

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 13

Section VI, paragraphs 7–13

Finding the Present

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The present offers you your brothers in the light that would unite you **with** them, and free **you** from the past. ²Would you, then, hold the past **against** them? ³For if you do, you are choosing to remain in the darkness **that is not there**, and refusing to accept the light that is offered you. ⁴For the light of perfect vision is freely given as it is freely received, and can be accepted only **without limit**. ⁵In this one, still dimension of time that does not change, and where there is no sight of what you were, you look at Christ and call His witnesses to shine on you *because you called them forth*. ⁶And **they** will not deny the truth in you, because you looked for it in them and **found** it there.

• Study Question •

7. a) *What choice do we have in regard to shadow figures from our past?*
- b) *How does a miracle worker bring the awareness of Christ to others?*

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Jesus now begins to appeal to our *will*, our responsibility for choice in how we use time. Often when the Course uses a term like “would,” as it does in 7:2, it is a form of the verb “to will,” as in making a choice or decision. “Would you...hold the past against them?” means, “Are you going to continue to *choose* to hold the past against your brothers? Knowing that the present offers you freedom from your past, and that holding onto their past means holding onto your own, do you really still want to hold the past against them?”

Here, in the present, you can find your brothers. You can see them in the light, you can see them as they are, which is as God created them, rather than hidden by the darkness of your unforgiving thoughts. Seeing them in the present, you can be united with them, and you can be freed from your own past. That is the experience the present offers. The present offers the *miracle*. Your brothers are your way out! Why, then, would you choose to *interfere* with that miracle by continuing to hold the past against them?

Over and over again, Jesus points out that miracles are natural, that if they are not occurring for us something is wrong. (See Miracle Principle #6, T-1.I.6:1–2.) *We* are what is wrong. If we continue to hold grievances, if we continue to listen to all the dark thoughts of the past that the ego constantly dredges up in our minds, we are choosing to stay in the darkness by refusing the light (7:3). The light is there, but we are covering our eyes with the past.

None of us can immediately stop doing this all at once. Because our unconscious

terror is so great, letting go of the past is usually a long process. But we all can start to be aware of what is going on in our minds. We can notice when we are responding to the present as if the past were here and now, and we can say to the Holy Spirit, "I see what I am doing. I am covering my eyes. I am afraid of Your light, and I am choosing the darkness." In doing that, we *are* bringing our darkness to the light, and if we keep doing that, the darkness will dissipate and disappear.

Sentence 4 is saying that whenever you *freely receive* it, the light of perfect vision is *freely given*. There is a line in the next section that says much the same thing: "Love waits on welcome, not on time" (T-13.VII.9:7). I have said that finding and living in the present is a long process, and it takes a long time before we can do this consistently. But it isn't really *time* that is required; it is acceptance or willingness to receive it. We can have willingness in any instant. It takes no time for that to happen. In any given instant, we can choose to love without attack, and in that instant *everything* that the Course talks about is right there, instantly, because it is *always* there.

Jesus says this light "can be accepted only without limit" (7:4). Only the limits we place on it limits our seeing the light. "I'll forgive this person but not that person. I'll overlook this mistake but not that mistake." You must be willing to see your brother as *totally* innocent. A single flaw destroys perfection. One spot on an otherwise perfectly white tablecloth, and the tablecloth is no longer perfectly clean. As long as you protect that one spot, God can't show you a clean tablecloth. We need to notice how we hold on to certain "spots" and refuse to let them go. That is what is preventing the miracle.

The present is, "This one, still dimension of time" in which the miracle occurs (7:5). If you have ever tried to meditate and to still your mind, you will realize that the *noise* in your mind is comprised of thoughts about the past or future. In the present, you find stillness. The present is always the present. It is absolutely unvarying; the present is always here. Here there is no awareness of "what you were," that is, of the past. If, as you meditate, you find your mind is filling with thoughts about the past, you can bring yourself to the present by becoming aware that you are here, now, in the present, *thinking* about the past.

In the present "you look at Christ." You won't find Him in the past or future, only in the present. And "you call His witnesses to shine on you" (7:5). This is a reference to your brothers; they are Christ's witnesses when you see them in the present. When you see them in the past they are the ego's witnesses. Your brothers will be Christ's witnesses "because you called them forth."

How do we call forth our brothers as witnesses to Christ? In "The Obstacles to Peace" (T-19.IV, the longest section of the Text), we are told that we send out messengers with specific instructions as to what to find and to bring back to us. Here's what it says about the two kinds of messengers we send out:

Fear looks on guilt with just the same devotion that love looks on itself. And each has messengers which it sends forth, and which return to it with messages written in the language in which their going forth was asked.

Love's messengers are gently sent, and return with messages of love and gentleness. The messengers of fear are harshly ordered to seek out guilt, and cherish every scrap of evil and of sin that they can find, losing none of them on pain of death, and laying them respectfully before their lord and master (T-19.IV(A)i.10:9-11:2).

That was the main point of the previous section: are you listening to love, or to fear? It's your choice. And depending on which voice you choose to listen to, you send out either messengers of love or messengers of fear, seeking external evidence that will confirm the choice you have already made.

If you are receiving messages of sin and guilt from your brother, you called them forth. If you are receiving messages of love and gentleness, you called them forth. It is your choice. You decided what you wanted to see, and how you wanted to see your brother. You get what you asked for. You receive what you gave out.

When you listen to the voices from the past you are choosing to see sin and guilt, and you will see them. When you listen to the Voice Which speaks in the present, you are choosing to see love and innocence, and you will see them. Always, it comes back to this choice in my mind. Do I take the ego's hand, or do I take the Holy Spirit's? What do I choose to see? The mind is the cause; what I see is the effect of my choice.

If you don't like what you are seeing, it is still you who are choosing to see it (my paraphrase of T-12.VII.7:6, which says, "When you think you are projecting what you do not want, it is still because you *do* want it" (T-12.VII.7:6)). The ego tries to tell you that the reverse is true, that what you are seeing is the *cause* of your unhappy thoughts. The Holy Spirit tries constantly to tell you that what you are seeing *reveals* what you are thinking, even if you have hidden those thoughts from yourself. He wants us to use the world as a classroom to undo those mistaken thoughts.

When you decide you want to see the light, when you decide you want to see your brother as innocent, you are sending out messengers of love. And they will *always* come back with what you sent them to find. You decide what to look for in your brothers (7:6), that is, to look for the truth, innocence, love, and the Christ, in your brothers. When you do you will always find it. What you see in them will show you the truth about yourself as well.

We have to decide that we are seeking the evidence to prove people innocent rather than guilty. We choose to find love, or a call for it, rather than to believe that what we see is attack. We set out to prove to our brothers that they are innocent instead of constantly trying to prove they are guilty. Instead of finding *fault* we set out to find *perfection*. Jesus is telling us that if we make this choice, our brothers will not disappoint us! (7:6). If we look for love we will find it because *it is the truth*. That is the shift of mind that brings miracles.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Now is the time of salvation, for **now** is the release from time¹. ²Reach out to all your brothers, and touch them with the touch of Christ. ³In timeless union **with** them is **your** continuity, unbroken because it is wholly shared. ⁴God's guiltless Son is **only** light. ⁵There is no darkness in him **anywhere**, for he is whole. ⁶Call all your brothers to witness to his wholeness, as I am calling you to join with me. ⁷Each voice [**Every voice**] has a part in the song of redemption, the hymn of gladness and thanksgiving for the light to the Creator of light. ⁸The

¹ Echoes the Bible verse: "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (II Corinthians 6:2)

holy light that shines forth from God's Son is the witness that his light is of his Father.

• Study Question •

8. *How are we called upon to bring salvation to the world?*

Each time you encounter someone, just remembering the thought in sentence 1 could transform your life. "Right now, my brother and I can experience salvation!" In every thought that arises in your mind concerning another person, or anything outside of yourself that you might judge, *now* is the time of salvation. (Of course, as I said earlier, in its deepest meaning, "now" means eternity. Salvation consists in experiencing the eternal reality of our brothers and sisters.)

Sentence 2, with its "reach out" talk, may remind us of the classic AT&T commercials about "Reach out and touch someone." The call to extension, to actually reaching out to the people around us in some tangible manner that brings them the healing "touch of Christ" (8:2), is very clear. The metaphysical talk about time and eternity has very practical application in our daily lives. Whose life are *you* touching?

Begin to learn to love indiscriminately. Stop allowing your judgments or your thoughts of the past to block the flow of love. Jesus charges you to extend yourself, not just to a few, but "to all your brothers" (8:2) all the time. Choose to see them released from fear, released from all guilt, released from all kinds of feeling bad about themselves.

Our *continuity*, our Eternal Identity, our true Self, is found "in timeless union with them," that is, with *all* our brothers (8:3). We are not talking about finding a better private self-image here, a better Allen Watson or a better you. We are talking about finding a Self that includes everyone. We are talking about finding a Self that we all share, of which we are all simply a part. This "greater Self" is "God's guiltless Son" who "is only light" (8:4), with no darkness in him at all.

This "greater Self" is the "him" referred to in the rest of this paragraph. When Jesus tells us to "Call all [our] brothers to witness to his wholeness" (8:6), he means that we should go out looking for this shared Self in everyone we meet. If we make it our choice to find Christ in everyone, we will find him! Through the Course and through our minds, Jesus calls us to this union with him, and he wants each of us to go out in the world and do the same thing in regard to our brothers. You don't find the light by seeking darkness. You won't find innocence by looking for faults in your brothers. Start looking for their love and you will find it.

Every single person has a part in this Self we are all seeking to find. The image here is of a choir singing a great hymn of thanksgiving. Every voice is needed to sing his or her part, and it won't be complete until everyone is singing the same song. This joining together of separate voices is the earthly reflection of the eternal song of love in Heaven that is described in *The Song of Prayer*:

Prayer is the greatest gift with which God blessed His Son at his creation. It was then what it is to become; the single voice Creator and creation share; the song the Son sings to the Father, Who returns the thanks it offers Him unto the Son. Endless the harmony, and endless, too, the joyous concord of the love they give forever to each other. And in this, creation is extended. God gives thanks to His extension in His Son. His Son gives thanks for his creation, in the song of his

creating in his Father's Name. The love they share is what all prayer will be throughout eternity, when time is done. For such it was before time seemed to be" (S-Int.1:1-8).

As you see the light in your brothers, you are witnessing to them of the truth about themselves, and you are encouraging them to join in the song. The light you see shining from them is witness to the light that is in you as well.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Shine on your brothers in remembrance of your Creator, for [and] you **will** remember Him as you call forth the witnesses to His creation. ²Those whom you heal bear witness to **your** healing, for in **their** wholeness you will see your own. ³And as your hymns of praise and gladness rise to your Creator, He will return your thanks in His clear Answer to your call. ⁴For it can never be that His Son called upon Him and remained unanswered. ⁵His call to you is but your call to Him. ⁶And in Him you are answered by His peace.

• Study Question •

9. *According to this paragraph, how can we remember God and see our own healing?*

When you drop the past and stop holding it against your brother, you are telling him the past is gone, and in the present he is innocent. That calls forth the light in him. You are literally asking your brother to show you Christ—not in words, not demanding of him or her, “Show me love! Show me Christ!” You ask by your attitude. You are telling him that you believe the Christ is what is in him, the Christ is truly who he is. You “shine” on him.

Your function in this world, in the part of it in which you have chosen to live, among the people with whom you have chosen to live, is to “call forth the witnesses to God’s creation” (9:1), to draw out of people their awareness of the love that is within them. As you do that, you will remember God yourself. Those whom you heal bear witness to your healing, for in their wholeness you will see your own.

Sentence 2 is saying the same thing in other words. In fact, this same thought is repeated over and over, in many different forms, in these final paragraphs: The way to see the Christ in yourself is to see Him in others. The way to be healed is to give healing to others. The way to know you are forgiven is to forgive others. Since all that you see outside yourself is really a reflection of your own mind, as you forgive them you really are forgiving yourself.

As you share healing and release from the past with others, songs of praise to God rise from both you and them (9:3). Not necessarily literal songs, although you may feel like singing; it is the *feeling* of joyfulness that is meaningful here, the content and not the form. There will be a feeling of gratitude to one another, since you have each served to release the other, and that gratitude will extend to God Himself. The Course clearly tells us that God does not want praise in the sense of being told how wonderful He is:

The Bible repeatedly states that you should praise God. This hardly means that you should tell Him how wonderful He is. He has no ego with which to accept such praise, and no perception with which to judge it (T-4.VII.6:1-3).

Miracle Principle 29 tells us that true praise to God consists in affirming the perfection of His creations, a thought that appears later in this chapter, as well:

Miracles praise God through you. They praise Him by honoring His creations, affirming their perfection (T-1.I.29:1-2).

Praise be to you who make the Father one with His Own Son. Alone we are all lowly, but together we shine with brightness so intense that none of us alone can even think of it. Before the glorious radiance of the Kingdom guilt melts away, and transformed into kindness will never more be what it was. Every reaction you experience will be so purified that it is fitting as a hymn of praise unto your Father. See only praise of Him in what He has created, for He will never cease His praise of you (T-13.X.12:1-5).

So our very act of extending to our brothers and seeing Christ in them *is* the way we can praise God.

As we open our hearts to God's love and extend forgiveness, something beyond ourselves responds within us (9:3–4). That is God's Answer, elsewhere called the Holy Spirit. "In Him you are answered by His peace" (9:5). As you experience a holy instant, a moment of healing with a brother, a profound peace comes to you. That peace is the "proof," so to speak, that you are on the right track.

This Answer *always* comes (9:4). If you call (by being willing to see things differently, to drop the past and let go of grievances), the Holy Spirit always answers with His peace. Anyone who has ever, even once, seriously practiced the Course's instruction can tell you this is so. And if you practice it, you will also know that it is so, by direct experience.

"His call to you is but your call to Him" (9:5). This is why the Answer is inevitable. My desire for God and His desire for me are actually the same thing, because we are One. There is only one Love, and I am It. As the Workbook says in lessons 171–180, "God is but Love, and therefore so am I."

There is an old Christian hymn with words by an anonymous author that express this thought beautifully:

I sought the Lord, and afterward I knew
He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me;
It was not I that found, O Savior true;
No, I was found of Thee.
I find, I walk, I love; but O the whole
Of love is but my answer, Lord, to Thee!
For Thou wert long beforehand with my soul;
Always Thou lovedst me.

"Always Thou lovedst me." God's love for me, for you, has never known interruption. When I feel drawn to Him, when I somehow find willingness in myself to let go of the past and shine with forgiveness and love on my brothers, it is already His Love acting through me. "He moved my soul to seek Him, seeking me."

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Child [Children] of light, you know not that the light is in you. ²Yet [And] you will find it through its witnesses, for having given light to them **they will return it**. ³Each one [Everyone] you see **in** light brings **your** light closer to your [own] awareness. ⁴Love always leads to love. ⁵The sick, who **ask** for love, are grateful for it, and in their joy they shine with holy thanks. ⁶And this they offer you who **gave** them joy. ⁷They are your guides to joy, for having received it **of** you they would keep it. ⁸You have established them as guides to peace, for you have made it manifest in them. ⁹And **seeing** it, its beauty calls you home.

• Study Question •

10. a) *How can we find the light in ourselves?*
b) *What two phrases, in sentences 7 and 8, describe those to whom we bring healing?*

We don't know the light is in us (10:1). We have been *told* the light is in us. Maybe we *believe* that the light is in us. But we do not yet *know* that the light is in us. When we *know*, we will be in the real world. There will be no more doubt. Now, however, there are still doubts. How can we find the light in ourselves? How can we come to *know*?

We find the light through its witnesses (10:2)—through the people around us we forgive. We find the light by giving it away. As we give light to our brothers, as we shine on them with forgiveness and love, affirming their innocence, “*they will return it*” (10:2). The Christ in them will *always* answer to the Christ in you. This doesn't mean their *ego* will agree! It doesn't mean that their outward reaction will always be one of love and acceptance of your love. Often it won't be. Yet something in them always agrees, always responds, and if you are tuned in to the right channel, you will receive it.

We make a mistake when we look to the world outside ourselves for validation of our love. The validation comes within the mind, like everything else in the Course. The section in the Manual on “Should Healing Be Repeated?” is very relevant here. It says, in part: “Whenever a teacher of God has tried to be a channel for healing he has succeeded” (M-7.2:1).

In the Workbook, the Course explains more clearly what happens when we offer forgiveness, healing and love to another person and they *appear* to not accept it. Some part of that person's mind receives the gift, even though consciously they may reject it (W-pI.197.4:1–4). God saves the gift in His storehouse until the person is free enough from fear to accept it (M-6.2:3–9).

All gifts of love you give are effectual. The other person may not be ready, in time, to accept them, but that does not matter. He receives them anyway. The Holy Spirit in his mind receives them for him, and keeps them ready, waiting until he is ready to receive them.

Once again the underlying thought is repeated: We don't know the light in ourselves, but each time we see a brother in the light we bring our own light closer to our awareness (10:3). That is the practice of forgiveness. “Love always leads to love” (10:4); the same idea. One of love's chief characteristics is that it is always extending itself. Whenever you give it away, there is more of it. It increases by being given away. Whenever you extend love, you receive it. The way we come to know our own love and innocence is by

seeing it in other people. Jesus just keeps reiterating this idea.

“The sick” includes not just the physically sick, but the mentally sick and the emotionally sick—it includes everyone in this world, everyone in your life. The Psychotherapy pamphlet says that “All sickness is mental illness” (P-2.IV.8:1). It’s all listening to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit, listening to the voice of fear instead of the voice of love.

The Course is telling us that all the ego-driven people around us—all the ones who are totally into living by the ego, who have absolutely no interest in the Course or anything spiritual, all the “bastards”, all the “bitches” and “sons-of-bitches”—they are our teachers and our guides! They all “ask for love.” “They are guides to joy.” They are “guides to peace.” They are your saviors (10:5,7,8).

They are all calling for love. And as you see through the ego’s perception of attack, anger, separation, physical illness, indifference, or malice, see through to the call for love that is behind it, and respond—not to the ego your ego sees, but to the love behind it—as you respond with love, they “are grateful for it, and in their joy they shine with holy thanks” (10:5).

You may not see them shining with holy thanks in outward manifestation. Sometimes you will, but often you will not. You need to learn that that’s okay. You have to trust that “love always leads to love” (10:4). Within your own mind, you can receive their gratitude even if they are not outwardly giving it. You see the beauty in them even if they do not. It is that sight of the beauty in them that “calls you home” (10:9). It allows you to see more of that beauty in yourself, and that is their gift to you. That is how, even acting in their ego, they can be your guide to peace and joy.

“*You* have established them as guides to peace, for *you* have made it manifest in them” (10:8, my emphasis). You called it out; you drew it forth. You chose how you wanted to see them and you saw them that way. You did it all (with a little help from the Holy Spirit!); the results have nothing whatsoever to do with their outward response to you, and nothing whatsoever to do with whether or not their behavior changes. The change happens in your mind.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹There is a light that this world cannot give. ²Yet **you** can give it, as it was given **you**. ³And **as** you give it, it shines forth to call you **from** the world and follow it. ⁴For this light will attract you as nothing in this world can do. ⁵And you will lay aside the world and find another. ⁶This other world is bright with love **which you have given it**. ⁷And here will everything remind you of your Father and His holy Son. ⁸Light is unlimited, and spreads across this world in quiet joy. ⁹All those you brought **with** you will shine on you, and you will shine on them in gratitude because they brought you here. ¹⁰Your light will join with theirs in power so compelling, that it will draw the others out of darkness as you look on them.

• Study Question •

11. Try to describe the "path" light takes in this paragraph, starting with the fact that God gave the light to us (11:2). Where does it move next? Where does it end up? Notice the word "shine" as well as the word "light" in looking for your answer.

The opening lines of this paragraph send chills down my back every time I read them. We can be channels of love that comes from beyond this world! The world cannot give this light, this love. But *I can! You can!* Wow! No wonder the workbook tells us, "I am the light of the world" (Lesson 61). *This is why I am here. This is why you are here* (W-pI.61.5:3-5). This is the "function God would have me fill" (W-pI.192).

Once you begin to practice this Course, it is addictive. You shine forth the light; it shines back, calling you to follow it further. And there is literally *nothing in this world* that is so attractive! (11:4). The peace, the joy, the love, the freedom that come from an experience of deep healing of the mind are indescribable. "You have no idea of the tremendous release and deep peace that comes from meeting yourself and your brothers totally without judgment" (T-3.VI.3:1).

This attraction of love is irresistible. It is irresistible because love attracts love, and love is what you are—therefore you are irresistibly attracted to it. It is so attractive that you will quite literally give up the world for it! (11:5).

Jesus is talking about the *real world* here. Experiences of healing in this world show the light of love to us, and it draws us right out of the world into another world. It isn't a different physical world; you don't disappear from this world and appear in another dimension. The real world is this world seen through the eyes of forgiveness (T-17.II.5:1). It is a world "bright with love which you have given it" (11:6). The gifts of love to your brothers, the gifts of forgiveness, are what populate this world. Your love (God's love as you) creates this world.

In the world you see through the eyes of Christ, everything reminds you of the Father and His holy Son (11:7). *Everything*. That is how Jesus saw the world: everything reminded him of God and of his own identity as the Son. The sight of this world comes because you *choose* to have it.

There is some paradoxical language in sentence 9. It says that we brought others to the real world, and then, in the same sentence, it says "they brought you here." Who brought who? I brought them, but they brought me. I shine on them, and they shine on me.

It only seems paradoxical; in reality both are true. When I extend love and healing to a brother, I am healed as well. Who heals whom? I bring them to the light, but in so doing they bring me to the light. They are grateful to me for their healing, and I am grateful to them for mine. It is, as the Course says, "a collaborative venture" (see T-4.VI.8:1-6). I can't make it without them, and they can't make it without me. So we end up both being grateful to the other.

The combined light in giver and receiver attracts others out of their darkness (11:10). This is how light spreads. How do we draw people out of darkness to the light? Simply by looking on them! Simply by being unafraid of their darkness and their ego, by overlooking their "sins" and seeing the light hidden in them. Simply by loving them. God drew us simply by loving us; we draw them simply by loving them. Not by preaching to

them, not by telling them how wrong and confused they are, not by insisting they read the Course and get with the program. Just by looking at them with love.

If there is any hint in the Course of a movement gathering power, this is it. It's a snowball effect—a snowball of love. I forgive you, extending love and healing, seeing the light in you. This shows me the light in myself, and I become addicted to the experience, so I forgive more and more; you begin to give as you have received, forgiving those around you. More and more people are infected by it. This happy infection of love begins to spread throughout the world. The power of it becomes “so compelling” that it eventually draws everyone out of darkness. That will be what the Course calls the Second Coming of Christ (W-pII.9:3:2).

I believe that, as students of the Course, we are part of this happy infection of the world with love. It is only just beginning, and it has a very long way to go, but we are part of it now. Spreading this infection is my mission in life. It is the mission in which Jesus calls each of us to join him. And we practice it every moment of every day with every person we meet, as we choose to see beyond the ego to the light that is hidden in everyone, to draw that light forth by simply looking on it. We brush aside the shadow figures of the past our ego minds throw up as barriers, let go of judgment, and hear the constant calls for love that resound on every side. And we answer. That is all there is to do, and that is the only meaningful activity in this world.

Paragraph 12

12. ¹Awaking unto Christ is following the laws of love **of your free will**, and out of quiet recognition of the truth in them. ²The attraction of light must draw you willingly, and willingness is signified by **giving**. ³Those who accept love **of** you become your willing witnesses to the love you gave them, and it is **they** who hold it out to **you**. ⁴In sleep you are alone, and your awareness is narrowed to yourself. ⁵And that is why the nightmares come. ⁶You dream of isolation **because** your eyes are closed. ⁷You do not **see** your brothers, and in the darkness you cannot look upon the light you **gave** to them.

• Study Question •

12. a) Paragraph 12:1-3. *Awakening means a conscious choice to love instead of giving in to fear. What signifies our willingness to follow the light of love?*
b) Paragraph 12:4-7. *How are the nightmares we experience in sleep parallel to our situation in failing to see the light of Christ in our brothers?*

What a beautiful summary of the purpose of the Course this first sentence is!

The intention of the Course is to teach us to follow the laws of love *of our own free will* (12:1). There is no coercion in *A Course in Miracles*. You do not have to do anything you don't want to do. In fact, the purpose of the Course's mind training is to bring you to the place where *you want* to follow the laws of love, where you realize that following the laws of love is what you have always wanted in your heart of hearts. The important thing, in the Course, is not that you do anything differently, but that you *want* to do it differently. It repeatedly says that all it asks of us is “a little willingness” (T-18.IV.4:1; T-18.V.2:4). It is the *willing*, the *wanting*, the *choosing* that is important. “There is no strain in doing God's Will as soon as you recognize that it is also your own” (T-2.VI.6:4).

The idea that we can be frightened into loving by threats of hell is so absurd that it would be laughable if such a belief were not the foundation of our major religions. Love *cannot* be imposed from without; it *must* be chosen from within. Charles Finney, a great Christian evangelist of the last century, and the founder of Oberlin College, defined love as “the eternal will to all goodness.” He was right, in that love is a matter of the will, a matter of choice. If love is not freely chosen, it cannot be love; acting against my will comes only from fear, which is love’s opposite. Many people in the world today who “obey God” do so out of fear, not love. That isn’t what God wants; it isn’t what the Course teaches.

The Course is teaching us that we are miserable because we listen to the voice of fear instead of the voice of love. It is teaching us that following the laws of love is what makes us happy, content, and peaceful. It points out that this fact proves that our nature must be love, because we could not be happy acting against our own nature; therefore, if acting in love makes me happy, my nature must be love. I must be “as God created me” (W-pI.110.Title). That is what is meant by “quiet recognition of the truth in them” (12:1). I choose to follow the laws of love because I want to, and I want to because love is what I am. That is the truth.

God draws us to love by *attracting* us, by showing us that we want it. The peace, joy, contentment and inner serenity that come from allowing love to flow through us is without question. Nothing is more powerfully attractive. Our willingness to love is “signified by giving” (12:2). That is, we demonstrate our willingness to follow the laws of love by giving love and light to others. Giving is how we know we are willing. “To give is how to recognize you have received” (W-pI.159.1:7). As the Apostle James wrote concerning “faith without works”:

Believing is like that. If it does not do anything it is no good. Belief by itself is dead. In that case someone may say, ‘You believe. And I do good things. Try to show me that you believe without doing any acts of kindness. I will show you that I believe by doing acts of kindness.’ (James 2:17–18, Weymouth translation)

Sentence 3 is another repetition of the recurring theme, that we learn the truth of the love that is in us from the people to whom we give love, and who accept it. The more love you give, the more you get back. If you want love, start giving it away.

“In sleep you are alone” (12:4). That is a simple fact. When we sleep *physically*, we are alone, and our awareness is narrowed to ourselves. When we sleep *spiritually* we do the same thing. When we “close our eyes” to the light in our brothers, when we pull down the curtains of past memory and block the light of the present from our awareness, we are alone, we are narrowing our awareness to ourselves.

“And that is why the nightmares come” (12:5). The entire nightmare of this world arises because we shut our eyes to the light in our brothers, because we *refuse* to see the light and love that is in them. We live in self-imposed isolation. We *dream* of isolation “because [our] eyes are closed” (12:6). We are not really alone, but we *dream* we are because we are shutting out the light that is always shining in our brothers. We think we are alone because we can’t see our brothers (12:7), but the reason we can’t see them is because we shut our eyes.

Paragraph 13

13. ¹And yet the laws of love are not suspended because you sleep. ²And you have followed them through all your nightmares, and have been faithful in your giving, for you were **not** alone. ³Even in sleep has Christ protected you, ensuring the real world **for** you when you awake. ⁴In **your** name He has given **for** you, and given **you** the gifts He gave. ⁵God's Son is still as loving as his Father. ⁶Continuous **with** his Father, he has no past **apart** from Him. ⁷So he has never ceased to be his Father's witness **and his own**. ⁸Although he slept, **Christ's vision did not leave him**. ⁹And so it is that he can call unto himself the witnesses that teach him that he never slept.

• Study Question •

13. How is it that we can be "asleep," and yet have Christ in our own minds, calling us to awake?

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And yet the laws of love are not suspended because you sleep. And you have followed them through all your nightmares, and have been faithful in your giving, for you were not alone.

Jesus is getting a bit mystical here; he's talking of something I don't think we can really understand yet. He's saying that because you are (or part of your mind is) asleep, you think you are alone, and you think you have suspended the laws of love (13:1). He's saying that what you think isn't true. You are not alone, you haven't suspended love's laws, and your giving has never stopped (13:2). At some level (a level of which you are not aware here in the dream), part of you is still awake and still giving—you aren't aware of it, but it is there. As Jesus says elsewhere, "Not one note in Heaven's song was missed" (T-26.V.5:4). The dream we think we are in never really happened.

Christ "is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well" (W-pII.6.6:1-2). In our sleep, Christ, our true Self, has been awake and active. Jesus is talking about something that is outside of time and space here, something in Heaven or eternity. I can only imagine what he is talking about! At this stage of our growth, I think we just have to take Jesus at his word here. Even though I think I'm asleep and in a nightmare, on some level that I don't understand my true Self has never stopped giving for me, and giving me the gifts He gave (13:4).

I find I can appreciate this idea in the sense that it tells me I haven't missed anything! When I look back at my life and all the "missed opportunities" for love, all the times I've listened to the ego instead of the Holy Spirit, I can get discouraged over how long it has taken me to get even this far. When I consider that I may have been at this for hundreds of lifetimes, I could get *really* discouraged. Jesus is saying that while this awful dream of separation has been going on, eon after eon, nothing has really happened and nothing has been lost. Christ has always been perfect love, and has been giving and receiving love without ceasing. He's saving it all up for me, so that when I finally awake it will all be there for me. This is a *dream* of loss, but the loss is not real.

Because this dream is not real, because the giving of love has never ceased, then here—within the dream—I can "call unto [myself] the witnesses that teach [me] that [I] never slept" (13:9). I am asleep, my eyes closed, and I see the terrible dream. But right

there on the other side of my eyelids is the real world! And I am in it; I'm not where I think I am. Here, within the dream with me, I carry the memory of the real world.

Here in the dream there appears to be loss. In this dream world there is a past that seems to prove that separation is real. There, in the real world, loss has never occurred. In that world, there is no past apart from God (13:6).

Each brother in the dream whom I meet *in the present* is a contact point between the world of the dream and the real world. In the present I can remember that real world, in which the past apart from God never occurred. Because perfect love is there, in that real world, I can draw forth the light and love in each of my brothers, and so learn that this dream world is not the real one.

Summary of Finding the Present

One sentence summary: *You find the present by letting go of the past.*

If I meet a brother in the present without reference to the past, I find the real world, the guiltless world. Using the past to condemn the present is not natural to me; it is a matter of my own choice. I have chosen use the past to obscure the light in the present because I am afraid of the light. I am afraid because the light means the loss of my ego identity.

The darkness I see in my brothers exists only in my own mind. I see it because I choose to see it. I can choose otherwise. I can choose to let the past go, and look without condemnation on the present.

In forgiving, letting go of the past, I will release my brother from condemnation. In releasing him, I will be released. Separation exists only in the past.

If I choose to hold on to the past, I am choosing to remain in darkness and refusing to accept the light. I am choosing to remain separated.

My mission in life is to call forth the witnesses to love in everyone. Each person around me is my savior, my guide to finding my own light, which I do by perceiving the light in him.

The light of the real world is irresistibly attractive. Each experience of it draws me to the next. I become *willing* to follow the laws of love because they are true. I become *willing* to lay aside the world I have made, a world of dreams, in exchange for the real world, a world in which there is no past of separation, no loss, and no guilt.

Eventually this love will draw everyone into its fold. The world we know will vanish, and we will know that we never slept.

Answer Key

7. a) We have a choice as to whether or not to see the shadows of the past, or to let them go.
b) The miracle worker looks for the truth in others, and calls upon them as witnesses to Christ.
8. We are asked to reach out to our brothers and touch them with the touch of Christ, through seeing the light and the wholeness in them, and calling them to wake up to their own wholeness.
9. We remember God by calling forth witnesses to His creation, shining on them and bringing their minds to light. We see our healing through healing others, and receiving their witness of our healing.
10. a) As we give light to others, they return it; we find light through its witnesses. We see them in light, and this brings our light closer to our awareness.
b) Guides to joy; guides to peace.
11. God gives us light. We then give it to others. Shining out of them, it calls to us into the real world. When a miracle occurs, light shining from me, being received, and shining back from another, the two sources of light will join together so powerfully that it will draw others out of darkness.
12. a) Paragraph 12:1-3. Our willingness to follow is signified by our giving of love to others.
b) Paragraph 12:4-7. By closing our eyes to the Christ in those around us, we experience the nightmare of this world.
13. Although we seem to be alone in our sleep, we are not. Christ has protected us. Our real Self has continued to be awake, following the laws of love, giving gifts in our name. Christ's vision has not left us. The sleep itself is an illusion.