God” (T-12.III.10.9).

Note the word “investment” in the title of this section and watch for it as you read; you will find that it recurs throughout the section. There is a kind of play on words as Jesus moves from investment in the financial sense as explanation of spiritual poverty to investment in the sense of a vested interest in a particular outcome as a result of having devoted time and energy to something to achieve a purpose. Thus, a person who has spent considerable time and money attempting to build a house can be said to have an investment in seeing the house completed and in use.

Remember also the message of the preceding two sections. The main themes of the chapter have already been stated. The curriculum of the Holy Spirit asks us to become aware of our perceptions and recognize that they are only interpretations, not facts. We are making error real, and all we need to do to find the truth is to stop doing that. The curriculum asks us to recognize our fearful perceptions, to let go of them, and to bring them to Him for transformation. The curriculum teaches us to share His judgment of everything as either love or a call for love. The only possible response to either thing is to give love in return. The Holy Spirit helps us to see that attack and sickness are only forms of fear, and fear is a call for love, unconsciously calling out for the love that fear denies.

This section and the next several sections are carrying on that theme, even though the connection is not immediately evident. This section, for instance, is discussing one of the major obstacles to our perceiving a call for love instead of perceiving attack, which is our investment in continuing to see things the way we always have seen them, that is, our continuing desire to see attack, and why that desire exists.

This is the setting for the startling line that opens the fourth paragraph: "...if your brothers ask you for something 'outrageous,' do it *because* it does not matter." Pay special attention to the three paragraphs that lead up to this puzzling directive!

Paragraph 1

1. ¹I once asked you to [asked if you were willing to] sell all you have and give to the poor and follow me. ²This is what I meant: If you have [If you had] no investment in anything in this world, you can [could] teach the poor where **their** treasure is. ³The poor are merely those who have invested wrongly, and they are poor indeed! ⁴Because they are in need it is given you to help them, since you are among them. ⁵Consider how perfectly your lesson would be learned **if you were unwilling to share their poverty**. ⁶For poverty is lack, and there is but one lack since there is but one need.

• Study Question •

1. *What does "invested wrongly" mean? (1:3).*

The reference to "sell all you have" is to the Gospels (Matt. 19:21, also in Mark and Luke), and is one instance in which the author of the Course is clearly identifying himself as the Jesus of the Gospels. In this section, Jesus says that when he spoke the words "Sell your possessions and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21, NASB), he really meant that we should give up our investment in this world—that is, to cease to value it or to be attached to it—and should help our brothers learn to do the same.

Notice how he redefines what it means to be poor (1:3). Even in the sense of investing money, investing unwisely results in poverty. This way of defining poverty, however, allows an interpretation of investing that is broader than financial: investing in the sense of putting time, energy and hope into something. Everyone in this world has an investment in certain things. We all have invested in the world in hopes that the world, in turn, would make us happy. By the Course' definition, that is an unwise investment that always results in poverty.

As children of God we have everything, so it is in our power to relieve the poverty of everyone around us. We are rich, they are poor, and the poor and we have met: Isn't it natural that we should be called to help these poor? We may not believe that we can bring healing to everyone around us, but we can (1:4). Yet because we are making the same mistake everyone else is making (investing in the world), it is difficult for us to believe we have such healing power. Our mistake causes us to believe that we have many different needs. The Course teaches: "There is but one lack since there is but one need" (1.6).

All the apparent needs that we perceive ourselves as having are illusory, substitutions for the real need we are hiding from ourselves. The "one lack" is our union with God. The "one lack" is the true nature of our Self, which we have thrown away. We don't want to admit that lack, so we literally invent thousands of other lacks and blame our poverty on our lack of those things.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Suppose a brother insists on having you do something you think you do not want to do. ²His very insistence should tell you that **he believes salvation lies in it**. ³If you insist on refusing and experience a quick response of opposition, **you** are believing that **your** salvation lies in *not* doing it. ⁴You, then, are making the same mistake **he** is, and are making his error real to both of you. ⁵Insistence means **investment**, and what you invest in is **always** related to your notion of salvation. ⁶The question is always two-fold; first, *what* is to be saved? ⁷And second, *how* can it be saved?

• Study Question •

2. *How is the topic of this paragraph related to the judgment of the Holy Spirit?*

Jesus now takes all the teaching about looking at our fears, and looking at the ego's domination of our minds, and brings it to bear on a particular and familiar situation. This is a good example of how, even in commonplace daily interaction with other people, we can learn to watch our thoughts and to recognize the ego's fear behind them.

The situation is one we are all familiar with: Someone "insists on having you do something you think you do not want to do" (2:1). What could be more ordinary than this? It happens all the time.

Notice the word "insists." This isn't just a general request; this is someone saying to you, "You have to do this for me! I'm depending on you. I'm lost if you don't do it." The strong insistence is a signal to us that this person, to some degree, believes that his salvation lies in your responding to his request. He feels that he would, in some way, be lost if you don't do it (2:2).

It might be something rather innocuous. Someone calls and says, "Please baby-sit for me this Friday night. I've been planning to go to this concert with my husband for weeks, and I haven't been able to find a baby-sitter. If you don't do it, I don't know what I'll do!" But, as it works out, you have previous plans for the evening. You have rented a video that you have wanted to see for a long time, and if you baby-sit you won't be able to watch it. You'll lose your money, or have to rent for a second night. So your initial immediate reaction is a strong, "I don't want to do this."

The Course calls this "a quick response of opposition" and says that such a response indicates that we are as invested in the outcome as our brother is, but in reverse (2:4). We are attaching as much importance to his request as he does. He is insisting that we do something, and we are insisting that we won't do it. Both of us are making our happiness dependent on having our way. "Insistence means investment" (2:5).

Again, notice the word "insist." The mistake you are both making is thinking that something in this world is necessary to your happiness! Your only real need is for God, but you are displacing that need, unwilling to look at it, and have invented some need in this world—watching a video or saving the \$4.00 rental fee—as what you must have to be happy.

This is just another example of what was discussed in T-12.I.1:1: making errors seem like something real. You are mirroring your brother's mistake, and "making his error real to both of you" (2:4).

Jesus is asking us to look at what is really going on in our minds when we feel that instant resistance when someone asks a favor of us. We think we just want to watch our

video, and don't want to baby-sit, but actually this is tightly linked to our concept of salvation! (2:5).

You would not normally connect baby-sitting or watching a video to salvation, and yet that is what is going on. When you insist on a certain thing in this world, you obviously have an investment in it. And "what you invest in," and why, "is always related to your notion of salvation" (2:5), even though you are not aware of it. (The extreme degree to which we are not aware is discussed in some detail in paragraph 6; we'll come back to that point.)

The whole question of our notion of salvation breaks down to two questions:

First, what is to be saved? And second, how can it be saved? (2.6–7)

The What and How of Salvation

Let's look ahead a little to get a clear general idea of what the Course is saying here, so that we can understand the details a bit better as we go through them.

The ego believes that "what" is to be saved is the ego, and "how" is by attack(3.1).

The Holy Spirit knows that "what" is to be saved is the mind, and "how" is through peace (5.1).

When we experience ourselves insisting on something, if we look at it, we will notice that we are striving to "save" something. We are in some way trying to save our ego, or something our ego is identified with, such as our body. And the way we are trying to save it is through some kind of attack. For instance, in the example I'm using, I have made the pleasure of watching my video and having a relaxing evening alone something that my ego "needs" to be happy. I am refusing my sister's call for help, I am denying her what she thinks she needs, and that is a form of attack. I am taking what I want, at her expense.

If my friend continues to insist, pleading with me to help out, I will probably begin to feel angry. "What right does she have to make this demand on me? What gives her the right to put her happiness above mine? Why can't she get her own life organized? There are hundreds of baby-sitters out there; surely she could have found someone else. But no! She waits till the last minute and then puts me on the spot!" When the anger flares, it is easy to see the attack in the situation.

When I respond like that, I am listening to my ego, which believes that I must save my own ego, and the way to do so is to attack my sister.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Whenever you become angry with a brother, for **whatever** reason, you are believing that the **ego** is to be saved, **and to be saved by attack**. ²If **he** attacks, you are agreeing with this belief; and if **you** attack, you are reinforcing it. ³*Remember that those who attack are poor.* ⁴Their poverty asks for gifts, **not** for further impoverishment. ⁵You who could help them are surely acting destructively if you accept their poverty **as yours**. ⁶If you had not invested **as they had**, it would never occur to you to overlook their need.

• Study Question •

3. *Explain the last sentence (3:6) in light of the earlier teaching about perceiving the call for help (see also 12.I.4:1).*



When I react to my sister's request to baby-sit with an angry "No way!" I have made a mistake about the what and how of salvation. Her ego believes that to get what it wants, it must attack. My anger shows that I see what my sister is doing as an attack on my peace of mind. I am therefore agreeing with her belief that her ego is to be saved by attacking me (3:1). And, if I attack back by insisting on my own way, I am reinforcing her ego's notion of salvation (3:2). By doing the same thing she is doing, I make matters worse.

Anyone who attacks must have an investment in having things their way (2:5), which is an unwise investment. Therefore, they fit the Course's definition of "poor" (3:3). They don't merit attack in return, therefore; they merit your compassion! (3:4). Just as we have seen before, what looks like attack is really a request for help, and the natural response of a healed mind is to offer that help—not to counter-attack.

In the example I've been using, the Holy Spirit is asking me to see my friend's insistence that I baby-sit, not as an attack; but as a call for help. She is seeing herself as poor and needy, and that *is* an appeal for help.

What is it that causes me, instead, to react with anger? Why don't I perceive this call for help *as* a call for help? As was said before (T-12.I.4:1), the only reason we don't see *everything* as the Holy Spirit does, as either love or a call for love, is that we have a prior investment in seeing attack! Jesus is trying to help us to observe ourselves and to notice our insane investment in things in this world that really do not matter to our peace of mind. When I am identified with my ego, I am trying to preserve my ego. I want to believe that the things of this world can be an adequate substitute for God, allowing my ego to survive in separation from God. I want to believe that watching that video will make me happy. Therefore, I want to see my sister's request as an attack, because that supports my belief that what I must save is my own ego. My own unwise investment prevents me from seeing *her* unwise investment as what it is.

The almost shocking truth is that unless this kind of craving and attachment existed in my mind, "it would *never occur to [me]* to overlook [her] need" (3:6). Just think about how often you have reacted in this way to requests for help and you will get some idea of how attached you are to your ego.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Recognize what does not matter, and if your brothers ask you for something "outrageous," do it *because* it does not matter. ²Refuse, and your **opposition** establishes that it **does** matter to you. ³It is only you, therefore, who have **made** the request outrageous, [*for nothing can be asked of you,*] and **every** request of a brother is **for** you. ⁴Why would you insist in **denying** him? ⁵For to do so is to deny yourself and impoverish both. ⁶**He** is asking for salvation, as **you** are. ⁷Poverty is of the ego, and never of God. ⁸No "outrageous" requests **can** be made of one who recognizes what is valuable and wants to accept nothing else.

• Study Question •

4. *When asked to do something that seems outrageous to you, why is just doing it often the wisest course?*

This paragraph has been the source of more discussion than nearly any other paragraph in the Course. It seems to be saying that whenever anyone asks you to do

something “outrageous” you should do it to demonstrate that you are not invested in *not* doing it. That is the basic message, although as usual, the real message is not about what you do or don't do, but about what you are *thinking*. To understand the point the Course is making, we should bear in mind the remarks in paragraph 2 that showed that a knee-jerk refusal to do it is usually based on our own investment in the ego.

Let's suppose that you are in a situation where someone is insisting you do something for them, and you have noticed yourself having an immediate, strong desire to refuse. What do you do about it? The Course's advice (in 4:1–2) seems quite clear: Do it.

In the example I have described, my friends' going to the concert does not matter in the grand scheme of things, nor does my watching the video. Therefore, I should go baby-sit. By going, I demonstrate that salvation is not of the ego through attack. I demonstrate this by giving them what they ask for. I show them that I am not an ego, and represent the alternative to them. If I insist on my own way, I am denying my own real need, which is God's peace, and teaching that my salvation lies in staying home to watch my video.

That is the ideal response for me under those circumstances, but there may be mitigating circumstances in some cases, which we will discuss shortly.

It is important to point out that this doesn't mean that you do everything that anyone asks you to do. First of all, the whole issue here is insistence and investment. If someone makes a casual request without insisting on it, the situation is different. You may grant or refuse their request without any real investment on your part or on theirs. It is the insistence in both parties that is at issue here. It is the insistence that reveals a misguided seeking for salvation in externals, thus signaling that the ego is at work.

Even if the other person is insisting, you can refuse for other reasons than your own ego's insistence. One such reason is given later in the Text, where Jesus refers to what he says here in Chapter 12, and then adds: “Be certain that this does not mean to do a foolish thing that would hurt either him or you” (T-16.I.6.5).

If your brother is asking you for money to support a drug habit, for instance, you might refuse without having an investment in refusing. You are not refusing because you believe that your salvation depends on it; you are refusing because to comply will cause him harm. Or if he asks you to do something harmful, such as holding up a liquor store, that would be harmful to *both* of you. The case being discussed here in Chapter 12 is a situation in which what you do causes no harm to anyone, except as you both make it matter to you in your own mind.

Although there are exceptions to the rule, “do it” is still the rule. The ego is quick to grasp at any excuse and to attempt to justify my refusal to help on some “moral” grounds. I must be vigilant to notice my ego's investment in my responses to people. For instance, I might say to myself when my friend asks me to baby-sit, “I really need a quiet evening by myself; I've been so busy lately. To give in to my friend's request would be harmful to me, so I won't do it.” That might be making the error real; it might be betraying my belief that something in this world—being at home watching a video—is essential to my peace of mind. And that is the only thing that really matters, my peace of mind.

Another sticky point with this “rule” is that it does no good to fake it. It might be that my level of fear is still so high that I really can't go and baby-sit for my friend and remain peaceful. If I go, I will be resentful or will do it as a sacrifice. “Okay, Ill do it, but you're gonna owe me big time!” Perhaps I know that I ought to be unattached to my need for a quiet evening and just do as they ask, but I am not *really* unattached. In that case, I

can't really carry out the instruction here. Whatever I do, in some way I will be teaching the ego's thought system because I am still captured by it.

If you refuse to answer your brother's call for help out of your own fear and ego attachments, at least know that you are doing so, and don't judge yourself for it. If recognize the call for help in the person but don't feel up to meeting it, you can ask the Holy Spirit to meet their need without actually trying to be the one through whom the need is met. At the same time, you can recognize your fear as your own call for help, and ask help from the Holy Spirit in seeing the situation differently, without feeling guilty that you are still afraid

Every situation is different, and no one can judge for another whether or not to "do it" when an outrageous request comes along. Each of us must rely on our inner guidance to know how to respond. It certainly helps, however, to realize that the general rule is: "Do it." Every attack, and thus every seemingly outrageous request, is a call for help that you could answer were you in tune with the Holy Spirit at the time (4:3–4). There really is no such thing as an outrageous request; what makes it outrageous is the interpretation we put upon it (4:3; 4:8).

In saying, "Recognize what does not matter" (4:1) Jesus is asking us to give up our investment in external things as the source of salvation. Our *insistence* on refusing proves our investment (4:2), so he is telling us not to follow that unconsidered impulse to refuse when it occurs. He is asking us not to see our brother's request as an attack, but as the call for help it really is, and to respond to that call by giving what is asked for: "He is asking for salvation, as you are" (4:6). That does not necessarily mean we respond by doing exactly what the person wants, in a physical way, but by giving the love and help they really need. What makes their request *seem* outrageous to us is our own ego investment, which causes us to see their request as an attack.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Salvation is for the mind, and it is attained through peace. ²This is the only thing that **can** be saved and the **only** way to save it. ³Any response **other** than love arises from a confusion about the "what" and the "how" of salvation, and this is the **only** answer. ⁴Never lose sight of this, and never allow yourself to believe, even for an instant, that there is another answer. ⁵For you will surely place yourself among the poor, who do not understand that they dwell in abundance and that salvation is come.

• Study Question •

5. *Call to mind a situation in which a brother or sister asked you for something that seemed to be outrageous. Reflect on how you might have best furthered the goal of inner peace for both parties.*

The primary goal for both you and your brother is to bring peace to your minds (5:1–2; see also T-8.I.1:1–2). It isn't watching a video, attending a concert, or even taking care of your friend's children. It isn't about behavior; it's about mental attitude.

Simple self-observation makes it fairly clear that the ego's concerns usually center around the body in some way. It is concerned with behavior, or what we do. The Holy Spirit is concerned with what we think and how we think.

The mind is “what” is to be saved, and peace is “how.” There is nothing else to be saved, and no other way to save it (5:2). Saving your body is not important. Saving the ego is not important. Saving my relaxing night at home is not important. The only thing of value is the mind. To have an investment in saving something else is to deceive yourself about the “what” and “how” of salvation.

When we fail to respond with love to our brothers and sisters, we have forgotten what our true central focus is: the mind (5:3). We are occupied with meeting what we believe are the needs of our bodies and our egos. Therefore we have an investment in *not* hearing the call for love in their request, and in not answering. When we do this, we do more than deny our brother's request: we deny Heaven to ourselves (5:5).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹To identify with the ego is to attack yourself and **make yourself poor**. ²That is why everyone who identifies with the ego **feels deprived**. ³What he **experiences** then is depression or anger, because [but] what he **did** was to exchange Self-love for self-hate, **making him afraid of himself**. ⁴He does **not** realize this. ⁵Even if he is fully aware of **anxiety** he does **not** perceive its source **as his own ego identification**, and he **always** tries to handle it by making some sort of insane “arrangement” with the world. ⁶He **always** perceives this world as **outside himself**, for this is crucial to his adjustment. ⁷He does **not** realize that **he makes this world**, for there **is** no world outside of him.

• Study Question •

6. *When we experience anxiety because of our identification with the ego, what do we usually do instead of recognizing the true source of the anxiety?*

When you invest in something in this world, you are identifying with the ego. Your reality is not an ego; it is the grandeur of the Son of God, so your false identification is actually an attack on your true identity, an attack that impoverishes you (6:1). That's why, whenever you identify with the ego, you feel deprived (6:2). You are deprived because you are depriving yourself of your own grandeur! You have exchanged your true love of Self (with a capital “S”) for the hatred of your small, impoverished self (6:3).

Such identification with the ego makes you literally afraid of yourself. I believe that Jesus means that we fear our true Self because it threatens our ego identification. We cause our own fear and depression, and then try to pin the blame on the external world. We think that the world is the source of our depression and anger.

Nobody who does this realizes they are doing it! (6:4). We may be aware of feeling depressed or angry or anxious, but rarely does anyone recognize themselves as the cause of those feelings (6:5). That, however, is what the Course is attempting to train us to do.

The source of these negative feelings is the fact that you are identifying with your ego. This is what is going on behind the scenes, this is the unconscious secret we all are hiding.

One person is insisting, “Do this!” and the other person is insisting “No!” Neither one realizes what is going on, that both of them are identifying with their ego and its notions of salvation. All they see is the conflict. But if one of you is willing to look at his own ego, the impasse can be broken. If you are willing to recognize your ego's investment in the outcome, give it to the Holy Spirit, and let go of it, and to recognize your brother's

call for help—then a miracle can happen. Then, salvation can come, at least to your mind. And if to yours, it will reach your brother as well, though he or she may not be aware of it in that moment.

When you are stuck in ego identification, “[you] always [try] to handle it by making some sort of insane ‘arrangement’ with the world” (6.5). You try to fix the situation outwardly. You make bargains with people, you make compromises, you “try to work it out.” It never works, at least not for long. “Well, OK, I’ll baby-sit for you tonight, but you have to do something for me in return.”

The whole scene is based on the belief that the world is outside of me. The truth is, I make this world, and there is no world outside of me (6.6–7). The ego cannot afford to let me realize this (6:6). That’s because I took everything I didn’t want in my mind and projected it out to get rid of it; that’s how I made the world (9:7). It is crucial to me, identified with the ego, to keep it that way. I do not want to see any of this ugly stuff as something that originates in me.

But that is the whole point: All of it is in my own mind and nowhere else (see T-29.VII.6:1 and P-In.4:2;). To be an ego depends on having an external world to blame for all my problems. To be a Son of God depends on recognizing that there is no world outside of my mind (6:7; T-18.VI.1:1; T-18.VI.8:8–11; T-26.VII.4:9; see also Lesson 132 in the Workbook, especially paragraphs 4–7.)

That is perhaps the most startling teaching of the Course. The Workbook calls this idea “the central thought the course attempts to teach” (W-pI.132.6:2–3). Let’s begin by admitting that, to most Westerners at least, this idea seems nonsensical. The world is right there, in our face; how can anyone claim it does not exist? Let me try briefly to put this in a way that may make sense to you.

The Course’s view of the world is that the entire physical world is like a vast hologram that we have superimposed over what is really there. We see the physical world because we have denied the real world. Therefore, to see the real world, you must deny the physical. “The sight of it [the physical world] is costing you a different kind of vision” (T-13.VII.2:1). The world *literally* exists only within our minds, just as the world we see when we dream exists only in our minds. In dreams, we seem to be within the world. We walk about in it; we get lost; we meet all sorts of interesting or frightening people. Yet all of that is happening in our minds and nowhere else. The Course very clearly teaches that the world we see, the world we think of as existing independently of us and outside of us, really has no existence outside of our thoughts. (See, for instance, W-pI.14.1:4–5; W-pI.132.6:1.)

Even physicists have, of late, begun to speculate that matter does not really exist as such, that it is (in my own unscientific words) energy or thought slowed way down. The idea that the physical universe is a by-product of thought is no longer quite as absurd as it used to appear.

If this idea is correct, then what happens within the confines of this world is not nearly as important as we have believed. For instance, from our point of view when someone’s body ceases to function the person has died. That appears to be tragic. From the Course’s perspective, nothing has happened and nothing has died because the body was never truly alive; it was nothing but an illusion of life (T-6.V(A).1:4). The living being that manifested that body existed before the body did and continues to exist afterward.

You may be wondering how this is relevant to our discussion of being asked to do something outrageous. It is quite relevant! The next paragraph will make this clear in

several ways, but it should be obvious that if there is no world, the importance of whether I watch a video or my friend attends a concert diminishes to nothing! Nothing in this world of time and space has any real value when compared to eternity and infinity (W-pI.133.6). That puts a different light on the choice we must make when approached in this way by a friend. Neither alternative—to do or not to do—really matters at all. What matters is my loving response to my brother's call for love.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹If only the loving thoughts of God's Son **are** the world's reality, the real world **must** be **in his mind**. ²His insane thoughts, too, must be in his mind, but an **internal** conflict of this magnitude he cannot tolerate. ³A split mind **is** endangered, and the recognition that it encompasses **completely** opposed thoughts within itself **is** intolerable. ⁴Therefore the mind projects the split, **not** the reality. **SEverything** you perceive as the outside world is merely your attempt to maintain your ego identification, for everyone believes that identification is salvation. ⁶Yet consider what has happened, for thoughts do have consequences to the thinker. ⁷You have become [**You are**] **at odds** with the world as you perceive it, because you think **it** is antagonistic to you. ⁸This is a necessary consequence of what you have done. ⁹You have projected outward what **is** antagonistic to what is inward, and therefore you would **have** to perceive it this way. ¹⁰That is why you **must** realize that your hatred **is** in your mind and **not outside it** before you can get rid of it; and why you must get rid of it **before** you can perceive the world as it really is.

• Study Question •

7. *What two steps in the solution are presented in the last sentence (7:10)?*

What, then, *is* real? “Only the loving thoughts of God's Son” (7:1). Thus, just as the world of illusion exists only in the mind, so “the real world must be in his mind” (7:1). The emphasis on the mind is almost overwhelming. Everything, whether illusory or real, takes place in the mind.

Because both antithetical thought systems are in the same mind, the mind has to at least seem to get rid of one of them. Otherwise they would cancel one another out, leaving nothing, like a collision of matter and anti-matter. The mind would be torn apart, and if the mind were to become *conscious* of such a split it would have to recognize its insanity. That is something the mind will not tolerate (7:2–3).

The mind “solves” this dilemma by means of projection. It takes the internal conflict and thrusts it out of the mind, thus “creating” the external world (7:4–5). The entire world is thus an ego-induced hallucination whose original purpose is to allow the mind to continue to identify with the ego. (I say “original purpose” because the Holy Spirit always takes whatever the ego does and, rather than attacking it, simply assigns it a new, divine purpose. See T-T-24.VI.4:1–2.) Sentence 5 makes quite clear that the ego's idea of salvation is our identification with the ego. Here is the what and how of salvation on a literally global scale: A world filled with attack becomes the means for preserving the ego.

The negative consequence of projecting the split from our mind onto the world is that we seem to be at war with the entire world (7:6–9). “You and me against the world,” as

the phrase goes, and often there is no “you”; it’s just “me.” This large-scale delusion is the explanation of why the requests of our friends seem outrageous, attacks on us rather than calls for love. We have an investment in seeing them as attacks. We see them as attacks because, quite unconsciously, we are striving to maintain our identification with the ego. We “have to perceive it this way” (7:9).

The attack and antagonism is not out there in the world. It is not out there in your brother or sister. It is in your mind! This is why, way back in Chapter 1, the Text taught us that our minds and our perceptions must be purified before we can experience miracles (T-1.I.1:7; T-18.IX.14:2). The practice of the Course leads us to examine our thoughts and to recognize that the conflict and hatred that appears to be “out there” in the world is actually an image being projected from our minds. We are superimposing our images of hate onto what is really there. We are seeing calls for love as if they were attacks deserving of punishment and retaliation. Until we identify the true source of the problem, which is our own thoughts of hate, we cannot see “the world as it really is” (7:10).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹I said before [Long ago we said] that God so loved the world that He gave it to His only-begotten Son [(that whosoever believeth on him should never see death)] [see 2.VII.5:14]. ²God **does** love the real world, and those who perceive its reality **cannot** see the world of death. ³For death is not **of** the real world, in which everything reflects the eternal. ⁴God gave you the real world in exchange for the one you made out of your split mind, and which **is** the symbol of death. ⁵For if you could **really** separate yourself from the Mind of God you **would** die. [And the world you perceive *is* a world of separation.]

• Study Question •

8. *The world we have projected is full of attack and death. What has God already given to us to replace it, and what does this gift “reflect”?*

The opening sentence is a reference to what is probably the best-known verse in the New Testament, John 3:16: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” Jesus both lays claim to the quote¹ and changes it: Instead of God, out of love, giving His only Son to the world (as a sacrifice for their sins, in traditional Christian teaching), he says that God *gave the world to His Son*. We’ve just stressed that the world does not exist except in our minds, yet somehow, God is giving it to us as a gift. In both versions the words “God...loved the world” appear, and those are the words Jesus focuses on (8:2). Despite its illusory nature the world is still the object of God’s love, but God loves, not the illusions we have projected, but the reality that lies behind those illusions, which the Course refers to as the *real world*, which we might briefly define as the world that reflects Heaven when seen through the eyes of forgiveness (8:3; see T-17.II.5:1; W-

¹ The biblical line was penned by the author of the Gospel of John—traditionally believed to be the Apostle John. In the Gospel, it is not attributed to Jesus. However, since the author of the Gospel was inspired by Jesus and is attempting, in all he writes, to convey what Jesus taught, we can presume that words similar to this were, at some time, spoken by Jesus, and were conveyed to us from Jesus through the apostle.

pII.8:1:4). This is the world we will see when we have given up our investment in the illusions. It is the call for love hidden in every seeming attack. The real world is our inheritance by divine right because God gave it to us.

You already have the real world. God has given it to you (8:4) and its reality is always there, in your mind. It is the reality of yourself and everyone as beings of pure Love, and it cannot die. When you see yourself that way, you will see the world that way; when you see this, you “cannot see the world of death” (8.2). When the Holy Spirit has transformed your perception, you simply cannot see attack anywhere, and no request appears to be outrageous. As a supreme example of this, when Jesus was on the cross, he did not see it as an attack; he saw his brothers calling for love, and he gave it.

When we think of the world we have made, we need to realize that all we have made is *an illusion*. It isn't real—thank God! A world separated from God simply is not possible. God is Life Itself. If we were able to separate ourselves from Him we would cease to exist; without God *nothing* exists. Therefore, although we have made an illusion of separateness, and although the world we look upon often seem bereft of God, what we see *cannot be real*. You cannot, in reality, separate yourself from the Mind of God (8:5).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹The world you perceive is a world of separation. ²Perhaps you are [You were] willing to accept even death to deny your Father. ³Yet He would not have it so, and so it is **not** so. ⁴You still cannot will against Him, and that is why you have no control over the world you made. ⁵It is **not** a world of will because it is governed by the desire to be unlike God, and this desire is **not will**. ⁶The world you made is therefore totally chaotic, governed by arbitrary and senseless “laws, and without meaning of **any** kind. ⁷For it is made out of what you do **not** want, projected **from** your mind because you are **afraid** of it. ⁸Yet this world is **only** in the mind of its maker, along with his **real** salvation. ⁹Do not believe it is outside of yourself, for only by recognizing **where** it is will you gain control over it. ¹⁰For you **do** have control over your mind, since the mind is the mechanism of decision.

• Study Question •

9. *Why is it so important for us to recognize that the world we see exists only in our minds?*

We see a world of separation (9:1). We chose to come to this world because we wanted to make our ego identity real. We wanted to make separation real. Yet, everyone who comes here dies. Therefore, in our mad desire to establish the ego as real we have been “willing to accept even death” (9:2). Everyone who comes here has, in fact, accepted death!

When the Course puts it like this, our insanity is apparent. When the patriot Patrick Henry cried, “Give me liberty, or give me death!” it seems a noble declaration, but the ego carries the idea a bit too far! Fortunately, as we've said, our insane thoughts cannot create reality: we *cannot* separate from God and therefore cannot die. God does not will death, and so death *cannot be real* (9:3). The world we see in which everyone dies seems real to us, but it cannot be real if God is God.

No matter what we may wish for, we cannot will against God (9.4). That explains why, although we made the world, we have no control over it: We did not *will* it into existence, we *wished* it out of a nightmare in which the impossible seemed possible. The desire to be unlike God is an idle wish and not *will* at all (9.5). Will belongs to God. So the world, which is a projection of a desire to be *unlike* God, is the antithesis of something controlled by will: It is “totally chaotic, governed by arbitrary and senseless ‘laws,’ and without meaning of any kind” (9.6). The world we project and see is the expression of thoughts *unlike God*, and since God is not chaotic, the world *must* be chaotic.

The world is made out of what we do not want, projected from our mind because we are afraid of it. (9.7)

The picture is quite clear. We have two conflicting thought systems in our minds. We cannot operate with such conflict, but rather than choose one over the other, we *project* the one that seems hostile to us. The ego's thought system *is* hostile to our true Self. We projected it because we are afraid of it and we cannot control it. Naturally, it shows up in physical manifestation as a world that is uncontrollable. What we are really afraid of, and what the world pictures, is our own insane thoughts. We are afraid we cannot control our own mind.

But we *can* control our own minds! (9.10). The ego in fact knows that; it is frantically trying by every means possible to keep us from realizing that the problem exists only in our minds, and that we have the power to change our minds. We have the power of decision. The world is the ego's great distraction device, designed to keep us from looking at our mind and undoing the ego's insanity there.

Don't be fooled by the world! Don't think the problems are all outside yourself: other people, lack of money or time, or adverse circumstances. Don't get caught up trying to manipulate the world into meeting your perceived needs, trying to find your salvation that way. It cannot work. The world is only in your mind, both the ego's world and the real world, and that fact is your salvation (9.8). Don't be deceived into thinking that the world has a reality outside of your mind (9:9); it does not.

The only way to solve the problems of the world is to recognize that your mind alone makes the problems, and your mind alone can solve them.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹If you will recognize that all the [that all] attack you perceive is in your own mind and **nowhere else**, you will at last have placed its source, and where it begins it must end. ²For in this same place also lies salvation. ³The altar of God where Christ abideth is there. ⁴You have defiled the altar, but **not** the world. ⁵Yet Christ has placed the Atonement on the altar **for** you. ⁶Bring your perceptions of the world to this altar, for it is the altar to truth. ⁷There you will see your vision changed, and there you will learn to see truly. ⁸From this place, where God and His Son dwell in peace and where you are welcome, you will look out in peace and behold the world truly. ⁹Yet to find the place, you must relinquish your investment in the world as **you** project [as you have projected] it, allowing the Holy Spirit to extend [project] the real world **to** you from the altar of God.

• Study Question •

10. What are we asked to do with our perception of this world, and what do you think this means (10:3-7)?

We all have a tremendous resistance to the idea that there is no world outside of our mind. We find it almost impossible to believe. The reason for that resistance is now obvious: the ego has a primal *investment* in the reality of an external world. It *needs* the world as dumping ground for its guilt.

The way this shows up for us is that we have an investment in seeing problems such as anger and hatred as outside ourselves, in other people. This gives us a place to start, even though it may seem impossible to accept that the world is nothing but a hallucination of the ego. We can begin by realizing that the anger and hatred—or the ridiculous requests—we believe we see are not what they appear to be; we can be willing to see these things as the calls for love they really are. The Course admits that it is “almost impossible to deny” the physical existence of the body (T-2.IV.3.10). If that is so, it must be even more difficult to deny the physical existence of the whole world! So don't waste your time trying. Leave that for graduate school. Start with things like noticing how you automatically resist doing something when you are asked to do it, and allowing yourself to realize that the extravagance of the request only reflects your own investment in the ego; start with hearing the call for love in a brother instead of seeing his action as some kind of attack.

If you will recognize that all the attack you perceive is in your own mind and nowhere else, you will at last have placed its source, and where it begins it must end. (10:1)

This is the way you can start. If you start here, the outcome—recognizing that the entire world is only in your mind—is inevitable. It may be impossible for us, now, to recognize that this room, the bodies in it, the world we live on, and all the galaxies of the universe actually do not exist except within our mind. But we *can* recognize that the anger we see and the attacks we see are within our minds. Pluck out this thread and you start to unravel the entire thought system of the ego.

You have mighty help in doing this. Christ lives in you, as does the Holy Spirit. You can meet with them in your mind; a meeting place the Course symbolizes with the term “the altar of God” (10:3). “Bring your perceptions of the world to this altar” (10.6). Look at your thoughts of fear and anger, and bring them to the Holy Spirit in your mind. That place in your mind where you can encounter God's loving Presence is the altar being spoken of. Give everything you do not want to Him (T-12.II.10:1) instead of projecting it out onto the world, and He will dispel those thoughts. When you do that, you can look out from this inner place of meeting and see the world truly (10.7–8).

And yet, to do this, to look at the thoughts of guilt and fear and anger in your mind and give them to the Holy Spirit, you have to be willing to give up “your investment in the world as you project it” (10:9). You have an investment in seeing it all “out there” instead of “in here.” That investment has to go for the healing to begin.

Answer Key

1. In this context “invested wrongly” means having an investment in this world, or a predisposition to have this world continue to be as it has been.
2. This paragraph addresses one of the major obstacles that prevents us from sharing the judgment of the Holy Spirit. We perceive our brothers as separate, with interests that compete with our own. We perceive this way because we want to, because we have an investment in seeing attack and competition. To learn to perceive with the judgment of the Holy Spirit, and to see the call for love where we now see attack, we have to be willing to let go of this investment.
3. Our own investment in ego-identification, in saving the ego by attack, is what causes us to overlook our brothers’ calls for help and to see them as attack instead; it is our “imagined need for attack” (T-12.I.4:1) that prevents us from recognizing all calls for love.
4. Our resistance to doing what is asked is, more often than not, derived from our own ego attachments. Refusing to do what is asked makes it seem too important. Doing what is asked demonstrates our own lack of attachment.
5. No written response is expected.
6. We try to adjust the world, or to adjust ourselves to the world. We see the world outside of us as the problem. We think that our happiness or salvation can be found through this kind of adjustment. Because we are afraid of ourselves and the thoughts in our minds, seeing attack as coming from outside seems to preserve our inner safety, and hides the real source of the problem, which is our identification with the ego.
7. The two steps of the solution are: (1) we must recognize that the problem is in our minds and not outside; and (2) we must get rid of (allow the Holy Spirit to heal) the problem in our minds before we can perceive the world truly.
8. He has given us the real world, which reflects the eternal.
9. The only way we can gain control of the world is by recognizing where it really is: in our minds (9:9). If it is outside of us and separate from us we will never control it. However, the mind is “the mechanism of decision,” that is, the mind is simply the tool by means of which our will carries out its desires (9:10). Thus, the will is master of what the mind does. Since the world is in our mind, and since the will controls the mind, by making the right choices we can gain control over the world.
10. Bring our perceptions to the altar of God (10:6). This means bringing our perceptions into the place of our union with Christ, where they can be changed; opening our minds to the Holy Spirit, communing with Him and allowing our misperceptions to be translated by Him until we share in His judgment of everything.