

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM<sup>®</sup> Text, Chapter 12, Section VI

### The Vision of Christ

#### Summary Notes

Let's remind ourselves of what has gone before in the first five sections of this Chapter, which is titled "The Holy Spirit's Curriculum."

In the first two sections we saw that the curriculum 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. It asks us to let go of those interpretations, to bring them to the Holy Spirit, and to ask Him to give us His interpretation instead. His judgment of everything is that it is either love, or an appeal for healing and help. 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.

In the next two sections, the Course presented the reason why we persist in choosing the ego's interpretations even though they are false and only cause us conflict: we have a strong investment in seeing the world this way. We do so in order to maintain our *ego identification*. We made the world as a defense against our guilt, by projecting that guilt out onto the world. Therefore we *want* to find fault with people around us because doing so eases our own guilt, and keeps us from looking at the real cause within our minds. We are invested in the world in two ways, which are really the mirror image of one another: we look for attack and guilt in the world, and we find it; and we look for love in the world, and do *not* find it.

By contrast, the Holy Spirit will lead us to seek for love within ourselves, where it is, and find it. He will also lead us to see that love mirrored back to us in the world by extending His love through us to our brothers, in answer to their calls for help.

Section V taught that the *sane curriculum* of the Holy Spirit delivers all it promises. The ego teaches that we have attacked ourselves by sinning, and that we have destroyed ourselves. Because our attack on ourselves worked, we now need to attack others in order to survive. The ego's curriculum is depressing, but if you *look at it* it is merely *ridiculous*. We are asked to *resign as our own teacher*, and to allow the Spirit of God to guide us in a new way. That new way is His judgment that our self-attack did not work! And that everything we see is either love or a call for love, and therefore the only appropriate response to anything—including our own attack on ourselves—is love.

The final three sections of this chapter will teach us that although we do not know how to extend love, the Holy Spirit can teach us. What we are as God's creations remains unchanged, and can be accessed under His tutelage. He imparts to us "the vision of Christ," which enables us to see the calls for love behind apparent attack, and to rediscover our own nature as loving beings.

That inner love seems invisible to us now, but as we extend it to others we will regain our awareness of it. As we extend love, the world will reflect our reality back to us. We must stop being afraid of finding guilt within ourselves, which will allow us to look within and find the love that has always been there.

We have not destroyed the loving being that we are, but thinking that we have causes us to see a loveless world. Nevertheless, that love within us still survives, and, just as a compass points north, it is inevitably drawn towards God. It will lead us to exchange our false perceptions of attack for true perception, and when that exchange is complete, perception will give way to knowledge, and we will awaken from our dream.

### Section Preview

The section title is not referring to an apparition of Jesus, but rather to *seeing in the same way Christ sees*, or seeing things through His eyes. The “vision of Christ” and the “judgment of the Holy Spirit” are nearly the same thing. The latter leads to the former. When you ask the Holy Spirit for His interpretation of things, what He gives you is a new way of seeing things: You see things the way Christ does. You receive a new interpretation that leads to a new perception, and that is the vision of Christ. He shares with you a vision of the perfection in everything (4.6).

The vision of Christ is a kind of perception in which you learn to recognize that you are the perfect Son of God; you learn this by seeing others that way. You extend loving thoughts to others, and see your own Self mirrored in them.

Although this section deals with vision, it also is a continuation of the discussion about *investing* that was begun in Section IV. If you invest in the world, you will sell your soul and gain nothing; if you invest in the real world (by looking upon the world with love), you will find your soul and gain Heaven. (My thanks to Robert Perry for that succinct summary statement.)

## Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>The ego is trying to teach you how to gain the whole world and lose your own soul. <sup>2</sup>The Holy Spirit teaches that you **cannot** lose your soul and there **is** no gain in the world, for **of itself** it profits nothing. <sup>3</sup>To invest [*in something*] **without** profit is surely to impoverish yourself, and the overhead is high. <sup>4</sup>Not only is there no profit in the investment, but the cost **to you** is enormous. <sup>5</sup>For this investment costs you the world's reality by **denying yours**, and gives you nothing in return. <sup>6</sup>You **cannot** sell your soul, but you **can** sell your **awareness** of it. <sup>7</sup>You cannot perceive your soul, but you will not **know** it while you perceive something else [*anything else*] as more valuable.

### • Study Question •

1. *Investing in the world returns nothing and costs a lot. What costs are mentioned?*

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In the Gospels, Jesus asked:

For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?  
Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (Matthew 5:14, NKJV)

In the discussion that follows, the Course uses the word “soul” because it is directly referring to this biblical passage. This is explained in the *Clarification of Terms* section at the end of the *Manual for Teachers*. Normally the Course does not use the word at all, preferring the term “spirit.” Unlike many metaphysical traditions, including Unity, which see the soul as a kind of middle ground between body and spirit, comprised of the conscious and subconscious aspects of mind, the Course does not present the idea of any kind of middle ground except the “you” that it constantly speaks to and asks to choose differently. I would say that, in the Course, “mind” is the closest equivalent to the meaning of “soul” in Unity’s teaching.

The term "soul" is not used except in direct biblical quotations because of its highly controversial nature. It would, however, be an equivalent of "spirit," with the understanding that, being of God, it is eternal and was never born (C-1..Int.3:2-3).

The Course’s interpretation of attempting to gain the whole world is that it means doing what the ego leads us to do, which is, as Section III characterized it, investing in the world. In the process of following the ego’s guidance, you lose your own soul—which is what the ego wanted. More precisely, you lose your *awareness* of Who you really are; you don’t really *lose* your soul (1.1; 1.6).

Notice how once again, as in Section IV, Jesus makes heavy use of financial terminology. Sentence 3 is a clear echo of that earlier discussion (compare it to T-12.III.1:3). You spend all your time seeking the answers in the world, seeking completion in the world, seeking happiness in the world. In the process you lose awareness of the Answer, the completion, and the happiness that are already within you. There is no guilt in this, but “the cost to you is enormous” (1:4). When Jesus brings in the concept of “overhead” I believe he is extending the analogy. Not only is the return on investment in the world a flat zero, there are general recurring costs to engaging in this enterprise.

The realization of just how much listening to the ego is *costing* us can motivate us to abandon our egos and turn to the Holy Spirit. First of all, it costs you the awareness of your true perfect nature as God’s creation; in losing that, you also lose your awareness of the true perfection of the world (1:4–5). You lose the reality of the entire world! You lose the reality of yourself. And you get nothing in return. (1.5)

Many times, people will say something like this: “If there is no guilt about anything, and if there is no punishment for wrong-doing, why should I bother to be good and loving? Why not just do whatever I want?” The answer is, there is no *punishment or guilt*, but there is an *enormous cost*. Ernest Holmes, founder of Religious Science, saw this when he wrote: “There is no sin but a mistake, and no punishment but an inevitable consequence” (*Science of Mind*, pages 110-111). The consequence of following the ego is losing the awareness of your reality and that of the world. You have “sold your awareness” of your soul (1.6). You have doomed yourself to live in an illusion, and this

illusion consists of fear, guilt, pain, conflict, loneliness, suffering and death. Is that what you really want?

Placing a higher value on things of this world than on our spirit cripples our spiritual vision (1:7). We don't see our spirits and, what's worse is that we don't *know* that we don't see them. We are blinded and don't know we are blind. Early in the Text, Jesus told us that one of the purposes of this Course is to "reawaken the awareness that the spirit, not the body, is the altar of truth" (T-1.I.20:1). In order to kindle that awareness, we must drop our investment in this world. (Read Workbook lessons 128 to 130 for a detailed explanation of how valuing the world blocks our vision.)

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The Holy Spirit is your strength because He knows nothing **but** the spirit [your Soul] **as you**. <sup>2</sup>He is perfectly aware that you do **not** know yourself, and perfectly aware of how to teach you ~~to remember~~ what you are. <sup>3</sup>**Because** He loves you, He will gladly teach you what He loves, for He wills to share it. <sup>4</sup>Remembering you always, He cannot let you forget your worth. <sup>5</sup>For the Father never ceases to remind Him of His Son, and He never ceases to remind His Son of the Father. <sup>6</sup>God is in your memory **because** of Him. <sup>7</sup>You **chose** to forget your Father but you do not really want [but you did *not* will] to do so, and **therefore** you **can** decide otherwise. <sup>8</sup>As it was **my** decision, so is it **yours**.

### • Study Question •

2. *List all the reasons you can find in this paragraph for being confident that the Holy Spirit will succeed in teaching you who you are.*

Within your mind, the Holy Spirit retains the perfect memory of God (2:6). He remembers both what you are and what God is. God has created the Holy Spirit as the perfect teacher for restoring your lost awareness. You may have confused yourself with a body, but the Holy Spirit has not; He knows what you really are (2.1). "He loves you" (2:3) and will teach you what you are (2:2).

Although the Course stresses the oneness of all things and the unreality of separation, it consistently presents the Holy Spirit as a distinct being, not merely as a forgotten part of our minds. It always speaks of Him as *in* a part of our mind which listens to His Voice, for instance:

[The individual mind] is therefore described in the course <as if> it has two parts; spirit and ego.

Spirit is the part that is still in contact with God through the Holy Spirit, Who abides in this part but sees the other part as well (C-1..Int.2:4-3:1).

Ultimately we will learn that the voice we hear is really our own as well:

Do you not understand that to oppose the Holy Spirit is to fight *yourself*? He tells you but your will; He speaks for you. In His Divinity is but your own (T-30.II.1:1-3).

It is your voice to which you listen as He speaks to you (W-pI.125.8:1).

But while we are convinced that we are separated bodies, guilty, sinful and depraved, or at the least flawed by our willful attempt to become separate, we absolutely need a Being we perceive as distinct from our corrupted selves:

He seems to be a Voice, for in that form He speaks God's Word to you. He seems to be a Guide through a far country, for you need that form of help. He seems to be whatever meets the needs you think you have (C-6..Int.4:5-7).

We need Him to be the repository of truth, the All-wise Instructor in the ways of God. In the Holy Spirit, we have such a pure resource.

This isn't a new concept in the Course. Once before, in Chapter 10, Jesus pointed out that our mind retains the memory of God because of the Holy Spirit (T-10.II.2:3-6). The message there had the same application as it does here: It urged us to set aside all the obstacles to remembering, just as this section urges us to turn away from the distractions of this world.

The good news is that, although we chose to forget God, it was never more than an idle wish, never our true *will*; therefore, with the help of the Holy Spirit, we *can* remember what we have forgotten. All we must do is to decide to remember (2:7).

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>**You do not want the world.** <sup>2</sup>The only thing of value in it is whatever part of it **you** look upon with love. <sup>3</sup>This **gives** it the only reality it will ever have. <sup>4</sup>**Its** value is **not** in itself, but yours **is** in you. <sup>5</sup>As self-value comes from self-**extension** [in Heaven], so does the **perception** of self-value come from the extension of loving thoughts outward [on earth]. <sup>6</sup>Make the world real unto **yourself**, for the real world is the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so it **belongs** to you.

#### • Study Question •

3. *How can we make the world, which is not real, real to us?*



It always amuses me the way Jesus presumes to know what we want. We *think* we want the world, of course. When he tells us we don't (3:1) we are likely to react by thinking, "What do *you* know?" We are like children being enticed by a cheap, breakable toy in the store. We cry, and perhaps throw a tantrum, when our parents say, "You don't really want that. It isn't good enough for you."

That's what Jesus is telling us here. He is saying, "You have made a silly mistake; you've been misled; but this is *not* what you *really* want."

Your love is the only thing that gives the world value and accords it the only reality it can have (3:2-3). Whatever you love has value to you (3.3). So the way to give yourself the whole world is to love it! The world has no value in itself (3.4). As you extend your love to the world, the world reflects your love back to you. That is how you learn what you are. "Self-value comes from self-extension" (3.5) means that I come to love and value myself only as I take the love within me and give it away. This principle operates

for us even in Heaven, and even with God Himself. The value of what we are is determined by how much we give. By what I give I come to know what I am. When I see the results of my love, I know the value of my love. In this world (the word “perception” is a clue that this world is being spoken of), “The perception of self-value come(s) from the extension of loving thoughts outward” (3.5). You can make the world real to yourself by extending loving thoughts toward it (3.6). In doing so, you learn that your heart is big enough to literally embrace the world.

This passage, to me, shows how mistaken is the idea that the world is good for nothing, and that our only goal should be to escape from it. Here we are clearly encouraged to *love* the world. We can take what is only an illusion and “make it real.” Remember that this chapter began by talking about what we should *not* make real: error. I believe there is a clear counterpoint to that in this passage. We make error real when we perceive the world as filled with attack, sin, and guilt. We make the world real when we set aside that false perception and allow ourselves to see love, and the call for it, everywhere.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>Correction is for all who cannot see. <sup>2</sup>To open the eyes of the blind is the Holy Spirit’s mission, for He knows that they have not **lost** their vision, but merely sleep. <sup>3</sup>He would awaken them from the sleep of forgetting to the remembering of God. <sup>4</sup>Christ’s eyes are open, and He will look upon whatever you see with love if you accept His vision as yours. <sup>5</sup>The Holy Spirit keeps the vision of Christ for every Son of God who sleeps. <sup>6</sup>In His sight the Son of God is perfect, and He longs to share His vision **with** you. <sup>7</sup>He will **show** you the real world because God **gave** you Heaven. <sup>8</sup>Through Him your Father calls His Son to remember. <sup>9</sup>The awakening of His Son begins with his investment in the **real** world, and **by** this he will learn to **re-invest** in **himself**. <sup>10</sup>For reality is one with the Father **and** the Son, and the Holy Spirit blesses the real world in Their Name.

### • Study Question •

4. *Summarize what it means to you to invest in the real world. For yourself, try to think of at least one action you can take to increase that investment for yourself.*

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You do not realize how grand you are! Your love is all encompassing; it can embrace the world. There is no limit to your love. You are *God’s Son*. His Love is yours. His only desire is to *love through you*. That is your calling. That is the mission of the Holy Spirit, and that is your mission as well. He wants to reawaken the world (4.2), and He wants to do it by using your eyes to look with love upon everything you see (4.4). “He longs to share His vision with you” (4.6). What vision is that? It is the perception of perfection, the realization that there is nothing wrong with anyone you look at (4:6). The Course says

that every one of us is eternally deserving of love, and that we have never ceased to be the loving beings that God created.

When I think that such love seems beyond my ability, this short prayer poem by Amy Carmichael has always inspired me, and it fits the message of this section quite well:

*Love through me, Love of God!  
Make me like Thy clear air  
Through which, unhindered, colors pass  
As though it were not there.*

We become channels for the Love of God. Christ looks through our eyes with perfect love for all He sees. The first paragraphs of the section have made it quite clear that we cannot teach ourselves the meaning of love because we do not know what love is. When we read the admonition to grant reality to the world by extending loving thoughts to it, we might wonder, “How can I know whether or not my thoughts or loving, since I don’t know what love is?” But here we find the answer: Christ will love through us. All we need to do is ask Him to do it. All we need to do is to decide that we *want* to see the world with love. Jesus will sum it up for us in the next section: “When you want only love you will see nothing else” (T-12.VII.8:1).

This paragraph comes back to the concept of *investment*. It asks us to be invested in the *real world*, to choose to see the *real* world instead of the world we have made. (4:9) This is where our awakening begins. To invest in the real world means that we make the decision to set aside our own perceptions and ask the Holy Spirit to show us the real world as seen through the loving eyes of Christ. The parallel benefit is the opposite of the overhead of the wrong investment, previously mentioned: Whereas investing in this world costs us our awareness of our true Self, investing in the *real* world repays us with a reawakened awareness of our identity with Christ. This is so because the real world is united not only with God but also with “the Son,” that is, God’s creation of which we are part. In learning to love the world we *are* learning to love our Self, because we are a part of what we are loving.

As a side observation, notice how the final sentence invokes all three Persons of the traditional Christian Trinity. The blessing poured upon the real world originates with both the Father and the Son, and is dispensed by the Holy Spirit (4:10). It is the Holy Spirit Who seeks to reawaken the memory of the Christ in us (4:8).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>When you have seen this real world, as you will surely do, you **will** remember Us. <sup>2</sup>Yet you must learn the cost of sleeping, **and refuse to pay it.** <sup>3</sup>Only then will you decide to awaken. <sup>4</sup>And then the real world will spring to your sight, for Christ has never slept. <sup>5</sup>He is waiting to be seen, for He has never lost sight of **you.** <sup>6</sup>He looks quietly on the real world, which He would **share** with you because He knows of the Father’s Love for Him. <sup>7</sup>And knowing this, He would give you what is yours. <sup>8</sup>In perfect peace He waits for you at His Father’s altar, holding out the Father’s Love to you in the quiet light of the Holy

Spirit's blessing. <sup>9</sup>For the Holy Spirit will lead everyone home to his Father, where Christ waits as His Self.

• Study Question •

5. *What must you learn before you become willing to invest in the real world?*

Choosing the real world and investing in it will lead to seeing it. Seeing it will lead to seeing our true Self (4:9) which is Christ (5:9), and that will lead to the memory of God and Christ as well (5.1). But to start on that road we have to “learn the cost of sleeping, and refuse to pay it” (5.2). We have to look at our ego and its investment in this world, see what that is costing us, and make another choice. Before we can make a *new* choice, we must become aware of the choice we *have been making*, evaluate the cost, and choose to change. Then we will decide to awake (5.3). Christ is waiting quietly and patiently to show us the real world (5.8). When we make this one, simple choice, the Holy Spirit will lead us home, where we will discover that the Self we have forgotten is the very Christ of God (5.9).

This is a pattern that recurs often in the Course. It begins with a choice to see things differently (investing in the real world), which leads to offering forgiveness to the people and things around us. As we extend loving thoughts outward, they reflect back to us and reveal the Christ within us. Then, as the glory of our divine nature dawns on us, the memory of God Himself, and of His glorious Son, can be welcomed back into our awareness, for no longer is there any reason to feel that we are unworthy of Them.

The journey home, then, begins with honest self-appraisal and an ensuing decision. Is the ego worth what it costs? The answer is a resounding, “No!” As we recognize the horrendous price we have been paying, we will “refuse to pay it” any longer (5:2). And that is sufficient to trigger our awakening.

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>Every child of God is one in Christ, for his being is in Christ as Christ's is in God. <sup>2</sup>Christ's Love for you is His Love for His Father, which He knows because He knows His Father's Love for Him. <sup>3</sup>When the Holy Spirit has at last led you to Christ at the altar to His Father, perception fuses into knowledge because perception has become so holy that its transfer to holiness is merely its natural extension. <sup>4</sup>Love transfers to love without **any** interference, for the two are one [for the situations are identical. Only the *ability to make this transfer is the product of learning*]. <sup>5</sup>As you perceive more and more common elements in **all** situations, the transfer of [your] training under the Holy Spirit's guidance increases and becomes generalized. <sup>6</sup>Gradually you learn to apply it to everyone and everything, for its applicability is universal. <sup>7</sup>When this has been accomplished, perception and knowledge have become so similar that they share the unification of the laws of God.



• Study Question •

6. *When perception has become similar enough to knowledge, it will naturally transfer over to it and become knowledge. What, according to this paragraph, makes perception become similar to knowledge?*

We are being led back to the heart of God, back to perfect oneness. Like a series of nested boxes, all of us are included in the oneness of Christ, and Christ is included in God. (6.1) Differences and distinctions will gradually disappear, one after the other, until the inherent oneness is all we will know. As one perception after another is healed, breaking down the distinctions between you and your brothers, eventually you will reach the place where “perception fuses into knowledge” (6.3). The lessons learned in one situation are seen to apply to another, and another, and another (6:5). You begin to realize that everything is really teaching you the same lesson (compare with Lesson 193 in the Workbook).

The commonality grows more and more generalized until at last “you learn to apply it to everyone and everything” (6.5–6). Your mind and God’s and everyone’s have become one; or more accurately, you have come to recognize the inherent and eternal oneness of all things. *Perceiving* this is the real world; *knowing* this is Heaven.

The Course often instructs us to apply its principles to specific situations. It always does so with a view to teaching us a principle that has a much wider application than that one specific example. This is the program of the Course: to transform our perceptions from attack to love, one by one, until a critical mass is reached, sparking a chain reaction that blows our mind wide open to God.

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>What is one cannot be perceived as separate, and the denial of the separation is the reinstatement of knowledge. <sup>2</sup>At the altar of God, the holy perception of God’s Son becomes so enlightened that light streams into it, and the spirit of God’s Son shines in the Mind of the Father and becomes one with it. <sup>3</sup>Very gently does God shine upon Himself, loving the extension of Himself that is His Son. <sup>4</sup>The world has no purpose as it blends into the Purpose of God. <sup>5</sup>For the real world has slipped quietly into Heaven, where everything eternal in it has always been. <sup>6</sup>There the Redeemer and the redeemed join in perfect love of God and of each other. <sup>7</sup>Heaven is your home, and being in God it must **also** be in you.

• Study Question •

7. *Is the real world really real, or it is a final illusion?*

The first sentence is as connected to the last paragraph as it is to this one. When perception finally sees everything as one, with all separation denied, it will be in perfect accord with knowledge. As we have often seen, rejecting the illusion restores our

awareness of truth. The Atonement (the affirmation of oneness) is simply the denial of the separation (7.1)

In the end, the real world will slip quietly into Heaven (7.5), for the world will have no more purpose (7.4). The ego's purpose, which made the world, is gone; the Holy Spirit's purpose for the world as a classroom is over because we've graduated. We saw this same idea of the world's ultimate disappearance in the last chapter (T-11.III.3:5). As the world vanishes, we have no regrets. We are done with it. It has served its purpose, and we eagerly welcome our new home in Heaven and in God.

In that experience of Heaven there is nothing but joining in the "perfect love of God and of each other" (7.6). What will that be like? Jesus said, in Chapter 11, that our hearts were not yet ready to hear (T-11.III.3:6–7). The only way I know to express a bit of what it must be like is the image of a radiant, swirling circle of light, composed of love that endlessly and gently cycles from one part of God's Being (the Father) to another part (the Son), where it joyously embraces every part of the Sonship before leaping eagerly back to the Father, over and over and over again. We may wonder how that feels or, as one person put it to me plaintively, "What will we *do*?" I think it is simply impossible for us to imagine an existence that—as I understand it—is primarily non-physical. We can only content ourselves now with knowing that whatever it is, it has been planned for us by a loving Father Whose care for us and desire for our happiness far exceeds our own. And more: Whatever it is, it is within us *now* (7:7).

## Answer Key

1. Investing in the world costs you the real world, and the awareness of your soul (your spirit or your reality).
2. There are many reasons to be confident that the Holy Spirit will succeed in teaching us who we are:
  - a. He has complete knowledge of both the problem and the solution (2:2).
  - b. “He loves you” (2:3).
  - c. He does not wish to keep His knowledge to Himself (2:3).
  - d. God makes sure that the Holy Spirit always retains a clear awareness of who you are and how valuable you are to God (2:4–5).
  - e. He constantly reminds you of God (2:5).
  - f. He preserves the memory of God in your mind (2:6).
3. We make the world real to us by extending thoughts of love to it, that is, by looking on it with love. What we love becomes real.
4. Investing in the real world means seeing with Christ’s vision. One way to increase your investment in the real world would be to engage in a Course-inspired forgiveness practice directed at a person toward whom you feel some grievance.
5. Before you become willing to invest in the real world, you must learn the cost of investing in this world (5:2–3).
6. Perception has become like knowledge when it has been fully generalized, so that you see that love applies universally to everything (6:5–6). There are no longer degrees and differences; everything is united in your love. Once perception has become so unified, “perception fuses into knowledge” (6:3).
7. It seems to be both, based on the fact that it is a reflection of Heaven--thus containing illusory elements (reflection) and real elements (that which is reflected).