

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 15, Section X

The Time of Rebirth

Legend:

blue text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

light blue text = editorial comments

~~striketrough-blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

The previous section ended by speaking about the tremendous, overpowering attraction we have for the Eternal, that is, for God. Section VIII told us that our only real relationship is with God. That relationship is what we are really seeking in the special relationships we have substituted for it. Once we are free from our attraction to the body, no longer valuing it “as a means of getting anything” (T-15.IX.7:1), the reality of our relationship with God becomes “the only truth you could ever want” (T-15.IX.7:5).

Section X continues the thoughts of the previous section without any real break. It begins by reminding us that in time we *can* delay the realization of our relationship with God. It then segues from speaking about the ability of the Holy Spirit to use both *time* and *seasons* for His holy purposes to speaking specifically about “the time of Christ,” that is, the season of Christmas. This section was dictated in December, 1966, so Christmas was apparently on Helen’s mind. In this section and the next, Jesus shows us how the season of Christmas can illustrate the lessons he has been trying to teach us concerning communication, the body, and freedom from the idea of sacrifice.

See also Lesson 343.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹It is in your power, **in time**, to delay the perfect union of the Father and the Son. ²For in this world, the attraction of guilt **does** stand between them. ³Neither time nor season means anything in eternity. ⁴But here it is the Holy Spirit’s function to use them both, though **not** as the ego uses them. ⁵This is the season when you would celebrate my birth into the world. ⁶Yet you know not how to do it. ⁷Let the Holy Spirit teach you, and let **me** celebrate *your* birth through Him. ⁸The only gift I can accept of you is the gift I **gave** to you. ⁹~~Release me as I choose your own release~~ [Release *me* as I willed *your* release]. ¹⁰The time of Christ we celebrate **together**, for it **has** no meaning if we are apart.

• Study Question •

1. *In the holy instant we briefly experience the “union of the Father and the Son,” but in time we are learning to make that union “perfect” or permanent in our awareness, gradually letting go of our attraction to guilt, which interferes with the experience of union. How is Christmas, “the time of Christ,” a symbol of this union?*
 - A. *Christmas celebrates the birth of Christ into the world, which is what is occurring in us.*
 - B. *Christmas is a time of the giving of gifts.*
 - C. *Jesus's birth was the moment when mankind was released.*

I want to call your attention to the fact that this paragraph and Paragraph 4 both begin with the phrase, “It is in your power.” For now, just notice that. Both paragraphs have something to do with time. We'll look more closely at the contrast between the two paragraphs when we get to Paragraph 4.

Here, Jesus says that *in the context of time* it is within our power to delay our experience of union with God (1:1). When he says it is in our power to delay the union, it cannot mean that we can delay the actual *union*, because that union already *is*; what can be delayed is our experience of the union. That's why the emphasis is on the words “in time.” In eternity there can be no delay; in fact, the very concept of delay is time-based. Any sort of delay requires time in which the delay occurs.

What comes between Father and Son to prevent the experience of union? Guilt, and our love of guilt (1:2). Remember that “love of guilt” has two faces: on the one hand, the ego itself actually craves guilt because it seems to grant reality to the ego's identity as separate from God; on the other hand, the ego loves guilt as a tool it uses to chain other people to itself by means of sacrifice. “Look what I've done for you; you *have to* love me!” What we do not realize is that the ego uses our projection of guilt onto others to increase our own guilt, under the guise of getting rid of guilt. So our love of guilt keeps us away from God.

In the third sentence there is an abrupt shift to talking about time and seasons, beginning with the fact that neither one means anything in eternity (1:3). As I said above, the shift is to use the season of Christmas as an illustration or analogy of how the Holy Spirit wants us to learn to transcend our attraction to guilt in order to perfect and fulfill our attraction to God. The Holy Spirit can use special seasons like Christmas if we open to a new way of looking at them, a different way than the ego looks (1:4).

It isn't the main point here, but I think it is interesting that the Course gives a positive spin on things like spiritual holidays such as Christmas and Easter. But the way it looks at them is “*not* as the ego uses them.” We all can probably think of dozens of ways that people's egos use Christmas, for instance. Some people try to give a better gift than anyone else gives, and it fits right into the “sacrifice for guilt” strategy of the ego. Other people look on Christmas as a time to “get” a lot of stuff. Then there are all the family

interactions involving guilt transactions. I think you know what I mean. That is not how the Holy Spirit sees Christmas.

Jesus begins by pointing out the obvious: Christmas is “the season when you would celebrate my birth into the world” (1:5). The birthday of Jesus; that’s what it’s about, right? Of course. But, he says, we don’t really know how to do it (1:6)! It’s not about making a big deal about Jesus, about the wise men and the shepherds and the angels we have heard on high. It’s as much about celebrating *our* birth as celebrating *his* (1:7). It’s a *mutual* celebration (1:10). It’s about giving back to Jesus the gift he gave to us: complete forgiveness and release from guilt (1:8–9). It is about joining with him as one in the Sonship.

Can you picture Jesus saying to you, “Christmas has no meaning if we are apart”? (1:9)

How can *we* release *Jesus*? The Course elsewhere offers some clues:

Walking with him is just as natural as walking with a brother whom you knew since you were born, for such indeed he is. Some bitter idols have been made of him who would be only brother to the world. Forgive him your illusions, and behold how dear a brother he would be to you. For he will set your mind at rest at last and carry it with you unto your God (C-5..Int.5:6-9).

We can forgive Jesus for *our* illusions about him, the “bitter idols” we have seen in him. For instance, the vision of him as the one who took our punishment from God, which indebted us to him forever. (There is even a gospel hymn that says, “Jesus paid it all; all to him I owe”!) Or the god-being, already perfect and free from all our limitations, who asks poor, weak us to “be perfect even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Forgive him *that*, and learn to see him as “him who would be only brother to the world.”

[Jesus speaking]: Forgive me, then, today. And you will know you have forgiven me if you behold your brother in the light of holiness. He cannot be less holy than can I, and you can not be holier than he (W-pII.288.2:1-3).

How do we know we have released him or forgiven him? You will see your brother “in the light of holiness,” one who “cannot be less holy than” Jesus. I think that when we recognize Jesus as our brother, someone just like us who learned to remember God and who now wants nothing more than to help us to do the same thing—and *not* some exalted, impossibly perfect being who is preparing to come back to the world to judge and punish all the sinners!—when we can see him as holy because that’s how God created him, just as He created us, it opens the way for us to see everyone in the same light. And seeing your brother in that light is your Christmas gift to Jesus!

Let me be to you the symbol of the end of guilt, and look upon your brother as you would look on me. Forgive me all the sins you think the Son of God committed. And in the light of your forgiveness he will remember who he is, and forget what never was. I ask for your forgiveness, for if you are guilty, so must I be. But if I surmounted guilt and overcame the world, you were with me. Would

you see in me the symbol of guilt or of the end of guilt, remembering that what I signify to you you see within yourself (T-19.IV.6:1-6).

How do you see Jesus? As the symbol of guilt (Jesus on the cross), or as the symbol of the *end* of guilt?

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The holy instant is truly the time of Christ. ²For in this liberating instant no guilt is laid upon the Son of God, and his unlimited power is thus restored to him. ³What **other** gift can you offer me, when ~~only this I choose~~ [*only this I will*] to offer **you**? ⁴And to see me is to see me in everyone, and offer everyone the gift you offer me. ⁵I am as incapable of receiving sacrifice as God is, and every sacrifice you ask of **yourself** you ask of me. ⁶Learn **now** that sacrifice of **any** kind is nothing but a **limitation imposed on giving**. ⁷And **by** this limitation you have limited [*your*] acceptance of the gift I offer **you**.

• Study Question •

2. *The holy instant is the true Christmas, the time of Christ. Jesus speaks here of our giving him a gift, but this gift is not a sacrifice (not something we give up). What is the gift he speaks of our giving? (There may be more than one correct answer.)*
- A. *The gift is the holy instant of release from all guilt, which is the same gift he offers us.*
- B. *The gift is our willingness to give up all the things that do not belong in our lives.*
- C. *The gift is receiving Christ into our hearts.*
- D. *The gift is seeing Christ in everyone, and offering the holy instant to them.*

Christmas is traditionally “the time of Christ,” but Jesus tells us that the true time of Christ is the holy instant (2:1), thus bringing this around and back to the subject of the chapter. Christmas is a time of gift-giving, but the real gift is to release another person from guilt, restoring him or her to the unlimited power that they had lost to guilt (2:2). This is the gift Jesus offers us, and the only one he wants us to offer each other (2:3).

He says, “To see me is to see me in everyone” (2:4). We are recognizing the innocence and holiness of Jesus, and we are seeing that present in everyone (2:4). Neither Jesus nor God wants any sacrifice from us! (2:5). When he adds, “and every sacrifice you ask of *yourself* you ask of me,” he seems to be addressing the issue of our making sacrifices for other people (thus obligating them to reciprocate). When we do that, we are asking those other people to sacrifice as well, and indirectly, we are asking Jesus to sacrifice too. When we sacrifice we ask *everyone* to sacrifice. Is this how we should

celebrate Christmas? Or should we, instead, free everyone from their guilt, releasing them from their past, and so experience the holy instant?

Sacrifice isn't giving; it is "a *limitation imposed on giving*" (2:6). It's giving with strings attached, asking for sacrifice in return. When we engage in this kind of limited giving, we've limited what we can *receive* of the gift of Christ (2:7).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹We who are one cannot give separately. ²When you are willing to accept **our** relationship **as real**, guilt will hold **no** attraction for you. ³For in **our** union you will accept **all** of our brothers. ⁴The gift of union is the only gift that I was born to give. ⁵Give it to **me**, that **you** may have it. ⁶The time of Christ is the time appointed for the gift of freedom, offered to everyone. ⁷And by **your** acceptance of it, you offer it **to** everyone.

• Study Question •

3. "Our relationship" (10:2) refers to our relationship with Jesus. He says that he was born to give us only one gift. How is that gift described in this paragraph? (There is more than one correct answer.)
- A. The gift of union
 - B. The gift of freedom
 - C. The gift of true relationship

Sentence 3:1 is summing up what has just been said: If our giving is limited, Jesus's giving to us will be limited as well. We cannot "give separately." This paragraph gets downright personal with Jesus. He asks us to accept our relationship—"we who are one"—with him *as real*, and says that when we do so, guilt will no longer attract us (3:2). How so? If we recognize that, in truth, we are one with Jesus, that we are as innocent as he, as holy as he, as wise as he, equally a son (child) of God as he, we will no longer give in to the illusory "need" of guilt to attract and hold others, to compel the love that we imagined we were lacking. There will be no reason for guilt...and of course, there never *was* any reason for it¹.

We are speaking here of our union with Jesus. It may be that you feel uncomfortable with the idea of having a relationship with Jesus. Perhaps it sounds too much like fundamentalist Christianity, which asks you to "accept Jesus as your Savior." But that isn't what is being suggested here. The key is in the first four words of the paragraph: "We who are one." *That* is the relationship you are asked to accept: your oneness with

¹ "As long as you believe that guilt is justified in any way, in anyone, whatever he may do, you will not look within, where you would always find Atonement. The end of guilt will never come as long as you believe there is a reason for it. For you must learn that guilt is always totally insane, and has no reason" (T-13.X.6:1-3).

Jesus, which is nothing more or² less than what you have with “*all of our brothers*” (3:3). Accept union with Jesus and you are accepting union with everyone. The reverse is equally true: accept union with everyone and, of course, you have accepted union with Jesus.

It is this gift, Jesus says, that he was “born to give” (3:4). “The gift of union” is being offered. Do you want it? To have it, you must *give it*, and give it *to Jesus* (3:5); the emphasis in “give it to *me*” is there in the Urtext. It’s important to realize the significance of this. It certainly implies that, in some sense, Jesus is real, and really is alive and active. Certainly this is a fundamental assumption of the Course; after all, Jesus is its source! If what the Course teaches—that we are not a body, that we are a mind, that we are eternal—then all that is equally true of him, and it is quite possible to have a relationship with him.

The Course does make it clear that no one is *required* to enter into any kind of personal, one-on-one relationship with Jesus. You don’t have to talk with him, or pray to him, or any such thing. But it would be beneficial to do so. In the Clarification of Terms, the Course says:

But Jesus is for you the bearer of Christ's single message of the Love of God. You need no other. It is possible to read his words and benefit from them without accepting him into your life. Yet he would help you yet a little more if you will share your pains and joys with him, and leave them both to find the peace of God (C-5.6:4-7).

Jesus can, in a sense, be the touchstone for your union with the Sonship, and through It, with God.²

The holy instant (“the time of Christ”) is the moment in which we offer the gift of freedom, and accept it for ourselves. In so doing, we offer it to everyone (3:6–7).

² "We have repeatedly said that one who has perfectly accepted the Atonement for himself can heal the world. Indeed, he has already done so. Temptation may recur to others, but never to this One. He has become the risen Son of God. He has overcome death because he has accepted Life. He has recognized himself as God created him, and in so doing he has recognized all living things as part of him. There is now no limit on his power, because it is the Power of God. So has his name become the Name of God, for he no longer sees himself as separate from Him.

“What does this mean for you? It means that in remembering Jesus you are remembering God. The whole relationship of the Son to the Father lies in him. His part in the Sonship is also yours, and his completed learning guarantees your own success. Is he still available for help? What did he say about this? Remember his promises, and ask yourself honestly whether it is likely that he will fail to keep them. Can God fail His Son? And can one who is one with God be unlike Him? Who transcends the body has transcended limitation. Would the greatest teacher be unavailable to those who follow him" (M-23.2:1-3:11).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹It is in your power to make this season holy, for it is in your power to make the time of Christ be **now**. ²It is possible to do this all at once because there is but **one** shift in perception that is necessary, for you made but **one** mistake. ³It **seems** like many, but it is all the same. ⁴For though the ego takes many forms, it is **always** the same idea. ⁵What is **not** love is always fear, and nothing else.

• Study Question •

4. (a) *How can we exercise our power to make the season holy, and make the time of Christ be now?*
- (b) *If what is not love is always fear, reflect on three or four unloving emotions or thoughts, and show how they are forms of fear. For example, insulting someone is an unloving act; it is a form of fear in that I am afraid of finding their weakness in myself, or somehow feel threatened by it. Other suggestions for things that are unloving: anger, revenge, stealing. Or think up your own.*

It is in our power to delay our union with God (1:1), but it is *equally* in our power to “make this season holy” or “to make the time of Christ be *now*” (4:1). Any time can be a holy Christmas; at any time, we can experience the birth of Christ in the world. Jesus asserts that doing this isn’t complex and does not need a lot of time. It can be *now*! It’s possible “because there is but *one* shift in perception that is necessary, for you made but *one* mistake” (4:2). And what it boils down to, as Marianne Williamson and so many others have observed, is the shift from fear to love. The “one mistake” is fear.

Our confusion and mistaken thinking seems to have many things wrong with it. The study of abnormal psychology has come up with hundreds or thousands of variations of mental disorders. The Course says they are really all the same idea, in a variety of forms (4:3–4). We made only one mistake: We shifted away from love, and “What is *not* love is always fear, and nothing else” (4:5). Now, the only shift needed is to shift back, from fear to love. This thought will be expanded in the rest of this section.

Would you not go through fear to love? For such the journey seems to be.
(T-16.IV.11:1-2).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹It is not necessary to follow fear through all the circuitous routes by which it burrows underground and hides in darkness, to emerge in **forms** quite different from what it **is**. ²Yet it *is* necessary to examine each one as long as you would retain the **principle** that governs all of them. ³When you are willing to regard them, **not** as separate, but as **different manifestations of the same idea**,

and **one you do not want**, they go together. ⁴The idea is simply this: You believe it is possible to be host to the ego or hostage to God. ⁵This is the choice you think you have, and the decision you believe that you must make. ⁶You see no other alternatives, for you ~~cannot~~ can **not** accept the fact that **sacrifice gets nothing**. ⁷Sacrifice is so essential to your thought system that salvation **apart** from sacrifice means **nothing** to you. ⁸Your confusion of sacrifice and love is so profound that you cannot conceive of love **without** sacrifice. ⁹And it is **this** that you must look upon; **sacrifice is attack, not love**. ¹⁰If you would accept but this **one** idea, your fear of love would vanish. ¹¹Guilt **cannot** last when the idea of sacrifice has been removed. ¹²For if there is [*must be*] sacrifice, [*as you are convinced,*] someone must pay and someone must get. ¹³And the **only** question that remains [*to be decided*] is **how much** is the price, and for getting **what**.

• Study Question •

5. (5:1–6). *Which of the following things is a necessary part of our learning process? (There may be more than one correct answer.)*
 - A. *Following fear through all its many twisted routes, and specifically identifying every form of fear.*
 - B. *Examining every different form of fear until we see the unifying principle behind them.*
 - C. *Seeing all forms of fear as manifestations of the idea that we must choose between being host to the ego or hostage to God.*
6. (5:7–13). *We believe that sacrifice is an essential part of salvation; in order to be saved, we must sacrifice. We think that “to love” means “to sacrifice myself.” What is the one idea which, if accepted, will cause our fear of love to vanish?*
 - A. *Sacrifice gets nothing.*
 - B. *In sacrifice, someone must pay and someone must get.*
 - C. *Sacrifice is attack, not love.*

Fear takes many disguises. Its manifestations are the result of convoluted, twisted, and devious metamorphoses, often making the fear nearly unrecognizable *as fear*. The good news is that we do *not* need to unravel *all* the tangled motives and twisted logic of the ego (5:1)! What *is* necessary is to carefully look at each individual form of fear (5:2) in order to realize that it is just another form of fear, and to keep on doing so until we generalize and infer the truth that *everything that is not love is fear*, that the seemingly different forms are “not...separate, but...different manifestations of the same idea, and one you do not want” (5:3). It’s helpful to examine jealousy, or worry, or an addiction of some kind, or anger, and to learn to recognize them all as variations on fear. But once we have begun to realize that every unloving thought we look at resolves to fear in the end,

the need to unravel the tangle woven by our egos dissolves. The varieties of fear “go together” (5:3); they lose all their power.

But apparently, Jesus is talking about fear in a very specific way. It isn't just fear in the abstract, it is a very particular fear: “You believe it is possible to be host to the ego or hostage to God” (5:4). Our fear comes from our belief that our choices are limited to these two options (5:5–6). We think that the only alternative to living as egos is being “hostage to God,” which is a fearful alternative. We don't want to be dominated and restrained by some all-powerful deity, so to avoid it, we settle for our separateness.

The reason we fear being “taken over” (“taken hostage”) by God is that we think love always involves *sacrifice* (5:7–8). Jesus says we can't accept the idea that “sacrifice gets nothing” (5:6). We must, instead, realize that “sacrifice is attack, not love” (5:9). We really have confused love with sacrifice. But, as we have seen, sacrificing for another is designed to make them feel guilty so they will sacrifice in return. Sacrifice is losing so you can gain, giving only to get.

If we can accept just this one idea—that sacrifice is attack, not love—Jesus says our fear of love would vanish (5:10). We fear surrendering to God's love because we think love means sacrifice. We think that we are going to lose something or be asked to give up something we hold dear. If we truly understood that love has nothing to do with sacrifice, our fear would evaporate. But as long as we continue to be convinced that “there *must* be sacrifice,” the only remaining question is who has to pay, and for what. Does God have to pay somehow for our sins? Do we have to pay to gain God's favor? Such questions must go.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹As host to the ego, you believe that you can give **all** your guilt away ~~whenever you want~~ [*whatever you think*], and thereby purchase peace. ²And the payment **does not seem to be yours**. ³While it is obvious that the ego **does** demand payment it **never** seems to be demanding it **of you**. ⁴[**For**] you are unwilling to recognize that the ego, which you **invited**, is treacherous only to those who think they are its host. ⁵The ego will **never** let you perceive this, since this recognition ~~would~~ make it homeless. ⁶For when ~~the~~ [**this**] recognition dawns clearly, you will **not** be deceived by **any** form the ego takes to protect itself **from** your sight. ⁷Each form will be recognized as but a cover for the one idea that hides behind them all; that love demands sacrifice, and is therefore **inseparable** from attack and fear. ⁸And that **guilt is the price of love**, which **must** be paid **by** fear.

• Study Question •

7. *It is the ego that really demands payment from us, not God. How does the ego hide its demands?*
- A. *It tricks us into thinking that the payment is being demanded of someone else.*
 - B. *It takes different forms to deceive us.*
 - C. *Both A and B.*

The images of host and hostage have been used several times earlier (T-11.II.7:1; T-15.III.5:1,6; T-15.IV.9:10, and the previous paragraph). As was indicated in the last paragraph, “host” implies a friendly relationship with a welcome guest; “hostage” implies a forced cooperation. God is calling us to love. While we believe that love means sacrifice, we will always fear His Love, seeing it as attack (a demand for sacrifice).

It may help to understand being “host to the ego” as the equivalent of identifying with the ego. We *welcome* the ego thought patterns; we align ourselves with them. In that frame of mind, when we gain or get something because we have seduced someone into sacrificing for us, we may feel guilty because, at least subconsciously, we know we have attacked that person. The ego then directs us to give our guilt away, either by sacrificing for someone else or simply by *blaming* them or judging them (6:1). This is how our egos tell us we can find peace of mind. As it said at the end of the last paragraph, in the ego system, the only question is who pays and how much, and “the payment *does not seem to be yours*” (6:2–3). We *appear* to divest ourselves of guilt, but that’s the lie. In the ego’s sacrificial exchanges, the only thing that happens to guilt is that it *increases for everyone*, most of all for *you*. The ego “is treacherous...to those who think they are its host” (6:4), although this is something the ego does everything in its power to keep below the surface of awareness. If it dawned on you that, by playing the ego’s game, you were always *adding to your own guilt* and making yourself miserable, you would immediately evict your “guest” (6:5). Once you realize what the ego has been doing to you, your ego will no longer be able to disguise its efforts (6:6).

No matter what form the ego comes up with, you will immediately recognize it as a cover for the core idea of the ego, “that love demands sacrifice,” and therefore, love (and God) is to be feared. And guilt is the price of loving someone because to love someone is to demand that they sacrifice for you. The result is always fear, because if your love demands that they sacrifice, *their* love will ask sacrifice of you in return (6:7–8).

Look back for a moment at sentence 6. “For when this recognition dawns clearly....” What recognition? “The ego...is treacherous only to those who think they are its host” (6:4). This is the key. Most people are convinced that listening to their egos, watching out for “Number One,” is the only way to get ahead and to be safe in this world. Take care of myself, and if someone else has to lose in the bargain, that’s just the way it is. No! We have to get beyond that mind-set. We have to see that when we stab someone

else in the back to get ahead, we've just stabbed ourselves. We've just added another layer to the thick wall we imagine stands between us and God, us and happiness.

Every time you feel a stab of anger, realize you hold a sword above your head. And it will fall or be averted as you choose to be condemned or free (W-pI.192.9:4-5).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹How fearful, then, has God become to you, and how great a sacrifice do you believe His Love demands! ²For total love would demand total sacrifice. ³And so the ego seems to demand **less** of you than God, and of the two is judged as the **lesser** of two evils, one to be feared a little, perhaps, but the **Other to be destroyed**. ⁴For you see love **as destructive**, and your only question is **who** is to be destroyed, you or another? ⁵You seek to answer this question in your special relationships, in which you seem to be both destroyer and destroyed **in part**, but [with the idea of being] able to be neither completely. ⁶And this you think **saves you from God**, Whose **total** Love would **completely** destroy you.

• Study Question •

8. *What is the key mistaken belief that makes it seem reasonable to us to prefer the ego to God? (One answer only.)*
- A. *The ego seems to demand less than God.*
 - B. *Love demands sacrifice, and total love demands total sacrifice.*
 - C. *Seeking love in special relationships.*

Do you see how, in the ego's sight, love is fearful? If love demands sacrifice, then for me to love you, I ask you to sacrifice for me, which makes me guilty. That's scary. But if *you love me*, that's even worse! Because now *I* am being asked to sacrifice *for you*. And the message, "God is Love," becomes terrifying, because "total love would demand total sacrifice" (7:1–2). So, rather than playing in the high-stakes game of love with God, we opt for the lower risk game of special love relationships. At least, that's how it seems to us. Sure, loving someone is a risky business. It makes us vulnerable, exposes us to hurt and pain. We might get our hearts broken (again!). But although it is fearful, it's nowhere near as terrifying as falling "into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31) (7:3–4).

Romantic relationships are the lesser of two evils to the ego. Yes, they can be destructive, and yes, we have to hurt as well as be hurt, but at least it isn't *total* destruction, which is what we fear if we fall in love with God (7:5–6). At least, that is what we fear as long as we continue to believe that love calls for sacrifice. The confusion of love and sacrifice is behind the whole concept that separation from God is somehow desirable.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹You think that everyone **outside** yourself demands your sacrifice, but you do **not** see that **only** you demand sacrifice, and **only** of yourself. ²Yet the demand of sacrifice is so savage and so fearful that you **cannot** accept it **where it is**. ³[But] The **real** price of **not** accepting this has been so great that you have **given God away** rather than look at it. ⁴For if **God** would demand total sacrifice of you, it seems safer to project Him outward and **away** from you, and **not** be host to Him. ⁵[For] to Him you ascribed the **ego's** treachery, inviting it to take His place to **protect** you **from** Him. ⁶And you do not recognize that it is **what you invited in** that would destroy you, and **does** demand total sacrifice of you. ⁷No partial sacrifice will appease this savage guest, for it is an invader who but **seems** to offer kindness, but **always** to **make the sacrifice complete**.

• Study Question •

9. *We are so terrified of the demand for sacrifice that we “cannot accept it where it is,” that is, within ourselves. What have we done with the demand for sacrifice in order to deny our responsibility for it?*

We believe that the world, and all the people around us, are constantly demanding some kind of sacrifice from us. The government wants our taxes. Charities are constantly asking for our money. Children call on parents to give up so much. Elderly parents demand sacrifices from their children. Our jobs ask us to give up our family obligations in order to advance our careers. We feel pulled in a dozen directions. What we fail to see, says Jesus, is that the demands *all come from ourselves* (8:1).

“The demand of sacrifice is so savage and so fearful that you *cannot* accept it *where it is*” (8:2)—that is, inside you. You have to project the demands outside, onto those around you. You even project the demands onto God (8:3–4). *God does not ask any sacrifice of us*.

Sacrifice is a notion totally unknown to God. It arises solely from fear, and frightened people can be vicious. Sacrificing in any way is a violation of my injunction that you should be merciful even as your Father in Heaven is merciful (T-3.I.4:1-3).

We are so unwilling to recognize our inner demand for sacrifice that, to avoid looking at it, we've given God away (8:3)! We are so sure that total love demands total sacrifice that “it seems safer to project [God] outward and away” from ourselves (8:4). I say again: the identification of love with sacrifice is the reason for our separation from God. We *fear* God. It is our egos that are treacherous, but we've projected that treachery onto God (8:5). We think separation is safer. We think the ego can protect us. We've invited the murderer to take up residence in our hearts (8:6).

The ego is the “savage guest,” and “invader” (8:7) who demands total sacrifice of us. And we invited the ego into our minds, so we are responsible for the demands of sacrifice we feel, and not God. The Course is asking us to look at the savagery of the ego and take responsibility for it.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹You will **not** succeed in being **partial** hostage to the ego, for it keeps **no** bargains and would leave you **nothing**. ²Nor can you be partial **host** to it. ³You ~~must~~ [will have to] choose between **total** freedom and **total** bondage, for there are no alternatives but these. ⁴You have tried many compromises in the attempt to avoid recognizing the one decision you ~~must make~~ [that **must be made**]. ⁵And yet it is the **recognition** of the decision, *just as it is*, that makes the decision so easy [!]. ⁶Salvation is simple, being of God, and therefore **very** easy to understand. ⁷[**But**] Do not try to project it **from** you and see it **outside** yourself. ⁸In **you** are both the question and the Answer; the demand for sacrifice and the peace of God.

• Study Question •

10. *What are our real alternatives, “the one decision you must make?” (9:4) (There is an answer in this paragraph. A clue: making a decision means to “choose between” alternatives.)*

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We think our alternatives for choice are to be host to the ego or hostage to God (5:4). Although hosting the ego isn't so great, it seems to be “the lesser of two evils,” since the ego “seems to demand less” (7:3). But compromise with the ego is not possible, and you cannot be “partial hostage” to it; “It keeps no bargains and would leave you nothing” (9:1). If you can't be *partial* hostage, then to choose the ego means being *total* hostage to it. And you cannot be partial *host* either, which would mean that sometimes you welcome the ego, and other times you push it away. Probably most of us feel that being partial host to the ego is exactly what we are doing! Sometimes we go along with the ego; sometimes we do not, and we choose God instead. I think what the Course is getting at is that identifying with the ego is an either/or situation: Either you *are* identified with the ego, or you *are not*. You cannot be half-and-half. I do think we go back and forth: at times coming from ego, at times free of the ego. But you cannot be *partially* in your ego and partially in spirit. Our goal is to be totally free of it. The only alternative is total bondage to it (9:3).

The issue at stake is our continued attempts to be spiritual while not letting go of the ego completely (9:4). It cannot be done. “The one decision that *must be made*” is the choice between total freedom from the ego or total bondage to it. Recognizing the black-or-white nature of this decision is what makes it “so easy” (9:5). Jesus seems to insist on

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the easy nature of the choice: “Salvation is simple, being of God, and therefore *very* easy to understand” (9:6).

We can deduce something from this that can be very helpful, I think. If our decision seems to be hard or complicated, we must be trying to find some kind of compromise with the ego. We must be trying (probably unconsciously) to avoid kicking the ego out entirely. If we were seeing the situation clearly, without seeking compromise, the decision would be easy; salvation would be seen in all its radical simplicity. The next two lines clarify the nature of our attempts at compromise: We try to project the decision outside of ourselves. *Someone else* has to change; *someone else* is to blame for our problems (9:7). The demand for sacrifice is *internal*, not external, and it is up to me, and me alone, to choose the peace of God (9:8). Jesus will say it very succinctly in a later chapter:

The secret of salvation is but this: That you are doing this unto yourself
(T-27.VIII.10:1).

Answer Key

1. A
2. A and D
3. A, B and C
4. **(a)** We can accept the shift in perception from the ego's fear to the Love of God. We can enter the holy instant, and continue to make the choices that lead to its permanence.
(b) Anger is a form of fear because I am afraid the other person will not do, or be, what I need to fulfill my lack. Revenge is a form of fear because I am afraid of the other person attacking me (again) and want to attack first. Stealing is a form of fear because I am believing in my own lack, and in a shortage that can be met only by taking from another.
5. B and C.
6. C
7. C
8. B
9. We have projected it onto God. We blame God for the ego's treachery, and then invite the ego to protect us against God.
10. Our only decision is to choose between total freedom (from the ego) and total bondage (to the ego).