

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 15, Section V

### The Holy Instant and Special Relationships

---

#### 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

~~strikethrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

---

### Overview of the Section

This section introduces what will become a major focus of the Course for the next six chapters: *special relationships*. It will help, I think, to give a quick summary of just what the Course means by that term. We can define a special relationship as one in which:

- I have a special arrangement (an exclusive relationship) with
- and receive special treatment from
- a very special person
- so that I can feel more special.

Just reading this list can make our heart start beating faster! It sounds wonderful, doesn't it? Yet, according to the Course, this is the ego's *pièce de résistance*, its masterpiece. It calls it "the ego's most boasted gift" (T-16.V.3:1), and declares, "The special love relationship is the ego's chief weapon for keeping you from Heaven" (T-16.V.2:3). The Course teaches us that a special relationship is of value only to the ego. We'll have many opportunities to consider all the reasons the Course will give for such drastic statements.

I should say, at the outset, that this does *not* mean that we must abandon all special relationships, such as those with family and friends! Nor does the Course, by declaring that we love everyone equally, advocate "free love." Rather, as with every other weapon in the ego's arsenal, the Holy Spirit proposes to re-purpose our special relationships, and to make them serve His goals instead of the ego's. The holy instant is the Course's answer, or antidote, for special relationships. It contains the qualities that undo all the mechanisms that drive the special relationship, and that can transform them into what the Course calls *holy relationships*.

## Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>The holy instant is the Holy Spirit's most useful learning device for teaching you love's meaning. <sup>2</sup>For its purpose is to **suspend judgment entirely**. <sup>3</sup>Judgment **always** rests on the past, for **past** experience is the basis on which you judge. <sup>4</sup>Judgment becomes impossible without the past, for **without** it you do **not** understand anything. <sup>5</sup>You would make no **attempt** to judge, because it would be quite apparent to you that you do not **understand [know] what anything means**. <sup>6</sup>You are afraid of this because you believe that **without the ego**, all would be chaos. <sup>7</sup>Yet I assure you that without the ego, **all would be love**.

### • Study Question •

1. *In this paragraph, what is it about the holy instant that serves to help us suspend judgment? (There may be more than one correct answer.)*
  - A. *The holy instant is by definition a moment of forgiveness.*
  - B. *The holy instant exists only in the present; by removing the past from consideration there is no longer any basis for judgment.*
  - C. *In the holy instant we do not understand anything.*

The holy instant is said to be “the Holy Spirit's most useful learning device for teaching you love's meaning” (1:1, my emphasis). It is the most useful learning device because (“For” in 1:2) “its purpose is to suspend judgment entirely.” Note that the word “suspend” implies a *temporary* cessation of judgment. Notice also that we fear the suspension of judgment because we believe that without the ego (i.e. without judgment) everything would fall apart (1:6), when in fact without judgment “all would be love” (1:7). Thus the suspension of judgment enables love to come into our awareness. The holy instant (in the present) is the chief learning device of the Holy Spirit; but the chief learning device of the *ego* is the past (2:1).

When I judge another person (in the sense of condemnation), I cannot, in that moment, truly *love* them. To the ego, judgment is a form of attack: The ego's “profound sense of vulnerability renders it incapable of judgment except in terms of attack” (T-9.VIII.3:3). Attack and love are antithetical. But in a holy instant, for a moment, my mind is free of judgment and therefore free of attack; it is capable of allowing love to be expressed.

The holy instant frees us from judgment because it frees us from the past, and “judgment *always* rests on the past” (1:3). Without the past, I have no basis for judgment; I do not understand anything because I have nothing in the past with which to compare it (1:4). When my mind relinquishes the past as a tool for judgment, my lack of understanding is immediately apparent to me (1:5).

You will recall the affirmation given to us in the final section of Chapter 14:

*"I do not know what anything, including this, means.*

*And so I do not know how to respond to it.*

*And I will not use my own past learning as the light to guide me now"* (T-14.XI.6:7-9).

These amount to instructions on how to experience a holy instant. As I give up any attempt to use my “past learning” to help me understand what is occurring in the present, I am left adrift. I have nothing to guide me, and it becomes apparent that I don’t know what “this,” whatever it is, means. *I am unable to judge it*, so I make no attempt to do so (1:5).

But not knowing what anything means (1:5) is incredibly uncomfortable to us. More than uncomfortable, we are deathly afraid of it (1:6)! We are so accustomed to relying on our egos to maintain order in our lives that the idea of doing without the “wisdom” of our egos scares the daylights out of us. We think that if we gave up ego judgements “all would be chaos” (1:6). We think we need to be in control! In fact, everyone is a control freak—unwilling to let go of the reins and to allow the Holy Spirit to carry us wherever It wills. Jesus assures us that letting go of ego control is safe: “Without the ego, *all would be love*” (1:7).

The Course has told us that we must teach only love, because that is what we are (T-6.I.13:2). It has told us that the judgment of the Holy Spirit is that everything is either love or a call for love (T-12.I.3:3-4). It declares that “love is everything” (T-2.VII.5:3). When we get the ego out of the way, that’s what we will see. The ego is what is meant when the Text, in the Introduction, says that the Course is about “removing the blocks to the awareness of love's presence” (T-Int.1:7). “Without the ego, *all would be love.*”

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The past is the **ego’s** chief learning device, for it is in the past that you learned to define your **own** needs and acquired methods for meeting them **on your own terms**. <sup>2</sup>We have said that to limit love to **part** of the Sonship is to bring guilt into your relationships, and thus **make them unreal**. <sup>3</sup>If you seek to separate out certain **aspects** of the totality [i.e., particular people] and look **to them** to meet your imagined needs, you are attempting to **use separation to save you**. <sup>4</sup>How, then, could guilt **not** enter? <sup>5</sup>For separation **is** the source of guilt, and to **appeal** to it for salvation **is to believe you are alone**. <sup>6</sup>To be alone *is* to be guilty. <sup>7</sup>For to experience yourself **as** alone is to deny the Oneness of the Father and His Son, and thus to **attack reality**.

• Study Question •

2. *Limiting love to part of the Sonship always results in guilt. Which of the following is given as a reason why? (There is more than one correct answer.)*
- A. *To do so is to make use of separation, and separation always causes guilt.*
- B. *To separate from some parts of the Sonship is to make ourselves alone, and to be alone is to be guilty.*
- C. *To do so is to deny the Oneness of God and His Son, and thus to attack reality.*

There is a lot being said in the first sentence. Let's unpack it bit by bit.

“The past is the *ego's* chief learning device.” Why the emphasis on “ego's”? Because in the first two paragraphs, Jesus is contrasting two learning devices: the Holy Spirit's, which is *the holy instant*, and the ego's, which is *the past*. The ego uses the past to fuel and form our judgment, while the whole purpose of the holy instant is to *suspend judgment entirely* (1:2). By means of the past the ego teaches us to do two main things (2:1):

- define [our] *own* needs”
- acquire methods for meeting them *on our own terms*

Notice the repetition of the word “own,” both times emphasized. My past has taught me what *my* needs are and how I can meet those needs in a way that is most to my individual advantage. My ego is not interested in meeting *your* needs, or in attempting to meet *my* needs while simultaneously taking you into consideration. It's all about taking care of Number One: me. Using the past as a learning device, we do our best to manipulate the world around us to our greatest benefit. Perhaps we don't act entirely selfish. We give the appearance, at least, of taking other people into consideration, but if we do it is mainly because we have learned (in the past!) that totally ignoring the needs of other people has a negative effect on getting our own needs met.

The “We have said” in 2:2 refers to the following paragraph a few sections back:

You cannot enter into **real** relationships with **any** of God's Sons unless you love them all and **equally**. Love is not special. If you single out **part** of the Sonship for your love, you are imposing guilt on **all** your relationships and **making them unreal**. You can love **only** as God loves. Seek not to love **unlike Him**, for there **is** no love apart from His. Until you recognize that this is true, you will have no idea **what love is like**. No one who condemns a brother can see **himself** as guiltless and in the peace of God. If he **is** guiltless and in peace **and sees it not**, he **is delusional**, and has **not** looked upon himself (T-13.X.11:1–8).

Clearly, that paragraph was talking about the same thing as our current paragraph. It pointed out that real love, that is, God's love, which is the only love, will love all of

God's Sons equally. To divine love, nobody is special. Or, as Jesus put it earlier, "All my brothers are special" (T-1.V.3:6). Singling out part of the Sonship for love—certain special individuals—brings guilt into all your relationships and makes them unreal. So it says, and that is how Jesus sums up the earlier paragraph here (2:2). But it does not really explain *why* loving some more than others incurs guilt everywhere and makes relationships unreal. Here in Chapter 15, Jesus explains a bit more fully.

Singling out, or *separating out*, particular people and looking *to them* to meet your needs ("imagined needs," he calls them), is an attempt to use separation to save yourself (2:3). And separation always engenders guilt; it is inevitable (2:4), because separation is the very source of guilt (2:5).

Think about it. There is a chain of mistaken thought here. First, you imagine that you have needs. Your needs are *imagined*, not real, because in God you have everything forever. Seeing yourself as lacking, as deficient in some way, you could already be feeling unworthy. Then, you single out certain people; why? You are making judgments about people, and evaluating some as better than others. You pick—consciously or unconsciously—people who have something you lack, something you need. The object of the relationship then is to try to get them to give you what you need. You can do that in many ways: by threatening them; by bribing them; by making them feel guilty if they *don't* give you what you need (and they never do; they never can; the needs are imagined in the first place); by manipulating them; or by tricking them. And in the process you are making yourself guilty for the ways you are attacking them. And this is what we often call a loving relationship.

When you engage in this kind of special relationship, the Course says, you are making yourself *alone*. By singling out certain people you are affirming that *people are separate from one another and different*, and if that is true generally, it is true of you in particular. Finally, to believe that you are alone "is to deny the Oneness of the Father and His Son, and thus to *attack reality*" (2:7). That is why, "To be alone *is* to be guilty" (2:6). If you have attacked reality by denying the Oneness of the Father and His Son (God and you), how can you *not* think you are guilty? Thus, special love relationships are the fruit of a very rotten root. They grow out of a buried belief in separation from the One. You *have* to believe in separation to imagine that you have any needs at all!

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>You cannot love **parts** of reality and understand what love **means**. <sup>2</sup>If you would love **unlike** to God, Who **knows** no special love, how **can** you understand it? <sup>3</sup>To believe that *special* relationships, with *special* love, can offer you salvation **is** the belief that separation is salvation. <sup>4</sup>For it is the **complete equality** of the Atonement in which salvation lies. <sup>5</sup>How can **you** decide that special aspects of the Sonship **can give you more than others**? <sup>6</sup>The past **has** taught you this. <sup>7</sup>Yet the holy instant teaches you **it is not so**.

• Study Question •

3. *Our belief in special relationships with special love is a belief that “separation is salvation,” because it makes distinctions between parts of the Sonship and says that some parts can give us more than other parts. How does the holy instant counteract this belief? (One correct answer.)*
- A. *It teaches us that separation is not salvation.*
  - B. *It gives us an experience of real love.*
  - C. *It teaches us that no special aspect of the Sonship can give us more than any other part, because it removes the past (which has taught us this false belief).*

To the Course, love *means* complete equality with no specialness. Therefore, if you attempt to give love to just certain parts of reality, you do not understand real love (3:1). As the Bible teaches, God *is* love. It does not say, “God is *loving*,” or even simply, “God loves,” but it identifies God and love. There is nothing called love but God. “There is no love but God’s” (W-pI.127.Title). To “love *unlike* to God” (3:2), therefore, is completely impossible. And God “*knows* no special love” (3:2). God loves all equally.

The Course is hitting very close to home here. The idea that special love is a *good thing* is ingrained in us. It seems *wrong* to think that we can love our neighbor just as much as we love our husband or our wife. In fact it seems *very wrong* to think that I would love your wife as much as I love mine, or that you would love mine as much as I do! But the Course is saying that this kind of thinking *guarantees guilt*. To value special relationships “*is the belief that separation is salvation*” (3:3).

Now, I’m not talking here about the form love takes. I’m not saying should not marry, or that we ought to have sex with everybody. Nor am I saying that parents should love their children any *less* than they do. I think what the Course is talking about is a holy love, a recognition that everyone is equally worthy, equally holy, equally a part of God. “For it is the *complete equality* of the Atonement in which salvation lies” (3:4).

The ego’s lessons from our past would tell us that certain special people (“special aspects of the Sonship”) can give us more than other people, and so our egos set us out on a kind of talent search: Who can give me the most? (3:5) On what do we base this idea? We must be basing it on our judgment of the relative worth to us that people hold. It is a comparison, a separating tactic, culling out the ones we think will benefit us the most. It’s totally an ego thing.

“Yet the holy instant teaches you *it is not so*” (3:6). *What* isn’t so? The notion that certain people can give you more than others. If you reflect on this seriously, even for a moment, I think you will realize that, in many ways, believing that certain people can give you more than others is a basic assumption, one of the foundational principles of all your thinking. So to take Jesus seriously here would mean you would have to drop that idea because it just isn’t so. Every aspect of the Sonship—every individual person—is

capable of giving you just as much as any other person. Every person is of equal value to you. The idea that some are more valuable than others *just isn't so!*

It's going to take some doing to integrate that idea into our lives, isn't it? You probably find it hard to believe. My advice, if that is so, is, "Just sit with it." Don't reject it outright. Don't argue with it. Don't ignore it. Don't *try* to believe it. Just sit with it. Just consider that it might be so.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>Because of guilt, **all** special relationships have [some] elements of fear in them. <sup>2</sup>This is why they shift and change so frequently. <sup>3</sup>They are **not** based on changeless love alone. <sup>4</sup>And love, where fear has entered, **cannot** be depended on because it is **not** perfect. <sup>5</sup>In His function as Interpreter of what you made, the Holy Spirit **uses** special relationships, which **you** have chosen to support the ego, as learning experiences that point to truth. <sup>6</sup>Under His teaching, **every** relationship becomes a lesson in love.

### • Study Question •

4. *What does this paragraph teach us about special relationships? (One answer only.)*
- A. *They shift and change so frequently that they are useless and should be abandoned.*
  - B. *They are harmful to us because they have guilt and fear built into them.*
  - C. *They can be used by the Holy Spirit to teach us lessons in love*

Many people, when they first encounter the Course's teaching about special relationships, form the opinion that the Course believes special relationships are "bad" in some way, and that we should at all costs avoid them. After all, as it says in the first sentence, they all "have some elements of fear in them" (4:1). The Course says, "All healing is essentially the release from fear" (T-2.IV.1:7). Isn't it obvious, then, that we need to be released from our special relationships? Not really!

This paragraph is really a key to the Course's attitude toward special relationships. As we will see in the chapters yet to come, the Course eloquently describes all the pitfalls and perils involved in special relationships, and paints them in an extremely negative light. It's already informed us that our belief that certain special someones can give us more than others betrays a belief in separation, indeed, a belief that separation will save us. It says here that because they contain elements of fear, special relationships "shift and change...frequently" (4:2). Most of us have experienced that kind of sudden shift and change in our relationships. It goes on to say that special relationships "are not based on changeless love alone" (4:3). In fact, because fear has entered in, even the love that does exist in special relationships "*cannot* be depended on because it is *not* perfect" (4:4).

Love diluted with fear is not changeless—so it changes! Is there anyone who has *not* ever experienced that?

And yet the Course does not throw out our special relationships. Distilling the next sentence to its essence, Jesus says, “The Holy Spirit *uses* special relationships...as learning experiences that point to truth” so that “*every* relationship becomes a lesson in love” (4:5–6). Far from telling us to avoid special relationships, the Course implies that if we *did* avoid them we would be denying ourselves one of the Holy Spirit’s greatest tools for awakening us. In fact, relationships are the special means the Course uses to release us, to save time in the process of waking up: “Time has been saved for you because you and your brother are together. This is the special means this course is using to save you time” (T-18.VII.6:3-4).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>The Holy Spirit knows **no one is special**. <sup>2</sup>Yet He also perceives that you have **made** special relationships, which He would purify and **not** let you destroy. <sup>3</sup>However **unholy** the reason you made them may be, He can **translate** them into holiness by removing **as much fear as you will let Him**. <sup>4</sup>You can place **any** relationship under His care and be sure that it will **not** result in pain, if you offer Him your willingness **to have it serve no need but His**. <sup>5</sup>All the guilt in it arises from **your** use of it. <sup>6</sup>All the love from His. <sup>7</sup>Do not, then, be **afraid** to let go your **imagined** needs, which would **destroy** the relationship. <sup>8</sup>Your **only need is His**.

### • Study Question •

5. *What are we asked to do in our relationships that will allow the Holy Spirit to do His part? (More than one answer should be selected.)*
- A. *Place the relationship into the care of the Holy Spirit.*
  - B. *Let go of our imagined needs in regard to the relationship.*
  - C. *Make the relationship a holy one.*
  - D. *Confess the unholy reasons we had for making the relationship.*
  - E. *Offer Him our willingness for the relationship to serve no need but His.*

Often we think the contrast the Course is making is between *special* relationships and *holy* relationships. I don’t think that is really the contrast that is meant. To me, the contrast is between *unholy special* relationships and *holy special* relationships. Making a relationship holy does not automatically mean that it is no longer special. In fact, if I have a dozen unholy relationships and one of them becomes a holy relationship, that relationship is special *because* it is holy, and different from all the others. There are a couple of places in which the Course refers to the *same* relationship as both special and

holy in the same breath, so to speak. In these passages Jesus clearly says that our relationships *remain special*, and yet can still be used for God's purposes:

The Holy Spirit, ever practical in His wisdom, accepts your dreams and uses them as means for waking. 2 You would have used them to remain asleep. 3 I said before that the first change, before dreams disappear, is that your dreams of fear are changed to happy dreams. 4 That is what the Holy Spirit does in the special relationship. 5 He does not destroy it, nor snatch it away from you. 6 But He does use it differently, as a help to make His purpose real to you. 7 **The special relationship will remain**, not as a source of pain and guilt, but **as a source of joy and freedom**. 8 It will not be for you alone, for therein lay its misery. 9 As its unholiness kept it a thing apart, **its holiness** will become an offering to everyone. (T-18.II.6)

Your **special relationship** will be a means for undoing guilt in everyone blessed through your **holy relationship**. (T-18.II.7.)

So Jesus is not saying we will not have special relationships. He is saying that the special relationships will become holy. They will be used for a different purpose, "not for you alone."

Our special relationships can be the ego's most potent tool in keeping us out of Heaven and away from God, on the one hand:

The special love relationship is the ego's most boasted gift...the ego's chief weapon for keeping you from Heaven. (T-16.V.3:1, 2:3).

But *those very same relationships*, although they remain special, can be used by the Holy Spirit for the exact opposite purpose, to find our Self and to find salvation:

In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship. (T-20.V.1:1).

And here [in this world] can he learn **relationships are his salvation**, and not his doom. (T-20.VI.11:9).

That is what changing the purpose of our relationships is all about; transforming them from sources of *doom* into the means of salvation.

To me, the message this paragraph #5 is worthy of a lengthy explanation and thoughtful consideration. I have attached an Appendix to this chapter, titled, "Changing the Purpose of Our Relationships"; it gives a detailed explanation of this message. These are notes for a talk I gave in 1995, part of a workshop on special and holy relationships. I'll give some short notes here on paragraph 5, as usual, but I urge you, if you have time, to read the longer article in the Appendix, which also references other material about special relationships from several chapters of the Course.

The Holy Spirit *knows* what Reality is, but he also *perceives* the illusions we have made. In Reality, "no one is special," but in our illusions, we have "made" (not "created") *special relationships* (5:1-2). So He works with us in our illusions. He is not indifferent to them. Our special relationships matter to Him, so that He wishes to purify them (5:2)—to

make them holy (5:3). He does not want us to destroy the relationships, which is all too frequently the eventual end of such special relationships. He purifies them for us “by removing *as much fear as [we] will let Him*” (5:3).

There is a wonderful promise here! With *any relationship*, I can be sure that it will *not* result in pain. Who doesn't want that! But to have that blessed certainty, I must place the relationship under the Holy Spirit's care; I must be willing that the relationship will serve *only His need*, and not my own (5:4). That sounds great until you actually go to “sign on the dotted line” about a particular relationship. Then, you realize just how much *you* have invested in that relationship, and in what you want to get from it. You have certain needs you want the relationship to meet. That's probably why you formed the relationship in the first place. So now you're supposed to give that up? Now, you are supposed to give up control entirely and allow the Holy Spirit to use the relationship for some unknown purpose of His own? It makes you have second thoughts, doesn't it?

But what need could the Holy Spirit possibly have? We know that the Spirit of God shares the nature of God, which is Love. Right? So, what need does Love have? The Course tells us that, “With love in you, you have no need except to extend it” (T-15.V.11:3). If that is true of us it is even more true of God, and therefore of the Holy Spirit. So if we substitute “no need but to extend love” for “no need but His,” the sentence now reads like this: “You can place any relationship under His care and be sure that it will not result in pain, if you offer Him your willingness to have it serve no need but to extend love.” That sounds a whole lot less threatening, doesn't it?

When we use a relationship for our own purposes, the result is guilt (5:5). Either we accumulate feeling of guilt because we recognize that we are *using* the other person, or we lay guilt on the other person for failing to meet our needs! The only result when the Holy Spirit uses the relationship, however, is love (5:6). In fact, love never results from our use of the relationship; only from His. But that's obvious, isn't it, if His only need is to extend love? Of course love results.

So we do not need to be afraid to let go of our needs, which are only *imagined* needs anyway (5:7). If we pursue our imagined needs in the relationship we will just destroy it! (5:7). The Holy Spirit does not want to let that happen. Far from taking special relationships away from us, the Holy Spirit wants to guide them in the only path that will *preserve* them and bring fulfillment to them. Our true need, our *only* need, is exactly the same as His (1:8).

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>Any relationship you would **substitute for another** has not been offered to the Holy Spirit for His use. <sup>2</sup>There *is* no substitute for love. <sup>3</sup>If you would attempt to substitute **one** aspect of love [**one person**] for **another**, you have placed **less** value on one and **more** on the other. <sup>4</sup>You have not only **separated** them, but you have also **judged against both**. <sup>5</sup>Yet you had judged against yourself **first**, or you would never have imagined that you needed [**them**] ~~your~~

brothers as they were not. <sup>6</sup>Unless you had seen yourself as **without** love, you **could** not have judged them so **like** you in lack.

• Study Question •

6. Which of the following situations, in your opinion, could be called a “substitute relationship” in the sense of this paragraph? (There may be more than one correct answer.)
- A. Your spouse does not satisfy you sexually, so you have a secret love affair.
  - B. Your spouse does not like science fiction movies, so you go with a friend.
  - C. Your best friend has betrayed you in some way, so you seek comfort by telling another friend about their treachery.
  - D. Your spouse refuses to study the Course with you, so you find a friend who will do so.
  - E. All of the above.

Substituting one relationship for another, or for a part of another, is something we may do when some aspect of one relationship is not pleasing to us, and we seek to fill our needs in that regard with someone else. A substitute relationship is not one we have offered to the Holy Spirit (6:1). It separates people by placing different values on the two relationships, and it judges against both of them, seeing both as lacking in some way (6:2–4). It sees the other persons as lacking somehow (6:3), and stems from our wish that they be something other than what they are (6:5), which in turn stems from our own self-judgment and belief in our own lack (6:6).

I notice that the substitute relationships are clearly the result my belief that I lack something, something that I expect from one relationship but, due to that person’s “failure” to supply my need, I now seek to find in another relationship. My mind keeps returning to that phrase in paragraph 5: “*imagined* needs.” Here, we are said to see ourselves as lacking, specifically, lacking *love*. All of us, most likely, have had experiences that fall into this category. We have certain expectations of the people we relate to. These expectations may have been overt, openly stated and agreed to, or they may be covert, something we believe is due us whether we’ve explicitly asked for it or not. We may think, “If he or she truly loves me, he or she will do so-and-so.” And when they *don’t* do so-and-so, how do we feel? *Unloved*. We are seeing ourselves as without love, as it says in 6:6. That’s when we are most likely to look for a substitute relationship, for someone who can give us the love we deserve but do not have (as we see it).

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>The ego’s use of relationships is so fragmented that it frequently goes even farther; one **part** of one aspect suits its purposes, while it prefers **different**

parts of another aspect. <sup>2</sup>Thus does it **assemble** reality to its own capricious liking, offering for **your** seeking a picture whose likeness **does not exist**. <sup>3</sup>For there is nothing in Heaven **or** earth that it resembles, and so, however much you seek for its reality, you **cannot** find it because it is **not** real.

• **Study Question** •

7. *Speculate as to why the ego makes such fragmented use of relationships. (Select one answer only, the one that seems like the best answer to you, although more than one may be correct.)*
- A. *The ego is trying to fill our many different needs, as it sees them, with selected parts of different people.*
  - B. *The ego is, in its delusion, thinking that it can assemble reality to its own liking.*
  - C. *The ego wants us to seek for “perfect love” without ever being able to find it.*



This paragraph seems to be talking about the kind of mental fantasies we have about the perfect partner—this person’s hair, that person’s smile, another person’s body build, this person’s personality, that person’s sense of humor, and so on. It may extend to what body parts we find most attractive. We are no longer even seeing whole persons; we like them for one particular feature and that’s about it. This is the ultimate objectification.

The ego, we are told, has a hidden purpose in this fragmented view. If we are fooled into seeking some one person who can fulfill all our needs, we end up making up a laundry list of all the characteristics we want in this Prince or Princess Charming, and we go around looking for an imaginary person that does not exist (7:2). As a result, we seek and seek and never find, because we are looking for something that isn’t real (7:3). This is just one expression of the ego’s basic rule, “Seek and do not find.” This fantasy image, built out of our imagined needs, is what we are being to let go of by offering our relationships to the Holy Spirit to serve only His need, and no other.

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>Everyone on earth has formed special relationships, and although this is not so in Heaven, the Holy Spirit knows how to bring a touch of Heaven to them here. <sup>2</sup>In the holy instant no one is special, for your **personal** needs **intrude** on no one to **make [them] your brothers** seem different. <sup>3</sup>Without the values from the past, you **would** see them all the same and **like yourself**. <sup>4</sup>Nor would you see **any** separation between yourself and them. <sup>5</sup>In the holy instant, you see in each relationship what it **will** be when you perceive **only** the present.

• Study Question •

8. (a) According to this paragraph, what makes us see one another as different? (b) How does the holy instant counteract that cause of differences, and allow us to “see them all the same and like yourself?” (See T-15.V.2:1 for a hint.)

In 8:1, Jesus reiterates the ability of the Holy Spirit to transform our special relationships into holy ones, to “bring a touch of Heaven to [our special relationships] here.” There are no special relationships in Heaven (8:1)<sup>1</sup>, but the Holy Spirit still can utilize them for His holy purposes. That’s good news because *everyone on earth* has formed special relationships. We need not think that we are somehow deficient if we have special relationships—everyone does. The holy instant seems to be the means used by the Holy Spirit to transform them.

When you experience the holy instant you realize no one is special (8:2). Everyone is equally lovable, equally deserving. That becomes possible because you are no longer evaluating and classifying people according to how they meet your imaginary “personal” needs (8:2). It’s startling to realize that my perception of differences in other people is brought about by my particular set of imagined needs, which stem from what the ego has taught me from the past; in reality these other people are like me, and we are all the same (8:3)! If I can let go of my past learning<sup>2</sup> I will see this equality, and I will realize there is no separation between myself and them (8:4). That is what happens in a holy instant because, for that instant, I am seeing only the present, and not the past (8:5). I am seeing the Truth about our relationship. I am seeing what the relationship can be and *will* be when I have once and for all let go of my values from the past, my set of imagined personal needs.

How can we do this? I have two answers. The first is: practice. The second is: I don’t really have to do anything because the Holy Spirit will empower me and do it through me, if I am willing. For me it has often come down to a simple decision not to trust my perceptions, especially when they are perceptions of differences, perceptions of judgment, or perceptions of comparisons. The Course assures us that, in any given situation, by refusing to be “taught” by my past learning, I make myself available to the leading of the Holy Spirit for that situation (T-14.XI.6:10).

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>God knows you *now*. <sup>2</sup>He remembers **nothing**, having **always** known you exactly as He knows you now. <sup>3</sup>The holy instant reflects [*parallels*] His knowing by bringing **all** perception **out** of the past, thus removing the frame of reference you have built by which to **judge** your brothers. <sup>4</sup>Once this is gone, the

<sup>1</sup> In the Bible, Jesus says something similar: “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.” (Matthew 22:30 NRSV)

<sup>2</sup> See T-14.XI.6:3-9. “I will not use my past learning as the light to guide me now.”

Holy Spirit substitutes His frame of reference **for** it. <sup>5</sup>His frame of reference is simply God. <sup>6</sup>The Holy Spirit's timelessness lies only [*lies simply*] here. <sup>7</sup>For in the holy instant, **free** of the past, you see that **love is in you**, and you **have** no need to look **without** and snatch love guiltily from where you **thought** it was.

• **Study Question** •

9. *What does the phrase, "He remembers nothing," in regard to God, mean (9:2)?*

- A. *God is very absent-minded and forgets things all the time.*
- B. *God remembers the state of "nothing" that existed before creation.*
- C. *Memory is of the past, and everything is always present for God.*



Remember that this section started out talking about how the holy instant would teach us love's meaning by suspending judgment. This is how judgment can be suspended. By removing us from the past into the present, the holy instant removes the criteria for judgment, thus making judgment impossible (9:3). In the absence of this "frame of reference," the Holy Spirit can substitute His frame of reference, which is God—which is Love (9:4).

God's knowledge is eternally present (9:1). To God there is no past because there is no time, and therefore, *no memory*. God always knows us exactly as He knows us now because now is all there is of time (9:2). That eternal knowledge, that knowing beyond time, is paralleled in the holy instant (9:3). In that moment we know as God knows. This, to me, is reminiscent of what the Apostle Paul says when he declares that in the resurrection we will "know fully" in just the way God has always known us:

*"For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known." (1 Corinthians 13:12 NRSV)*

But to enable that kind of transformed perception in the holy instant it is imperative that our usual, past-based frame of reference "is gone" (9:4). Thus, one way of describing a miracle is that our entire frame of reference is changed, and the new frame of reference "is simply God" (9:5), and the "timelessness" that "lies simply here," in God (9:6).

When, in the holy instant, we are (for that moment) free of the past, we suddenly perceive that *love is in us* (9:7). It isn't something we have to find *outside ourselves*, something we must "snatch...guiltily" from another person. It isn't lacking! We don't have to merit love or win love—we *are* love.

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>**All** your relationships are blessed in the holy instant, **because the blessing is not limited**. <sup>2</sup>In the holy instant the Sonship gains **as one**, and **united** in your blessing it **becomes one to you**. <sup>3</sup>The meaning of love is the meaning God **gave** to it. <sup>4</sup>Give to it **any** meaning **apart** from His, and it is **impossible** to

understand it. <sup>5</sup>God loves every brother as He loves you; neither less nor more. <sup>6</sup>**He needs them all equally**, and so do you. <sup>7</sup>In time, you have been told to offer miracles as I direct [Ur: Christ directs], and let the Holy Spirit bring to you those who are seeking you. <sup>8</sup>Yet in the holy instant you unite **directly** with God, and **all** your brothers join in Christ. <sup>9</sup>Those who are joined in Christ are in no way separate. <sup>10</sup>For Christ is the Self the Sonship shares, as God shares His Self with Christ.

• **Study Question** •

10. *What aspect of the holy instant does this paragraph seem to be emphasizing? (One answer.)*

- A. *The experience of sharing God's Love, which is the same for every brother, for all relationships, for the whole Sonship.*
- B. *Offering miracles to those who are brought to us by the Holy Spirit.*
- C. *Overlooking the past mistakes of our brothers.*

When our frame of reference shifts so drastically that we can see everyone as equally lovable and equally loving, when we see that love is in us and everyone is the same as us, when we see one another as God sees us and has always seen us, so that the blessing we experience in one particular relationship is not limited to that relationship, it is no leap of logic to realize that *all* of our relationships are blessed (10:1). The entire Sonship profits from our blessing. We experience our oneness with that totality<sup>3</sup> (10:2).

In special relationships we think we are looking for love, but we don't know what love really is. *God defines love*. "The meaning of love is the meaning God gave to it" (10:3). Love is not what we think it is when we are looking to another person (who by definition is *separate* from us) to give it to us. Love is *in us*; we don't need to look outside!

God's love is not selective and limited, as ours is; it is universal and total. The love of God embraces "every brother" equally, no one less, no one more (10:5). If we try to somehow hold on to our limited perspective of love we will be unable to truly understand the love of God (10:4). There are aspects of God's love described here that we probably have difficulty grasping. For instance, the idea that God not only loves everyone equally, He *needs* all brothers and sisters equally (10:6). To me, this means that Oneness simply is not complete if any aspect of It is left out.

<sup>3</sup> "But see the Love of God in you, and you will see it everywhere because it *is* everywhere. See His abundance in everyone, and you will know that you are in Him with them. They are part of you, as you are part of God. You are as lonely without understanding this as God Himself is lonely when His Sons do not know Him. The peace of God is understanding this. There is only one way out of the world's thinking, just as there was only one way into it. Understand totally by understanding totality" (T-7.VII.10:4-10).

And what is true of God in that respect is also true of you and me: we need *absolutely everyone* (10:6). We are not complete unless everyone is included. In time, we express and accept the holy instant with one person after another as the Holy Spirit directs (10:7), yet when we do, we are in reality joining in oneness with God and everyone (10:8). There is no separation in Christ<sup>4</sup> (10:9).

I love the definition given here of “Christ”: “Christ is the Self the Sonship shares” (10:10). We read this identification of our Self with Christ over and over in the Course:

"I have no self except the Christ in me" (W-pII.354.1:2).

"Set in his holiness, the Christ in him proclaims Himself as you" (T-25.I.2:9).

"Christ waits for your acceptance of Him as yourself, and of His Wholeness as yours" (T-11.IV.7:3).

"Christ is God's Son as He created Him. He is the Self we share, uniting us with one another, and with God as well" (W-pI.pII.6.1:1-2).

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>Think you that you can judge the Self of God? <sup>2</sup>God has created It **beyond** judgment, out of **His** need to extend His Love. <sup>3</sup>With love in you, you **have** no need **except to extend it**. <sup>4</sup>In the holy instant there is no conflict of needs, for there is **only one**. <sup>5</sup>For the holy instant reaches to eternity, and to the Mind of God. <sup>6</sup>And it is only there love **has** meaning, and **only** there **can** it be understood.

### • Study Question •

*11. In our special relationships we experience many conflicting needs, leading us to fragment and to substitute one relationship for another. In the holy instant, we experience only one need. What is it?*

- A. To know our true Self*
- B. To extend love*
- C. To offer forgiveness*

Why do you suppose Jesus asks us if we think we can “judge the Self of God”? (11:1) Few of us have ever imagined that we were judging *God*. But if our Self is One Self, the Christ, shared by every one of us, and if *God* shares His Self with Christ, then when we judge a brother or sister we *are* judging “the Self of God.” That is what we are being

---

<sup>4</sup> “There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28 NRSV)

asked to become aware of: In judging my brother I am judging God. Jesus said much the same thing when on earth:

“And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’” (Matthew 25:40 NRSV)

Our Self, Jesus says, was “created...beyond judgment” (11:2). Once we recognize the Self in ourselves and others, all judgment will end. Like God, we will have no need but to extend love (11:2–3). *No need but to extend love!* “In the holy instant there is no conflict of needs, for there is *only one*” (11:4).

What does it feel like to have no need but extending love? Try to imagine it. Imagine interacting with your spouse or family while feeling and knowing that your only need in that moment is to extend love. Picture some recent moment of conflict—particularly a situation where your needs and their needs seemed to be in conflict—and imagine how you might have behaved or what you might have said if you had been willing in that moment to let go of your personal needs and to recognize that your *only* need was to extend love. To me, to feel no need but to love would be immensely liberating and empowering. There would be utterly no sense of any kind of lack. Instead there would be an awareness of an overflowing abundance, bubbling up and needing to burst forth, to give, to share, to embrace.

That’s the holy instant. It is a moment of alignment with the Mind of God (11:5). And only in that experience of profligate, unconditional inner giving can we begin to understand the Truth about Love (11:6).

## Answer Key

1. B (and possibly C, OK if C is included or omitted)
2. A, B and C
3. C
4. C
5. A, B and E
6. A and C. The other two answers are ambivalent; they could be substitutes, depending on how you are holding the situation in your mind. In my opinion, B is not a substitute as long as it is OK with you that your spouse doesn't like science fiction. You are not seeing their dislike as a lack and wishing they would change. D also does not seem to be a true substitute unless you harbor a grievance against your spouse for not wanting to study the Course, and view this as a lack in them you are trying to compensate for with someone else.
7. C. Actually all the answers are applicable, but C is the ego's real motivation, as is shown in sentences 2 and 3.
8. (a) We see one another as different because we grade them as to how well they match up to our personal needs. (b) Because the holy instant does not see the past, it does away with what we have taught ourselves about our imagined personal needs and how they must be met. Without this standard by which to evaluate our brothers, we see them as all the same.
9. C
10. A
11. B
12. Things the holy instant teaches us or accomplishes:
  - To suspend judgment entirely
  - Love's meaning
  - That it is not so that special aspects of the Sonship can give you more than others.
  - No one is special.
  - Seeing each relationship as it will be when perceived only in the present.
  - Brings all perception out of the past.
  - Shows you that love is in you.
  - Makes the Sonship one to you.
  - Unites you directly with God.
  - Shows you have only one need, and no conflicting needs.