

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 15, Section VII

### The Needless Sacrifice

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#### 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  
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### Overview of the Section

This is a key section on the topic of *special relationships*. It urges us to look at the ugly underpinnings of our special relationships, because only by looking at these relationships honestly and recognizing the ego's dark motives can we allow the holy instant to free us from them.

### Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>Beyond the poor attraction of the special love relationship, and **always** obscured by it, is the powerful attraction of the Father for His Son. <sup>2</sup>There is no **other** love that can satisfy you, because there *is* no other love. <sup>3</sup>This is the **only** love that is fully given **and fully returned**. <sup>4</sup>Being complete, it asks nothing. <sup>5</sup>Being wholly pure, everyone joined in it **has** everything. <sup>6</sup>This is **not** the basis for **any** [love] relationship in which the ego enters. <sup>7</sup>For **every** relationship on which the ego embarks *is* special.

#### • Study Question •

1. *Paragraph 1 consists of a contrast between special love and real love. It also says several things about real love, the love between the Father and the Son. Please list in your own words the several things that are said about real love.*
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The Course makes a fundamental assumption that, to paraphrase Saint Augustine, “There is a God-shaped blank in every human heart, and our hearts are restless until they rest in Him.” The attraction of love for love is all-powerful:

What God did not give you has no power over you, and the attraction of love for love remains irresistible  
(T-12.VIII.7:10).

Special love relationships are designed by the ego to obscure and interfere with our attraction to God and His to us (1:1). But only the love of God can satisfy us because there is no other love (1:2). It's not that our love for one another, or for things, somehow *interferes* with our love for God, or that loving God somehow blocks out all other loves. There simply *is no other* love. Love for God *includes* all there is, and it includes love for one another. In the Bible we read, "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen." (1 John 4:20 NRSV). If you love God you *must* love everyone because everyone is *in* God. It is only as we identify with that love that we can be satisfied, because we will have finally identified with the truth of our own being.

This divine love "is fully given *and fully returned*" (1:3). It is poured out without reservation or limitation, and when we tune in to it, it flows from us with equal lack of inhibition. It gives with no demands or expectations (1:4). It is an exuberant, extravagant exchange of blessings among equals (1:5), one complete being rapturously rejoicing with another complete being, sharing their completion together.

No ego relationship is like that! (1:6) All of the ego's "love" relationships are special (1:7). Unlike holy relationships, the giving and receiving is restrained, conditional, and limited. The "gifts" come with strings attached, with one lacking hoping to grab completion from another lacking being.

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The ego establishes relationships **only** to **get** something. <sup>2</sup>And it would keep the giver **bound to itself** through guilt. <sup>3</sup>It is impossible for the ego to enter into any relationship without anger, for the ego believes that **anger makes friends**. <sup>4</sup>This is **not** its statement, but it *is* its purpose. <sup>5</sup>For the ego **really believes** that it can get and **keep** by *making guilty*. <sup>6</sup>This is its **one** attraction; an attraction so weak that it would have no hold at all, except that **no one recognizes it**. <sup>7</sup>For the ego always **seems** to attract through love, and has no attraction at all to anyone who perceives that **it attracts through guilt**.

• Study Question •

2. *How, according to this paragraph, does the ego hold its relationships together by keeping people bound to itself through guilt?*
  - A. *The ego uses anger to make others feel guilty, and so to make them feel obligated to stay in the relationship.*
  - B. *The ego uses anger to make others feel guilty. This makes them stay because they are attracted to the guilt.*
  - C. *A and B*

The ego's only purpose in entering a relationship is to "get something" (2:1). It wants to make the other person guilty enough to coerce them into giving me (my ego) what I think I want; it uses guilt to chain them to me (2:2). This always involves anger; every ego relationship involves anger (2:3). The ego believes that if I get angry at you I can make you guilty enough to give me what I want (2:3). And of course you, feeling trapped by my manipulative laying on of guilt, also feel anger towards me, although your ego is actually *attracted* by the guilt (2:6–7). That sounds insane—no, it *is* insane!—but it's what nearly everyone does.

"Anger makes friends" is what the ego believes (2:3). *Anger makes friends?* That's nuts, isn't it? Of course the ego does not publicize this idea (2:4); if we become aware of what the ego is doing and why, the saner part of us would reject it out of hand. But this is what it believes. Here's how the ego thinks things work: I get angry at you and lay blame on you, causing you to feel guilty. As a result, you feel obligated to give me what my anger is asking for, and perhaps you do. Or perhaps not! Maybe you get angry in return, and make me feel guilty about being so demanding, so that I cave in about my demands out of guilt. Your ego is just playing the same anger game back at me. And this is how "anger makes friends." Really, though, it's more "frenemy" than "friend," isn't it?

The ego does all this in the name of love (2:7), sometimes almost tipping its hand when it has one of us say to the other, "If you really loved me you'd do" so-and-so. Sometimes we even say something like, "I only get so angry because I love you so much!" But, because the ego *craves* guilt and *needs* guilt to survive, it is guilt, not love, that is the glue holding its special relationships together. "Without guilt the ego has no life" (T-13.I.2:5).

If we recognized this (2:6) and perceived that our egos are attracting through guilt (2:7), we would see how crazy it is, and it would stop having any hold on us.

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>The sick attraction of guilt **must** be recognized **for what it is**. <sup>2</sup>For having been made **real** to you, it is essential to look at it clearly, and by withdrawing your **investment** in it, to **learn to let it go**. <sup>3</sup>No one would choose to let go what he believes has value. <sup>4</sup>Yet the attraction of guilt has value to you **only** because you have **not** looked at what it **is**, and have judged it [as **valuable**]

completely in the dark. <sup>5</sup>As we bring it to light, your **only** question will be why it was you **ever wanted** it. <sup>6</sup>You have **nothing** to lose by looking open-eyed [at this], for ugliness such as this belongs not in your holy mind. <sup>7</sup>The host of God can have no **real** investment here.

• Study Question •

3. *What does this paragraph counsel us to do in order to cure our sick attraction to guilt?*
- A. *To forgive the people we are trying to get and keep through guilt.*
  - B. *To realize that only by repenting will we be free of guilt.*
  - C. *To look at it for what it is, see its true ugliness and so withdraw our investment in it.*
  - D. *To bring it to the light and see its valuelessness.*
  - E. *C and D*

So that is our need: to recognize “the sick attraction of guilt...for what it is” (3:1). As he has so often done in recent chapters, Jesus is once again leading us to look squarely at what our ego is doing. We need to observe ourselves when we do this and tell ourselves, “This is *sick*.” We have made guilt real to ourselves, and we think we can *attract* people with guilt! We think this game works. And if the other person is as blinded by their ego as we are, *it does appear to work*—although if we think we are getting *love* by doing this we’re sadly mistaken. It is absolutely “essential to look at it clearly, and by withdrawing [our] *investment* in it, to *learn to let it go*” (3:2). As long as we think guilt ties them to us we won’t choose to stop doing it (3:3). Yet, the only reason we can possibly think it works is that we have not really looked at it; we have not shined the light on it (3:4). When we bring it into the open, we will be dumb-founded, and wonder why on earth we *ever wanted* it (3:5). We will realize this kind of thing is not what we want and does not bring us what we believe we need. It is *ugly*, and we are better than this; we are the holy children of God (3:6–7).

What you need to do, and what I need to do, is to be willing to do just this kind of radical self-examination in the context of our own special relationships. For the next week or two (at least), try to be conscious of the interchanges between you and the people you associate with or live with. Watch for the exchange of guilt, and when you see it, remember to tell yourself, “This is sick! I do not want this.” As Jesus says, “You have nothing to lose by looking open-eyed at this” (3:6). Yes, there has to be something to replace it; and of course there is. That will come. But you need to clean out the old way of thinking to make room for the new. The rest of this section probes deeper and deeper into the ugliness of the ego. It’s not fun, but it is *essential*. So stick with it.

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>We said before<sup>1</sup> that the ego attempts to maintain and **increase** guilt, but in such a way that you do **not** recognize what it would do to **you**. <sup>2</sup>For it is the ego's fundamental doctrine that what you do to others **you have escaped**. <sup>3</sup>The ego wishes **no one** well. <sup>4</sup>Yet its survival **depends** on your belief that **you** are exempt from its evil intentions. <sup>5</sup>It counsels, therefore, that if you are **host** to it, **it** will enable you to direct its anger outward, thus protecting **you**. <sup>6</sup>And thus it embarks on an endless, unrewarding chain of special relationships, forged out of anger and dedicated to but one insane belief; that the more anger you invest **outside** yourself, the safer **you** become.

### • Study Question •

4. *Imagine that a friend of yours borrows your car, sells it and tells you it was stolen. Your friend then takes the money and buys a car for himself. You find out about this and get very angry at him (what's more, he won't let you borrow his new car). Why, according to this paragraph, did you get angry at him?*
- A. *As a device to make him feel guilty so that he would give you the new car.*
  - B. *To make yourself safe from guilt by directing anger outside yourself.*
  - C. *Because he benefited at your expense.*
  - D. *Because your ego wanted to trick you into making yourself feel guilty.*
  - E. *B and D*
  - F. *A and C*

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1 "The ultimate purpose of projection is *always* to get rid of guilt. Yet, characteristically, the ego attempts to get rid of guilt *from its viewpoint only*, for much as the ego wants to *retain* guilt you find it intolerable, since guilt stands in the way of your remembering God, Whose pull is so strong that you cannot resist it. On this issue, then, the deepest split of all occurs, for if you are to retain guilt, as the ego insists, *you cannot be you*. Only by persuading you that *it* is you could the ego possibly induce you to *project* guilt, and thereby keep it in your mind.

"Yet consider how strange a solution the ego's arrangement is. You project guilt to get rid of it, but you are actually merely concealing it. You do experience the guilt, but you have no idea why. On the contrary, you associate it with a weird assortment of "ego ideals," which the ego claims you have failed. Yet you have no idea that you are failing the Son of God by seeing him as guilty. Believing you are no longer you, you do not realize that you are failing yourself" (T-13.II.1:1-2:6).

The paragraph begins with the words, “We said before.” The passage referred to is in the footnote (on the previous page). Take a moment to read it over. The sentence in 4:1 gives a brief summary of the key point: the ego is always feeding guilt, but hiding from you the fact that it is feeding *your* guilt as well as that of others. As we saw in the previous section, the fundamental cause of our guilt feelings is our belief (of which we are not conscious) that, by choosing to be separate selves, we have attacked God and, as it says in T-13.II.2:5, we have failed the Son of God by seeing him as guilty—all the time failing to realize that we are failing *ourselves* (T-13.II.2:6).

The paragraph then goes on to explain just how the ego tries to increase guilt in a way that we don't notice what it is doing to *us*. Start with this basic premise: “The ego wishes *no one* well” (4:3). Your ego wants to pour guilt on *everyone*, including you. But the ego isn't stupid, just insane. It knows that its very survival “*depends* on your belief that *you* are exempt from its evil intentions” (4:4). Therefore, your ego tries to convince you that “what you do to others *you have escaped*” (4:3). As the passage from Chapter 13 made clear, this refers to the way we project guilt onto others. As the ego turns up the volume on guilt within *you*, it convinces you that the reason you are feeling bad isn't *your* guilt, it's *theirs*. “You make me so angry!” we cry out as we dump our guilt on our relationship partners. The anger we feel, which is really *at ourselves*, we turn on others, convinced by our egos that by directing it outward we are protecting ourselves (4:5 & 4:6).

This is the ego's motivation for relationships: it views them as dumping grounds for anger and guilt. This is why, so often, we burn through one relationship after another without ever finding satisfaction and happiness. Despite repeated demonstrations that the ego's tactics don't work, we keep on believing that “the more anger [I] invest *outside* [myself], the safer [I] become” (4:6).

Does any of this seem familiar to you?

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>It is this chain that binds the Son of God to guilt, and it is this chain the Holy Spirit would **remove** from his holy mind. <sup>2</sup>For the chain of savagery belongs not around the chosen host of God, who **cannot** make himself host to the ego. <sup>3</sup>In the name of his release, and in the Name of Him Who would release him, let us look more closely at the relationships the ego contrives, and let the Holy Spirit judge them truly. <sup>4</sup>For it is certain that if you will **look** at them, you will offer them gladly **to** Him. <sup>5</sup>What **He** can make of them you do **not** know, but you **will** become willing to find out, if you are willing first to perceive what **you** have made of them.



• Study Question •

5. *Why, according to this paragraph, are we now going to look more closely at the relationships the ego contrives (there may be more than one right answer)?*
- A. *If we look, we will offer our relationships to the Holy Spirit.*
  - B. *If we look, we will become willing to find out what He would make of them.*
  - C. *If we look, we will become willing to accept the holy instant.*
  - D. *If we look, we will allow the Holy Spirit to extend to us our special function.*

The cycle of blame, anger, and guilt is what enslaves us to the ego, and this is that from which the Holy Spirit wants to free us (5:1). To me, this is the heart of *A Course in Miracles*. Its aim is to lead us to enlightenment through the means of holy relationships. Transforming our special love relationships into holy relationships is the primary mechanism of our spiritual path. In a recent book by Cynthia Bourgeault, *The Meaning of Mary Magdalene*, the author postulates that, “A reclaimed vision of Jesus and Mary Magdalene walking this [path of sacred relationship] allows us to honor and accept human intimate partnership as the very crucible of transformation” (Bourgeault, page 216). Whether or not one accepts the historicity of an intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary, the fact that a priest in a mainline Christian church (Episcopal) is describing relationship “as the very crucible of transformation” and the core of Jesus’s message affirms, for me, that the voice speaking in the Course is indeed that of Jesus, echoing the same truths and insights he taught us when he walked the earth.

The Course goes on to tell us that, as host to God, it’s impossible that we could become host to the ego. This attempt to gain love through attack, this “chain of savagery,” is completely incompatible with our true nature (5:2). Based on that incompatibility and appealing to God’s Name, Jesus calls us to “look more closely at the relationships the ego contrives,” and to “let the Holy Spirit judge them truly” (5:3). He repeats these appeals to us to *look* frequently because we have such a strong investment in *not looking*. Just think of how much popular music and movies celebrate the special love relationship, and hold it up as the epitome of happiness. Part of our minds, yours *and* mine, question the degree of Jesus’s abhorrence for special love relationships as “contrived” by the ego. “Can it really be *that* bad?” we wonder. “Doesn’t it have some redeeming value?” Or, as the old song by Sophie Tucker claimed, “Fifty million Frenchmen can’t be wrong”—can they? So we need to repeatedly be poked and prodded to “look more closely.”

Why? Because if we do look, what we see will convince us, and we will not hesitate to offer these relationships to the Holy Spirit to use for His purpose (5:4)—and His purpose is our release, as was affirmed in the preceding sentence (5:3). We don’t know yet just what the Holy Spirit will do with our relationships, what He can make of them,

but if we see clearly the horrific mess that the ego has made of them, we will be totally willing to find out what the Holy Spirit can do (5:5).

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>In one way or another, every relationship the ego makes is based on the idea that by **sacrificing** itself, **it becomes bigger**. <sup>2</sup>The “sacrifice,” which it regards as purification, is actually the root of its bitter resentment. <sup>3</sup>For it would [much] prefer to attack directly, and avoid delaying what it **really** wants. <sup>4</sup>Yet the ego acknowledges “reality” as it sees it, and recognizes that **no one** could interpret **direct** attack as love. <sup>5</sup>Yet to make guilty *is* direct attack, although it does not **seem** to be. <sup>6</sup>For the guilty **expect** attack, and having **asked** for it they are **attracted** to it.

### • Study Question •

6. *What does this paragraph say about why we "sacrifice" for someone else?*
- A. *Because the sacrifice makes the ego feel innocence, pure, as if it has paid off some guilt.*
  - B. *Because the ego knows that it won't get what it wants through direct attack and so it offers a "gift."*
  - C. *Because the sacrifice is designed to accomplish the ego's goal: make the other guilty. It does so because it is an expression of veiled anger, since the ego is angry over having to sacrifice, to give something up.*
  - D. *All of the above.*

So, having asked us to take a closer look at the relationships the ego has contrived, Jesus now begins to help us do just that.

To begin with, *sacrifice* is at the core of the ego's relationships. That is true of “every relationship the ego makes” (6:1). Love as sacrifice—it sounds familiar, doesn't it? The Course sees love and sacrifice as incompatible: "It is not love that asks a sacrifice" (T-29.Int.7:1). Later in this chapter, Jesus will tell us:

*Your confusion of sacrifice and love is so profound that you cannot conceive of love without sacrifice. And it is this that you must look upon; sacrifice is attack, not love (T-15.X.5:8-9).*

But we read stories of someone making great sacrifices for love and think it is “so romantic”. Many of us are familiar with the story by O. Henry, “The Gift of the Magi,” in which a couple sacrifice for one another and both end up losing; she sells her long hair to buy him a gold chain for his pocket watch, while he sells the watch to buy her a set of fancy combs for her hair! To me the story exposes the error of love as sacrifice. You can almost imagine the feelings the Course describes, of “bitter resentment” at the sacrifices being made. But to the ego, what it resents is not so much the loss of whatever is being



sacrificed as the delayed opportunity for *direct attack*, which it would much prefer to do (6:2–3). In other words, sacrifice is an *indirect attack*, because it fosters guilt in the recipient. When someone has sacrificed something for you, don't you feel a bit guilty in some way? Many people have told me that, when they followed traditional Christian beliefs such as "Jesus died for our sins," they felt somehow guilty that he had to suffer *for their sins*. It didn't seem fair (and it isn't fair!). Some even felt a bit *angry* at Jesus and God, thinking, "I didn't ask you to do that!" And that is exactly the dynamic that runs through the ego's special love relationships based on the idea that sacrificing makes us bigger persons, it makes us *more special*.

Think too of the times you have been trying to win someone's favor, perhaps flattering them, giving them gifts, doing things you know they will like, in hopes that they will end up giving you something you want in return. Have you ever at such times felt yourself wishing that they would just give you what you want without your having to make so many little sacrifices?

But the ego "acknowledges 'reality' as it sees it, and recognizes that *no one* could interpret *direct attack* as love" (6:4). To just *take* or *steal* what you want would be direct attack. So it sacrifices, delaying the direct attack and making what it considers an *indirect attack* instead. "Yet to make guilty *is* direct attack" (6:5), and that is exactly what sacrifice does! It doesn't *seem* to be direct attack, but it is (6:5).

The final line (6:6) may be difficult to understand because it expresses an idea that at first seems unbelievable: that we are *attracted to attack*. We all realize that there are *some* people who seem to be attracted to direct attack, people who choose to enter and to remain in abusive relationships. If we have considered why people do that, it often seems that the abused person has such low self-esteem that they feel they *deserve* the abuse, or perhaps they feel they are sacrificing out of love, wanting to help or heal the abuser. In relationships such as that, the dynamic the Course is talking about here is plain to see. The person is literally attracted to attack. What isn't so apparent is that the same dynamic is at work in every special relationship of the ego. We all carry subterranean guilt stemming from our belief that we are separate from God, and we "*expect attack*." We subconsciously believe we deserve punishment and so, because of that, we are attracted to it.

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>In such [In these] insane relationships, the attraction of what you do **not** want seems to be much stronger than the attraction of what you **do** want. <sup>2</sup>For each one thinks that he has **sacrificed** something to the other, **and hates him for it**. <sup>3</sup>Yet this is what he thinks he **wants**. <sup>4</sup>He is **not** in love with the other at all. <sup>5</sup>He merely believes he is **in love with sacrifice**. <sup>6</sup>And **for** this sacrifice, which he **demand**s [demanded] **of himself**, he demands that the other **accept** the guilt and **sacrifice himself** as well. <sup>7</sup>Forgiveness becomes impossible, for the ego believes that to forgive another **is to lose him**. <sup>8</sup>[For] It is only by attack **without**

forgiveness that the ego can ensure the guilt that holds **all** its relationships together.

• **Study Question** •

7. *When someone wrongs you and you “sacrifice for love,” choosing to put up with the injury, why do you do it, according to this paragraph? Is it really because you love the other person?*
- A. *Because you are attracted to, in love with, sacrifice.*
  - B. *Because you want the other person to feel guilty and thus obligated to sacrifice back.*
  - C. *Because to really forgive the other person would relieve them of guilt, which you do not want to do.*
  - D. *Because you know that such a generous act will probably bring reward in some way for you.*
  - E. *A and B*
  - F. *A, B and C.*

In 7:1, “what you do *not* want” is referring to attack, guilt, and sacrifice, and “what you *do* want” refers to love. The Course is telling us that, when we consider our relationships from the perspective of the ego, we actually find attack more attractive than love! You are not in love with the other person, but are in love with and attracted to sacrifice (7:4–5). That may be hard to believe, but Jesus goes on to explain why it is so.

It is important to realize that all of this is speaking *within the context of an ego-driven special relationship*. These are the dynamic forces in relationships when people are living from their egos, and not from spirit. And most likely it applies to you.

None of us likes to admit it, but when we “give up” something—anything, really—for the sake of a person we “love,” deep within us there is a core of anger and resentment at being asked to sacrifice (7:2). For instance, when a parent gives up going to a party in order to stay home and mind the children, at a certain level, he or she feels some anger toward the children. What the Course is getting at here is that, for our egos, it is the sacrifice and anger that motivates us. *They* are what we, as egos, want, and not the love of our children. This does not mean that such acts of “sacrifice” are wrong, only that when we are living from our egos, we engage in these actions for the wrong reasons. The whole notion of sacrifice is an ego notion. There is no sacrifice in God because there is no loss; loss is impossible. But to our egos, sacrifice is what we demand of ourselves; it is what the ego wants and loves (7:6) because it justifies us in demanding that the other person accept the guilt of our sacrifice for them, and obligates them to sacrifice in return.

In such a frame of mind there is no place for forgiveness because that lets the other person off the hook (7:7), and the “hook” was the whole point of the sacrifice! The ego believes that it can enslave other people to itself by making them guilty! (7:8) Guilt is the glue that holds the relationship together, so to forgive would be to lose the relationship.

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>Yet they only *seem* to be together. <sup>2</sup>For relationships, to the ego, mean **only** that **bodies** are together. <sup>3</sup>It is always ~~this~~ [*physical closeness*] that the ego demands, and it does not object where the **mind** goes or what it thinks, for this seems unimportant. <sup>4</sup>As long as the **body** is there to receive its sacrifice, it is content. <sup>5</sup>To the ego **the mind is private**, and only the body **can** be shared. <sup>6</sup>Ideas are basically of no concern, except as they bring the **body** of another closer or farther. <sup>7</sup>And it is in these terms that it evaluates ideas as good or bad. <sup>8</sup>What makes another guilty **and holds him through guilt** is “good.” <sup>9</sup>What releases him **from** guilt is “bad,” because he would no longer believe that **bodies** communicate, and so he would be “gone.”

### • Study Question •

8. *The ego sees relationships as bodies being together. What is the importance of ideas in this perspective?*
- A. *They are only important insofar as they bring the body of another nearer or farther.*
  - B. *They are only valuable insofar as they make another feel guilty and so keep his body around.*
  - C. *They help you come up with plans and strategies for how to keep the other person's body close to yours.*
  - D. *They are unimportant, because they get in the way of direct experience.*
  - E. *A and B*
  - F. *A, B and C*

Clearly we are continuing the thought of the previous paragraph: “Yet *they*,” that is, the ego’s relationships, “only *seem* to be together.” (8:1). The people may be together *physically* but not *mentally*, not in the realm of shared ideas (8:2, 5). As Jesus puts it a little later in speaking of people in the ego’s special relationships:

*"And so they wander through a world of strangers, unlike themselves, living with their bodies perhaps under a common roof that shelters neither; in the same room and yet a world apart" (T-22.Int.2:8).*

In the previous section we saw that ideas are the real language of communication between minds. But all the ego is concerned with is keeping bodies together (8:2). How can two minds truly be together if the glue holding them in the relationship is guilt. Each is somehow *obligated* to the other because of their reciprocal sacrifices. And to the ego, that’s enough: As long as the other person’s body is there to receive my sacrifice, I’m content (8:4).

If we are thinking and acting on the premise that “the mind is private” and that minds really cannot be shared, we are engaging in the ego’s kind of relationships (8:5). Only

bodies can be shared, and ideas are of no value except as they serve to “bring the body of another closer” (8:6). “Good” ideas make someone else guilty and forges chains of obligation that keeps them close. Anything that releases them from guilt, such as forgiveness, is “bad.” To the ego, if I forgive someone I have just left the barn door open so they can escape (8:8–9).

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Suffering and sacrifice are the gifts with which the ego would “bless” all unions. <sup>2</sup>And those who are united at its altar **accept** suffering and sacrifice as the **price** of union. <sup>3</sup>In their angry alliances, born of the fear of loneliness and yet dedicated to the **continuance** of loneliness, each seeks **relief** from guilt by **increasing** it in the other. <sup>4</sup>For each believes that this **decreases** guilt in him. <sup>5</sup>The other seems always to be attacking and wounding him, perhaps in little ways, perhaps “unconsciously,” yet never without demand of sacrifice. <sup>6</sup>The fury of those joined at the ego’s altar far exceeds your awareness of it. <sup>7</sup>For what the ego really wants [**guilt**] you do **not** realize.

### • Study Question •

9. *This passage can seem to be too hard on our relationships. Why does it seem like it is exaggerating, perhaps even describing someone else's relationships?*
- A. *It is exaggerating in order to make a point; it is trying to shock us out of our complacency.*
  - B. *It is describing the relationships of those who have not yet found the Course, or a comparable spiritual path.*
  - C. *It is not exaggerating, because the ego's fury in our relationships far exceeds our awareness of it.*
  - D. *It was speaking personally to Helen and Bill and does not necessarily describe the relationships of others.*

So, rather than forgiveness and love, the ego pronounces the “blessing” of suffering and sacrifice on our relationships (9:1). Most of us can recognize that many, if not all, of our relationships have been sources of suffering and have included many painful experiences. We tend to consider the pain as the dues we pay for the benefits of being united with another person (9:2). The benefits, we think, outweigh the costs, which seem to be necessary. It seems as if this is just how relationships work.

Meanwhile, with anger at the guilt and sacrifice the other imposes on us still simmering under the surface, but afraid of being alone (although the way we engage in relationship really just increases our loneliness), we try to project our guilt on one another (9:3), in the belief that doing so somehow diminishes our own guilt (9:4). In fact, our guilt increases, but our egos convince us it’s the other person’s fault. The other person

always seems to be asking sacrifice in some way, perhaps small ways, but always there are little attacks and wounds (9:5).

All of this is buried quite deeply in our unconscious. In any ego-based special love relationship, “the fury [of the two involved] far exceeds your awareness of it” (9:6). We just don’t know how deep it goes, but that’s exactly why you are being asked to watch for it, to notice when what either you do, or what your partner in the relationship does, is aimed at producing guilt or deflecting it (9:7).

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>Whenever you are angry, you can be sure that you have formed a special relationship which the ego has “blessed,” for anger *is* its blessing. <sup>2</sup>Anger takes many forms, but it cannot long deceive those who will learn that **love brings no guilt at all**, and what brings guilt **cannot** be love and *must* be anger. <sup>3</sup>All anger is nothing more than an attempt to **make someone feel guilty**, and this attempt is the **only** basis the ego accepts for special relationships. <sup>4</sup>Guilt is the only need the ego has, and as long as you identify **with** it, guilt will remain **attractive** to you. <sup>5</sup>Yet remember this; to be **with a body is not** communication. <sup>6</sup>And if you think it **is**, you will feel guilty about **communication** and will be **afraid** to hear the Holy Spirit, recognizing in His Voice your **own** need to communicate.

### • Study Question •

*10. Keeping in mind that anger's purpose is to make someone feel guilty, what is the main form of expressing anger that this section has discussed so far?*

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What’s the sign your ego has sucked you into a special relationship? Simple: anger. “Whenever you are angry” you’ve been “blessed” by the ego (10:1). Anger produces guilt in its target. When someone gets angry with me, I tend to feel guilty. That’s just a normal reaction. Or maybe I should say, guilt is the *expected* reaction. Producing guilt is the purpose of getting angry (10:3), and making people feel guilty is the ego’s goal in every relationship.

When you feel angry, you *want* the other person to feel guilty. You may not be conscious of it, but you do. Have you ever gotten angry at someone and then found your anger multiplied when they *did not* exhibit any guilt about it? But anger isn’t love: “What brings guilt *cannot* be love and *must* be anger” (10:2). Love does not produce guilt—*ever* (10:2). If we can just learn that, believe that, and accept that, we won’t be fooled by the ego’s temptations to anger. As the Course declares, “Anger is *never* justified” (T-30.VI.1:1). We need to look honestly at the ways we allow anger into our special relationships, and to realize that every time we do, we’ve capitulated to the ego. We have identified with our ego, and have chosen anger in order to make someone feel guilty. I think that, when the Course says that “guilt will remain *attractive* to you” (10:4), there are two ways that can be applied and understood. It’s clear than when I get anger I

will find guilt in the other person to be attractive; it's the desired response I am seeking. But this also means that if I identify with my ego I will be attracted to a person who makes *me* feel guilty.

Anger isn't a *sin*, or anything to be guilty about! But it is a warning flag, a signal that we need to pay attention to our consciousness and to recognize that, "I must have decided wrongly, because I am not at peace" (T-5.VII.6:7). I've mistaken myself for an ego.

Sentence 5 seems to be abruptly returning to an earlier topic about the body and communication. Notice, however, that the sentence begins with the linking word "yet." It's a conjunction here, equivalent to saying "but" or "nevertheless." So, try it this way: "Guilt is the only need the ego has, and as long as you identify *with* it, guilt will remain *attractive* to you. Nevertheless, remember this; to be *with a body* is not communication." What's the tie-in between guilt and communication? I think it is the fact that, in ego relationships, much of our communication consists of anger and guilt, attempting to keep the other person's body with us—to keep them in the relationship using guilt. And so we end up feeling guilt *about communication* because we subconsciously associate it with anger and guilt (10:6). The result of a general guilt about such misconceived communication is that we will fear any communication from the Holy Spirit, sure that His only purpose can be *to make us guilty*, because that is what *we imagine* our need is in communication. We communicate to make guilty, so He must do the same!

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>The Holy Spirit **cannot** teach through fear. <sup>2</sup>And how can He communicate with you, while you believe that to communicate is to **make yourself alone**? <sup>3</sup>It is **clearly** insane to believe that by communicating you will be abandoned. <sup>4</sup>And yet ~~many do~~ [you do] believe it. <sup>5</sup>For ~~they think their minds~~ [you think that your minds] must be kept **private** or ~~they~~ [you] will **lose** them, but if ~~their~~ [your] **bodies** are together ~~their~~ [your] minds remain ~~their~~ [your] own. <sup>6</sup>The union of bodies thus becomes the way in which ~~they~~ [you] would **keep minds apart**. <sup>7</sup>For bodies cannot forgive. <sup>8</sup>They can only do as the mind directs.



• Study Question •

11. *In an ego-based special relationship, when one person seeks physical closeness with their partner, what is the real motivation of their ego in doing so?*

- A. *The ego wants to make the other guilty.*
- B. *The ego thinks that if you join your bodies you will keep your mind private and intact.*
- C. *The ego wants you to stay separate from this person mentally.*
- D. *To warm your feet.*
- E. *B and C*
- F. *A, B and C*

I can almost hear Jesus saying, “Really? You think the Holy Spirit is angry at you and wants you to feel guilty? *Really?* ‘The Holy Spirit *cannot* teach through fear” (11:1). That’s what the ego thinks it can do, but it does not work, and the Holy Spirit does not work that way. Forget *that* as a reason to be afraid of listening to His Voice.

Another reason we avoid true communication is we think that, being mind-to-mind communion, it will cause us to be abandoned, which is “*clearly* insane” (11:2-3). “Yet you *do* believe it” (11:4). Oddly, this reminds me of the famous joke by Groucho Marx: “I don’t want to belong to any club that would accept me as one of its members.” Our ego has convinced us of our unworthiness. We’re sure that if our mind were open to another mind (or to the Holy Spirit) the result would be (and *should* be) total rejection! So we want to keep our minds private, and we settle for just keeping our bodies together (11:5). We are actually substituting bodily union for true union of minds, and we use the one to *prevent* the other (11:6).

To experience true union we must forgive, but “bodies cannot forgive” (11:7). If the mind is using anger to produce guilt in an attempt to hold the relationship together, all the body can do is follow suit, acting out the awful drama, and perpetuating the separation of our minds.

## Paragraph 12

12. <sup>1</sup>The illusion of the autonomy of the body and **its** ability to overcome loneliness is but the working of the ego’s plan to establish its **own** autonomy. <sup>2</sup>As long as you believe that to be with a body is companionship, you will be **compelled** to attempt to keep your brother **in** his body, **held there by guilt**. <sup>3</sup>And you will see **safety in guilt** and **danger in communication**. <sup>4</sup>For the ego will **always** teach that loneliness is solved by guilt, and that communication is the **cause** of loneliness. <sup>5</sup>And despite the evident insanity of this lesson, ~~many~~ **[you] have learned it**.

• Study Question •

12. *The ego sees safety in guilt--for it can solve loneliness--and sees danger in communication--for it causes loneliness. How does communication cause loneliness?*

- A. *We think that communication means getting bodies together. This causes loneliness because it keeps minds apart, thus making them lonely.*
- B. *Communication here refers to the real joining of minds. We think this joining will cause loneliness because we will lose our identity, and being without identity is a kind of loneliness or incompleteness.*
- C. *We think that communication causes loneliness because it releases the other person from the guilt that keeps them bound to us.*



Most people think that, operating as a separate body with a separate mind, we can somehow overcome loneliness. If we just find the right person or the right group, if we just figure how to get people to give us what we need and figure out what they need that we can afford to give to them (although it may seem like a sacrifice), we can achieve true companionship and stop feeling lonely. But that's an illusion. It's nothing more than the ego's plan to perfect its *autonomy*, which means self-determination and independence—in other words, to stand completely alone! (12:1).

The ego is twisting relationships into a way of achieving *independence*, not *companionship*. It convinces us that “to be with a body is companionship” (12:2). That causes us to use guilt to “keep your brother *in his body*” (12:2). That's a puzzling phrase, and frankly I'm not sure I understand it. I doubt very much that it means we are trying to use guilt to keep our partner from leaving his or her body in the sense of dying. Perhaps what it means is that, since I believe that I am a mind *in a body*, I don't want anyone I am relating with to think anything different, that is, to realize that they are not a body, but a mind that isn't bound by a body. Anyone who realizes that has escaped from my (my ego's) clutches! So I will see “safety in guilt,” which keeps the other bound to their material form, and “danger in communication,” because it would liberate the other from the chains of guilt I've been using to hold onto them (12:3).

Bottom line ego lesson? “Loneliness is solved by guilt, and communication is the cause of loneliness.” Maybe we find it hard to believe that we, or anyone, would ever listen to such absurdity. But Jesus thinks otherwise: “And despite the evident insanity of this lesson, *you have learned it*” (12:5). The practical point of all this is that if we will try to objectively observe ourselves and those with whom we relate, we will discover that the things we say and do betray the fact that we *have* learned this insane lesson!

## Paragraph 13

13. <sup>1</sup> Forgiveness lies in communication as surely as damnation lies in guilt. <sup>2</sup> It is the Holy Spirit's teaching function to instruct those who believe
--

communication to be damnation that communication is salvation. <sup>3</sup>And He will do so, for the power of God in Him **and you** is joined in a **real** relationship so holy and so strong, that it can overcome even this **without** fear.

• **Study Question** •

13. *What comes from the true joining of minds?*

- A. *Forgiveness.*
- B. *Damnation.*
- C. *Guilt.*
- D. *Salvation.*
- E. *A and D*
- F. *B and C*

If the ego's lesson is that loneliness is solved by guilt, and communication is the cause of loneliness, the Holy Spirit teaches the exact opposite: "Forgiveness lies in communication as surely as damnation lies in guilt" (13:1). The Holy Spirit has a tough job! His function is to teach the exact opposite of what our ego has taught us, and because of that, our minds rebel when we first hear these truths. Yet surely there is something in us that recognizes the sanity of the Spirit's lesson and the *insanity* of the ego's. *Of course* communication leads to forgiveness and is impossible without it. *Of course* guilt pulls us down to damnation. These things make sense, don't they?

So, the Holy Spirit *will* instruct us in these things; it is His function. And He has been joined with us, by the power of God, "in a *real* relationship so holy and so strong, that it can overcome even this," that is, the deeply imbedded lessons of the ego, "*without* fear" (13:3), which to me implies without use of any anger or guilt. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is gentle and compassionate. There is no judgment of our insane beliefs and behavior, just a persistent, gentle yet powerful nudging that constantly moves us toward the light.

## Paragraph 14

14. <sup>1</sup>It is through the holy instant that what **seems** impossible is **accomplished**, making it evident that it is **not** impossible. <sup>2</sup>In the holy instant guilt holds **no** attraction, since communication **has been** restored. <sup>3</sup>And guilt, whose **only** purpose is to **disrupt** communication, **has** no function here. <sup>4</sup>Here there is no concealment, and no private thoughts. <sup>5</sup>The **willingness** to communicate attracts communication **to** it, and overcomes loneliness completely. <sup>6</sup>There is complete forgiveness here, for there is no desire to exclude **anyone** from your completion, in sudden recognition of the value of his part in it. <sup>7</sup>In the protection of **your** wholeness, all are invited and made welcome. <sup>8</sup>And you understand that **your** completion is God's, Whose only need is to have you be complete. <sup>9</sup>For your completion **makes** you His [**completion**] in **your**

awareness. <sup>10</sup>And here it is that you experience yourself as you were created, **and as you are.**

• **Study Question** •

14. *How does the Holy Spirit teach us the true nature and purpose of relationships, and teach us how to let go of the view of relationships that is based on anger, guilt, sacrifice and bodies?*

- A. *Very carefully.*
- B. *Through the power of forgiveness.*
- C. *Through the holy instant.*
- D. *Through God's completion.*
- E. *Through our private thoughts.*

•

And so, we return to the holy instant. It becomes the *means* by which the Holy Spirit accomplishes the seemingly impossible (14:1): instructing “those who believe communication to be damnation that communication is salvation” (13:2). To me, this simply means that when I experience a holy instant, I have a glimpse or preview of Heaven. The repeated experiences of holy instants eventually begins to crack through the heavy walls of ego resistance, and I begin to be willing to experience full mind-to-mind communication. I begin to willingly allow myself to truly join with other minds, and stop my insane protection of my solitude.

As we begin to watch our minds and discover how deeply the tentacles of the ego have buried themselves in our ways of thinking, feeling, and interacting with others, we may despair that we can ever unravel or uproot the ego. We may fear that the cancer of the ego has metastasized and spread too far, and that our spiritual condition is terminal. The good news is that what appears to be impossible *is not impossible*. The holy instant proves that to us. In the holy instant we experience, for a moment, what true communication is, what Oneness is. The addiction to guilt just drops away, since its only purpose is to *disrupt* the Oneness (14:2-3). We experience a true union of minds, nothing hidden, no private thoughts (14:4).

The holy instant comes when we are willing for it, willing for real communication, and all sense of separation vanishes, and with it loneliness (14:5). Our perception of one another shifts dramatically and we no longer judge; there is no desire to exclude anyone because we recognize the value of everyone (14:6). We are celebrating our wholeness and our completion, and that which we celebrate includes all of the Sonship (14:7). The Oneness we experience includes God Himself, and we recognize our part in God's completion; indeed, we see that *our* completion and *God's* completion are intricately connected. My being complete is an essential part of God's being complete (14:8-9). This is the reality of what we are as God's creations (14:10).

One can easily understand how such an experience, even for a brief instant, can effect a radical shift in a person's awareness. Having tasted Oneness we *know* Oneness exists,

and is in fact the essence of What Is, the underlying bedrock of Reality, the truth that is hidden by all our illusions. The illusions no longer can deceive us. We've seen behind the curtain; we know the Truth. We don't simply know the Truth as a mental concept—we *know* the Truth directly. Oh, we can still get sucked in by the illusions, but we cannot *stay* fooled by them. We slap our forehead and mutter, "What am I thinking? This isn't the way things *really* are!" And we know, for sure, that the total change of mind that once seemed to be impossible is *not* impossible. It's within our grasp. And so we forge ahead, more willing than ever to do the work, the daily practice, that will flush the ego's nonsense from our minds and enable us to live forever in the Holy Instant.

• **Study Question** •

15. *As a partial summary of this section, please take the following topics, in order, and describe how they are linked together to form a single overall process, which the ego employs in its relationships.*

*--the desire to get*

*--making a sacrifice*

*--expressing anger*

*--instilling guilt*

*--the return sacrifice*

*--bringing and keeping the body of the other close to ours*

•

## Answer Key

2. C

3. E

4. E

5. A and B

6. D

7. F

8. E

9. C

10. sacrifice

11. E

12. C

13. E

14. C

15. Based on the desire to get, the ego makes a sacrifice for another. This sacrifice is really an expression of anger, for the ego hates the loss entailed. This anger is designed to make the other person feel guilty so that he will sacrifice in return, especially in the form of keeping his body in the vicinity.