

# Study Guide and Commentary

## ACIM® Text, Chapter 16, Section IV

### The Illusion and the Reality of Love

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#### Legend:

- blue text** = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)  
**bold blue text** = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext  
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## Overview of the Section

This section serves as an introduction to a prolonged discussion of *special relationships* that runs through the rest of this chapter, and continues into the next chapter, where the special relationship is contrasted with the holy relationship. The section does not itself go into detail about special relationships, but sets the stage and emphasizes that understanding special relationships is essential to the healing of our split mind.

## Paragraph 1

1. <sup>1</sup>Be not afraid to look upon the special hate relationship, for ~~freedom lies in looking at it~~ [**freedom lies here**]. <sup>2</sup>It would be impossible **not** to know the meaning of love, *except for this*. <sup>3</sup>For the special love relationship, **in which the meaning of love is hidden** [*lost*], is undertaken solely to ~~offset the hate~~ [*offset this*], but **not to let it go**. <sup>4</sup>Your salvation will rise clearly before your open eyes as you look on this. <sup>5</sup>**You cannot limit hate**. <sup>6</sup>The special love relationship will **not** offset it, but will merely **drive it underground** and out of sight. <sup>7</sup>It is essential to bring it **into** sight, and to make **no** attempt to hide it. <sup>8</sup>For it is the attempt to **balance** hate with love that makes love meaningless to you. <sup>9</sup>The extent of the split that lies in this you do **not** realize. <sup>10</sup>And until you do the split will remain unrecognized, **and therefore unhealed**.

• Study Question •

1. *This paragraph states that, "It is essential to bring it into sight, and to make no attempt to hide it" (1:7). It also says, "Until you do the split will remain unrecognized, and therefore unhealed" (1:10).*
  - A. *What is the "it" that must be brought into sight?*
  - B. *What is it that, until done, will prevent the healing of the split that lies in our minds?*

Let's recall that in the Course, a "special relationship" is one in which we try to a) have a special or exclusive interaction with b) a special person so that c) we can feel more special. The term "special hate relationship," in 1:1, is the *only* use of the phrase in the entire Course. In my opinion, it isn't intended to be a major type of special relationships, into "special love" and "special hate." If it were meant that way, surely the Course would use the term more than once, and expand on its meaning. As we begin to examine the way the Course speaks of special relationships, I think we will see that, for the Course, any relationship that has not been given into the control of the Holy Spirit, even if we think it is one of special love, is in fact governed by hate rather than love. So "the special hate relationship" may be simply a more realistic way to speak of an ego-based relationship that we may *think* is one of special love. The other possibility is that it refers to a relationship in which the other person is chosen as a target for our hatred, but in my opinion that seems unlikely, given the context. The next sentence implies that the reason for our fearful reluctance to examine the nature of our presumably loving relationships is that the surface love actually masks hatred.

That is precisely why we may fear to "look upon" such relationships (1:1). We do not want to uncover the hatred that lies beneath of surface of what we have been calling love. Jesus urges us not to be afraid, because "freedom lies here," in looking at our relationships in the light of the Course's penetrating insights. The buried, hidden hatred is the very thing that is preventing us from knowing the true meaning of love (1:2). He says that the *only* reason we involve ourselves in special love relationships is to "offset" our hatred without letting go of it (1:3). And he claims that by opening our eyes to discern the true nature of our ego-based special relationships, "your salvation will rise clearly before your open eyes" (1:4). As uncomfortable as it may be—and it can get *very* uncomfortable—this self-awareness, this stripping away the disguises of the ego, is the path to salvation that the Course urges on us.

The ego's hatred is toxic, and it cannot be contained ("limited," 1:5); it has to be exposed and expunged, utterly and consciously rejected. Trying to mask it with "special love" just drives it underground, where it festers and pollutes our relationships, like a pestilent mold hiding in the walls of a house that poisons us with each breath we take (1:6). The covering—the plaster in the infected home, the special love in the case of our relationships—has to be stripped away, and the infection—the hidden hatred—laid bare.

We have to relinquish every attempt to hide or minimize that hatred. We have to see it as it is (1:7).

In fact, using surface love to cover up the buried hatred is what prevents us from truly understanding love (1:8). It splits our minds in two, far more deeply and harmfully than we realize (1:9). Until we recognize how profoundly polluted our egos are, how poisonous its thinking is, and realize the ugliness of what we have been trying to whitewash, the split will live on, unhealed (1:10). Elsewhere, Jesus puts it like this:

That is why you must realize that your hatred is in your mind and not outside it before you can get rid of it; and why you must get rid of it before you can perceive the world as it really is (T-12.III.7:10).

## Paragraph 2

2. <sup>1</sup>The symbols of hate against the symbols of love play out a conflict that does not exist. <sup>2</sup>For symbols **stand for something else**, and the **symbol** of love **is** without meaning if love is everything. <sup>3</sup>You will go through this last undoing quite unharmed, and will ~~at last~~ emerge **as yourself**. <sup>4</sup>This is the last step in the readiness for God. <sup>5</sup>Be not unwilling now; you are too near, and you **will** cross the bridge in perfect safety, translated quietly from war to peace. <sup>6</sup>For the **illusion** of love will **never** satisfy, but its **reality**, which awaits you on the other side, **will** give you everything.

### • Study Question •

2. *This paragraph speaks to reassure us about going through “this last undoing,” or “the last step in the readiness for God” (2:3,4). What is this “last undoing”?*
- A. *The undoing of the conflicting symbols of love and hate.*
  - B. *The undoing of the illusion of love in our special relationships.*
  - C. *The undoing of our guilt.*

The first sentence (2:1) speaks of symbols playing out a conflict that doesn't exist. This refers to the seeming conflict between love and hatred in our special love relationships—the whole, so-realistic similitude of a split mind that we all experience. It's nothing but a conflict *between symbols*, not a real conflict at all.

There is a logical argument here that may not be obvious at first. A symbol, Jesus says, stands for *something else*. According to the dictionary, the very definition of the word “symbol” is “a thing that represents or stands for something else.” But “love is everything” (2:2). Therefore, love cannot have a symbol, because in order for such a symbol to exist, something *other than love* would have to exist. Nothing “else” but love exists—that is the assertion. Nothing exists that can conflict with love. Nothing even exists that can *symbolize* love. Love is *everything*.

The upshot of this arcane reasoning is very good news: The inner conflict of a split mind that we all experience actually *does not exist*. There is no conflict. Although the Course repeatedly talks about our experience of a split mind, our minds are *not* split, despite our experience to the contrary.

Would God teach you that you had made a split mind, when He knows your mind only as whole (T-6.V.1:4)?

Two selves in conflict could not be resolved, and good and evil have no meeting place. The self you made can never be your Self, nor can your Self be split in two, and still be what It is and must forever be (W-pI.96.3:2-3).

Or, as we read in the previous section:

For nothing real has ever left the mind of its creator. And what is not real was never there.

You are not two selves in conflict. What is beyond God? If you who hold Him and whom He holds are the universe, all else must be outside, where nothing is (T-16.III.5:10-6:3).

Because the conflict is an illusion, the *undoing* of our split between love and hatred will not damage us in any way (2:3). We will lose nothing, because the ego *is* nothing. The awful hatred that we expose beneath our façade of love will dissipate like morning mist in the sunlight, and only the love will remain. You will “emerge *as yourself*” (2:3), the Being of Love that you are. “Teach only love, for that is what you are” (T-6.I.13:2). “You are the work of God, and His work is wholly lovable and wholly loving. This is how a man must think of himself in his heart, because this is what he is” (T-1.III.2:3-4).

That’s why we need not and *must not* fear exposing our egos.

This is the last step in the readiness for God. Be not unwilling now (2:4–5).

The only real part of us is the divine nature, the love as which God created us. We are nearer to the end of the journey than we think we are. The “translation” process from war (split mindedness) to peace (single-mindedness) will, in fact, be a quiet one! (2:5). We need not be afraid of the process.

Why, then, does the selfishness and veiled rage of the ego seem so real when we begin to peel away its disguise? Because of our fear of it! Only our fear gives it substance. We *believe* in our egos, and that is what energizes and empowers them. The conflict we experience isn’t between love and hatred; it is between the *illusion* of love and the *illusion* of hatred (2:6). Buried beneath both of those illusions is the *reality* of love, and that will give us everything.

### Paragraph 3

3. <sup>1</sup>The special love relationship is an attempt to limit the destructive effects of hate by finding a haven in the storm of guilt. <sup>2</sup>It makes **no** attempt to

**rise above** the storm, into the sunlight. <sup>3</sup>On the contrary, it **emphasizes** the guilt **outside** the haven by attempting to build barricades **against** it, and keep **within** them. <sup>4</sup>The special love relationship is **not** perceived as a value **in itself**, but as a place of safety from which hatred is split off and **kept apart**. <sup>5</sup>The special love partner is acceptable **only** as long as he serves this purpose. <sup>6</sup>Hatred can enter, and indeed is **welcome** in some **aspects** of the relationship, but it is still held together by the illusion of love. <sup>7</sup>If the illusion goes, the relationship is broken or becomes unsatisfying on the grounds of **disillusionment**.

• **Study Question** •

3. *What distinguishing characteristic of the special love relationship is highlighted in this paragraph?*
- A. *It tries to create an isolated island of love in the middle of a sea of hate, excluding others from the love.*
  - B. *It makes the love partner the special focus of attention.*
  - C. *It stems from a sense of incompleteness or lack.*

We begin in this paragraph to examine the purpose of our “special love” relationships. The only purpose is, as was mentioned in the first paragraph, to “offset” the destructive effects of hatred (1:3; 3:1), to offer a “haven” of safety “in the storm of guilt” (3:1).

Try to see your own relationships in the light of this paragraph. You may not *want* to; I realize that. It may feel disloyal or disrespectful to your relationship partners even to *consider* that this description somehow applies to your relationship. But don't be afraid! The purpose here is not to destroy your special relationships, it's not to condemn them; the purpose is to *transform* them into holy relationships.

So, okay, a special love relationship serves as a buffer against the effects of hatred. What does that mean? All of us have experienced people in our lives whom we want, now, to keep at a distance. People we really don't want to see again. People who let us down or betrayed us, whom we have deliberately left behind. People we've found objectionable that we never let get close enough to *need* to leave them behind. People who have judged us, thought little of us, laughed at us, and hurt us. In fact, we all let very few people get close to us; most of them, we prefer to keep at a distance, and regard as at least potential sources of discomfort. There are people we hate, and people who hate us. The special love relationship is where we relate with people who counteract the condemnation and criticism we feel coming at us from the world, and who join us in *our* condemnation of the people we reject.

So, it says, the special love relationship “makes no attempt to rise above the storm” (3:2), which would mean completely doing away with the story we've constructed about love and hate, the good guys and the bad guys, and recognizing the reality of Oneness and Love. Instead, we barricade ourselves in the relationship, “You and me against the world.” In our view all the guilt is outside, while we are safe in the “haven” of

the special love relationship (3:3). This causes us to perceive the relationship more as a safe house against the external hatred and not as “a value *in itself*” (3:4). We value our relationship partner as long as he or she serves the purpose of keeping us safe from the world (3:5). If our special person ever begins questioning our perceptions of the world, our judgments for or against the people around us, it’s “Bye, bye, baby.” It’s okay for *some* hatred to enter in *some* aspects of the relationship—in fact, it may even be welcome (I assume for the spice it adds to the relationship; I think of couples who talk about how they love to make up after a fight), but all that is holding it together is an *illusion* of love (3:6). And if that illusion is shaken, if the image we’ve built up of our partner is shattered, the relationship is over. We’ve been *disillusioned* (3:7).

## Paragraph 4

4. <sup>1</sup>**Love is not an illusion.** <sup>2</sup>It is a **fact.** <sup>3</sup>Where **disillusionment** is possible, there was **not** love but **hate.** <sup>4</sup>For hate *is* an illusion, and what can change was **never** love. <sup>5</sup>It is sure that those who select certain ones as partners in **any** aspect of living, and use them for **any** purpose which they would **not** share with others, are trying to **live with** guilt rather than **die of** it. <sup>6</sup>This is the choice they see. <sup>7</sup>And love, to them, is only **an escape from death.** <sup>8</sup>They seek it desperately, but **not** in the peace in which it would gladly come quietly **to** them. <sup>9</sup>And when they find the fear of death is still upon them, the love relationship loses the illusion that it **is** what it is **not.** <sup>10</sup>[For] When the barricades against it are broken, fear rushes in and hatred triumphs.

### • Study Question •

4. *Many relationships we think are “love” end in hatred and fear. Why does the Course say that this kind of love isn’t really love?*
- A. *Because, if disillusionment is possible, it must be an illusion.*
  - B. *Because we seek it desperately and not in peace.*
  - C. *Because what can change was never love.*
  - D. *A and C*
  - E. *B and C*

Again the Course applies strict logic to our relationships. The logical argument may seem very abstract but it has very practical application. It begins by pointing out that love is not an illusion but a fact (4:1–2), clearly referring to *real* love. Therefore, if we can become “*disillusioned*” in a relationship, what we had experienced was not real love! Disillusionment is the ending of an illusion, but if love is not an illusion, we cannot become disillusioned of it. To be disillusioned means that what you were experiencing *was an illusion!*

But the Course goes further: It not only says that if we become disillusioned of our “love,” it was not simply an illusion, it was *hate* (4:3), because hate *is* an illusion. “What

can change was *never love*" (4:4). You might say that what isn't love is hate<sup>1</sup>. But there is no opposite to love, so hate is an illusion. Thus, disillusionment about a relationship is a *good* thing! It allows us to let go of an illusion. It is an opportunity for growth, for transition from the illusion of love (which is really hate) to real love.

Look at sentence 5 carefully; it gives an excellent description of what the Course means by a special relationship. In special relationships, we "select certain ones as partners" (excluding others) and use them for a purpose we do not want to share with others. This can happen "in *any* aspect of living," such as family, work, or even spiritual growth (4:5–6). It seems to me that the key element here is the *use to which we put the relationship*. In special relationships we deliberately *shut out* the rest of the world. Even if our purpose is spiritual growth, if I am joined with another person for spiritual growth but I am not willing to share that purpose and that person with others, it is a special relationship, and what I may think is love is really an expression of hate. I pick out a certain one for love, and "let the rest of the world go by."

The Course says that when I do this, I am "trying to *live with* guilt rather than *die of* it" (4:5). The guilt is the selfishness inherent in the special relationship. I am clasping my special partner to myself and refusing to share her or him with others. I'm counting on being able to live with that guilt. The special relationship is a haven in which I seek to escape from the consequences of guilt, the sentence of death that seems to loom over us all (4:7). Here, in this haven, I can have respite, at least for a time. Here, by this special person, I am loved, no matter what the rest of the world thinks. I am desperately seeking to escape from death, but the desperation betrays the fact that I have not really escaped at all; it's only an illusion (4:8).

The problem with special love relationships is that they cannot provide what we hope to find in them. They always let us down. I think the evidence of that is all around us! We go into the relationship hoping that it will bring us peace and happiness and safety; we hope that it will somehow offset the guilt and fear we find within ourselves. And it doesn't. It doesn't do that. When that realization dawns on us, "the love relationship loses the illusion that it *is* what it is *not*" (4:9). The flimsy barricades we've constructed against fear collapse, and "fear rushes in and hatred triumphs" (4:10). So many divorces end in bitterness because we blame the other person for "failing" to give us what we wanted from them—something that *no one* is capable of giving us but ourselves.

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<sup>1</sup> "What is not love is murder. What is not loving must be an attack. Every illusion is an assault on truth, and every one does violence to the idea of love because it seems to be of equal truth" (T-23.IV.1:10-12).

## Paragraph 5

5. <sup>1</sup>There are no triumphs of love<sup>2</sup>. <sup>2</sup>Only hate is at all concerned with the "triumph of love." <sup>3</sup>The **illusion** of love **can** triumph over the illusion of hate, but **always** at the price of **making both illusions**. <sup>4</sup>As long as the illusion of hatred lasts, so long **will** love be an illusion to you. <sup>5</sup>And then the **only** choice remaining possible is which illusion you prefer. <sup>6</sup>There *is* no conflict in the choice between truth and illusion. <sup>7</sup>Seen in **these** terms, **no one** would hesitate. <sup>8</sup>But conflict enters the instant the choice seems to be one **between illusions**, but this choice does **not** matter. <sup>9</sup>Where one choice **is** as dangerous as the other, the decision **must** be one of despair.

### • Study Question •

5. *What keeps the illusion of love going, according to this paragraph?*
- A. *We can't make up our minds between the illusion and the reality.*
  - B. *The illusion is very deceptive.*
  - C. *Our belief in the illusion of hate.*

Love does not "triumph," only the illusion of love (which is really hate) does that (5:1–2). Only illusions conflict; there is no conflict between true love and love's illusion. Therefore, when we experience love as bringing us into conflict (for example, being torn between love for two or more people), both "loves" must be illusions, or "special love." If it breeds conflict it can't be love.

So many romantic stories and movies about "the triumph of love" against all sorts of obstacles are probably just a naïve exaltation of special love, which isn't love at all as the Course sees things. "The *illusion* of love" (the illusion that special love is really love and not disguised hatred) "*can* triumph over the illusion of hate" (the illusion that hate is real), "but *always* at the price of *making both illusions*" (5:3). In other words, if I persist in believing that hate (which *is* illusion) is real, *love* will be no more than an illusion of its reality. I cannot "triumph" over hate without using a distorted simulacrum of love (5:4). The only choice then available to me "is which illusion [I] prefer" (5:5).

Putting that in concrete terms, what it boils down to is the typical dilemma we so often face: Shall I pretend to be nice (and risk becoming a doormat), or shall I defend myself (or better yet, attack before I am attacked)? Shall I retreat and hide in the haven of my special love relationship, or shall we openly retaliate?

The real choice must be between the illusion of hate (disguised perhaps as special love) and the *reality* of love. Then, the choice is obvious (5:6–7). Conflict arises when the choice is between illusions, but which illusion we choose does not really matter, does it (5:8)? Whichever way we choose will hurt us. "One choice is as dangerous as the

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2 "Love does not conquer all things, but it does set all things right" (T-4.VI.7:6).



other” (5:9). When that realization begins to dawn the first result may be growing despair. If you’ve ever felt despair about your relationships, you may just be on the right track!

## Paragraph 6

6. <sup>1</sup>Your task is **not** to seek for love, but merely to seek and **find** all of the barriers **within yourself** that you have built **against** it. <sup>2</sup>It is **not** necessary to seek for what is true, but it *is* necessary to seek for what is **false**. <sup>3</sup>Every illusion is one of fear, **whatever** form it takes. <sup>4</sup>And the attempt to escape from one illusion **into another must** fail. <sup>5</sup>If you seek love **outside** yourself you can be certain that you perceive hatred within, **and are afraid of it**. <sup>6</sup>Yet peace will never come from the **illusion** of love, but **only** from its reality.

### • Study Question •

6. *Based on this paragraph and the preceding ones, which of the following (there may be more than one) are an example of a “barrier”?*
- A. *Our illusions of love in special love relationships.*
  - B. *All forms of fear.*
  - C. *Trying to escape from the world’s fear in special love.*
  - D. *The hatred we fear to find within ourselves.*
  - E. *Using a relationship for any purpose we won’t share with others.*
  - F. *All of the above.*



The process of the Course leads us to seek, not *for love*, but for all the *barriers* to love we have built *within ourselves* (6:1). We undo the illusions to uncover the truth. All illusions are forms of fear (6:3, cf. T-15.X.4:5<sup>3</sup>).

I recommend memorizing the first two sentences! Nearly everyone gets caught up in the search for love. This may seem to apply especially to our youth, but even in senior years people often feel starved for companionship, looking for love outside of themselves. And, alas, often looking in all the wrong places. It’s a relief, for me at least, to realize that seeking for love is *not* my job, not what I am called to do. All that is necessary is looking *within myself* to discover any barriers against love that I may have built.

These inner barriers are all various forms of fear (6:3). Fear is what drives us into ill-advised special relationships. Fear fuels our efforts to use special love to mask our fear. Fear of looking within, fear of what I will find there, blocks my awareness of the love that is at my core. Those are the barriers I need to uncover and eliminate.

Special love relationships will *not* deliver me from my fears, because attempting “to escape from one illusion into another *must* fail” (6:4). If my energy is being pulled to seek outside myself for love from some special other, it simply proves that I “perceive

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<sup>3</sup> "What is not love is always fear, and nothing else" (T-15.X.4:5).

hatred within, and [am] afraid of it" (6:5). I don't like myself. I crave reassurance; I think I need someone who will *give* me that reassurance. But assurance from outside is never enough. "Peace will never come from the *illusion* of love, but *only* from its reality" (6:6).

## Paragraph 7

7. <sup>1</sup>Recognize this, for it is true, and truth **must** be recognized if it is to be distinguished from illusion: The special love relationship is an attempt **to bring love into separation**. <sup>2</sup>And, as such, it is nothing more than an attempt to bring love into fear, and **make it real in fear**. <sup>3</sup>In fundamental violation of love's one condition, the special love relationship would **accomplish the impossible**. <sup>4</sup>How but in illusion **could** this be done? <sup>5</sup>It is essential that we look **very** closely at exactly what it is you **think** you can do to solve ~~the~~ a dilemma which seems very real to you, but which does not exist. <sup>6</sup>You have come close to truth, and only this stands between you and the bridge that leads you into it.

### • Study Question •

7. (a) *What, in your opinion, does bringing love into separation (7:1) mean; what is it we are trying to do?*  
(b) *What is "this" that stands between us and truth, which it is essential to look at (7:5–6)?<sup>4</sup>*

"Recognize this" he says (7:1). What is "this" that we must recognize? It might seem to refer to the previous sentence at the end of paragraph 6: "Yet peace will never come from the illusion of love, but only from its reality." But there is a colon in the sentence, and in this case, "this" refers to what follows the colon: "The special love relationship is an attempt to *bring love into separation*" (7:1). The two sentences are clearly related. The special love relationship is never going to bring us peace, and this is so because it is trying to create a haven of love that is rigidly separated from the rest of the world. (See also the answer I have given to question 7(a) in the Answer Key.)

A special love relationship involves accepting the reality of fear—accepting that this is a truly fearful world against which we must defend and protect ourselves—and attempting to create a pocket of love in the midst of that fearful environment (7:2). This, Jesus tells us, violates "love's one condition" (7:3). We may wonder what that "one condition" is. Back in chapter 15 we read:

*In the holy instant the condition of love is met, for minds are joined without the body's interference, and where there is communication there is peace. The*

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<sup>4</sup> Regarding the "dilemma...which does not exist" (7:5), this may possibly be a reference to 2:1: "The symbols of hate against the symbols of love play out a conflict that does not exist."

Prince of Peace was born to re-establish the condition of love by teaching that communication remains unbroken even if the body is destroyed (T-15.XI.7:1-2).

And in the next section of this chapter:

For the ego would never have you see that separation could only be loss, being the one condition in which Heaven could not be (T-16.V.4:4).

The condition of love, then, is perfect communication in perfect Oneness. Love cannot exist in separation, so trying to bring love into the midst of fear is simply impossible.

Back in 1:7 we were told that it is essential to bring to light the hidden hate within the special love relationship. Sentence 5 repeats the thought that *looking very closely* at something is “essential” (and the idea is implied again in the next section)<sup>5</sup>. Here, we are told that it is essential to “look *very* closely” at the solution we have invented to “solve a dilemma which seems very real to you, but which does not exist” (7:5). This is an oblique reference to the special love relationship, which is our “solution” to the imaginary dilemma of surviving in a world of attack and guilt. We think we have a problem, but the problem exists only in our minds. So really, this “looking” is the same looking mentioned in the first paragraph. We are looking “*very closely*” at the special love relationship and the hate it conceals. This “looking” is something we do in the rest of the chapter.

In sentence 6 we are told we have come close to truth, and “only this” stands between us and the bridge to truth. “This” must be the special love relationship with its hidden hatred. Have we done what the Course is talking about? Are my relationships formed in real love, or is it an attempt to stake out a safe haven in the middle of a separated world that threatens fear and guilt. Remember what was said in paragraph 2, that we need not fear this process; we *will* find ourselves crossing the bridge, translated from war to peace, unharmed, and fully ourselves (2:3–5).

## Paragraph 8

8. <sup>1</sup>Heaven waits silently, and your creations are holding out their hands to help you cross and welcome them. <sup>2</sup>**For it is they you seek.** <sup>3</sup>You seek but for your own **completion**, and it is they who render you complete. <sup>4</sup>The special love relationship is but a shabby substitute for what makes you whole **in truth, not in illusion.** <sup>5</sup>Your relationship with them **is** without guilt, and **this** enables you to look on all your brothers with gratitude, because your creations were created in union **with** them. <sup>6</sup>Acceptance of your creations **is** the acceptance of the oneness of creation, without which you could never **be** complete. <sup>7</sup>No specialness can offer you what God has given, and what **you** are joined **with** Him in giving.

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<sup>5</sup> "In looking at the special relationship, it is necessary first to realize that it involves a great amount of pain" (T-16.V.1:1).

• Study Question •

8. According to this paragraph, what makes us complete? (Pick two.)
- A. God
  - B. Our creations
  - C. Our true Self
  - D. Accepting the oneness of all creation

In special love relationships we are seeking our own completion in illusions. We are trying to make a substitute for our real completion. According to the Course, what we are truly seeking, our real completion, is *our creations* who wait, silently, holding out their hands to help us across that daunting bridge between illusion and the Truth (8:1–4).

Once again we come up against our inability to understand exactly what our creations are. In his Course glossary<sup>6</sup>, Robert Perry asserts, “They are not our extensions or thoughts of love in this world”. Rather, they are “pure spirit, formless, timeless and perfect” according to T-24.VII.7:1-3. The best I can come up with is that our creations are spiritual beings just like us, but without physical bodies (holding out their hands must be a figure of speech). According to the Course, we have never stopped creating<sup>7</sup>. Those we have created await us on “the other side of the bridge” or “in Heaven”; but remember, Heaven is not a place, but a state of consciousness, “the awareness of perfect oneness” (T-18.VI.1:5–6). In our longing for love in the special love relationship, what we are actually seeking is the awareness of oneness with our creations (8:2–3). We are looking for a “special person” to complete us, but true completion is found only in a recognition of oneness with all creation (8:6). “The special love relationship is but a shabby substitute” for that awareness (8:4).

The Course equates accepting our creations with accepting the oneness of creation (8:6). What intrigues me is that my creations are not just *my* creations; they were created “in union with” all my brothers (8:5). In opening to the oneness with all creation I am simultaneously leaving behind any sense of guilt in myself or any of my brothers or sisters, enabling me to look with gratitude on those I had been regarding with fear (8:5). No specialness can ever offer me that total oneness and total acceptance (8:7).

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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.circleofa.org/glossary-of-terms>

<sup>7</sup> "Spirit retains the potential for creating, but its Will, which is God's, seems to be imprisoned while the mind is not unified. Creation continues unabated because that is the Will of God" (C-1.4:2-3). "You, too, have a Kingdom that your spirit created. It has not ceased to create because of the ego's illusions" (T-4.III.1:7-8).

## Paragraph 9

9. <sup>1</sup>Across the bridge **is** your completion, for you will be **wholly** in God, willing for **nothing** special, but only to be wholly like to Him, completing Him by your completion. <sup>2</sup>Fear not to cross to the abode of peace and perfect holiness. <sup>3</sup>Only there is the completion of God and of His Son established forever. <sup>4</sup>Seek not for this in the bleak world of illusion, where nothing is certain and where everything fails to satisfy. <sup>5</sup>**And**, in the Name of God, be wholly willing to abandon **all** illusions. <sup>6</sup>In any relationship in which you are wholly willing to accept completion, and **only** this, there is God completed, and His Son **with** Him.

### • Study Question •

9. *In this paragraph, what does “crossing the bridge” seem to symbolize? (More than one answer may be correct.)*
- A. *Entry into Heaven*
  - B. *Leaving the physical world*
  - C. *Accepting completion in our relationships*
  - D. *Abandoning the search for completion in this world*
  - E. *All of the above*

“...willing...only to be wholly like to Him” (9:1). As a young man I was deeply inspired by my evangelical minister, who one day declared, “I have come to know that the only thing I desire is to be more and more and more like Jesus every day.” That is a high and noble calling, indeed! But the Course takes it one step further: It says that when we are wholly in God, all we will want is to be wholly *like God*! It is speaking in the context of creation here, and what it says is that, “across the bridge,” we will complete God by our total union with our creations—“completing Him by your completion” (9:1).

Once again Jesus urges us not to be afraid of making this transition, crossing the bridge “to the abode of peace and perfect holiness” (9:2). I emphasize again that this does *not* mean “dying and going to Heaven,” it does not mean any change at all in our location. This is a crossing in consciousness, a shift from a mindset that huddles in fearful separateness from the world to one that totally *embraces* the world and recognizes myself and the world as a continuous Whole. It means leaving behind the battleground and entering a realm of perfect peace. Yes, crossing the bridge *does* mean entering into Heaven, but:

*Heaven is here. There is nowhere else. Heaven is now. There is no other time (M-24.6:4-7).*

It's insane to look for this kind of completion “in the bleak world of illusion” (9:3–4), particularly in a special love relationship. When Jesus says that, in the world of illusion, “nothing is certain and where everything fails to satisfy,” it must make us think of our relationship failures, and of the imperfection of even the best special relationships. We

need to stop putting such a heavy and impossible demand on one another. It is not the job of my relationship partner or spouse to complete me, to make me happy and whole. That comes only by my expanding my awareness to embrace all of God, God's creations, and our mutual creations—that is, embracing Oneness. “In the name of God, be wholly willing to abandon *all* illusion” (9:5). I hear that as an exclamation, “In the name of *God!*” In asking us to abandon all illusion, he is exhorting us to withdraw our attempts to find satisfaction in special love.

What is the alternative to seeking completion in special love? It is being wholly willing to *accept completion* in the relationship (9:6). It means recognizing that you *are* complete, that completion is already yours, and not something your partner has to give you. It means knowing deep within yourself that you *are* whole, you *are* complete, and you *have* all things in God. This is what transforms a special relationship into a holy relationship.

A holy relationship starts from a different premise. Each one has looked within and seen no lack. *Accepting his completion*, he would extend it by joining with another, whole as himself (T-22.Int.3:1-3, my italics).

## Paragraph 10

10. <sup>1</sup>The bridge that leads to union **in yourself** *must* lead to knowledge, for it was built with God beside you, and will lead you straight to Him where **your** completion rests, **wholly** compatible with His. <sup>2</sup>Every illusion you accept into your mind **by judging it to be attainable** removes your own sense of completion, and thus denies the Wholeness of your Father. <sup>3</sup>Every fantasy, be it of love **or** hate, **deprives** you of knowledge for fantasies **are** the veil behind which truth is hidden. <sup>4</sup>To lift the veil that seems so dark and heavy, it is only needful to **value** truth beyond **all** fantasy, and to be entirely **unwilling** to settle for illusion **in place** of truth.

### • Study Question •

10. *What is the detrimental effect of thinking our fantasies of special love are attainable?*
- A. *It removes our sense of our own completion.*
  - B. *It deprives us of knowledge.*
  - C. *It veils the truth from us.*
  - D. *All of the above.*

The symbol of “the bridge” referred to so often in this section symbolizes a variety of things: the transition from lack to wholeness, from incompleteness to completion, and from a fragmented self or split mind to the united Self that we are in Truth. Here, in 10:1, we are told that the bridge leads to “union *in yourself*,” which to me has to do with a re-uniting of my fragmented self, the recognition that, as the Workbook lesson says, “I am

one Self" (W-pI.95), not "two selves in conflict" (T-16.III.6:1). The bridge also, of necessity, leads to *knowledge* and to God (10:1). In fact, back in Chapter 5 of the Text, we are told that, "the Holy Spirit is the bridge for the transfer of perception to knowledge" (T-5.III.1:2). That is what is happening here: our perception of ourselves, and of one another, is being transformed, so that we come to know our true Self, which we share with our brothers and with our creations. Our completion is "*wholly compatible with His [that is, with God's completion, which is God's creations]*."

The preceding paragraph told us that "Across the bridge is your completion" (T-16.IV.9:1), so the bridge leads to our completion as well. What completes us? Our creations, who are part of our Self, just as we are God's completion. This is the transition that each of us must go through, or "go across," using the bridge image. The bridge represents what appears to us as a journey, the distance we seem to travel in shifting our mental state from separation to union, from who we *think* we are [separate beings] to who we *truly* are [aspects of The One], the "journey without distance" across an imaginary gulf. And this *individual* transition is the catalyst that shifts an unholy relationship to a holy one. How could it be otherwise, when the transition takes us from fragmentation to union?

Our sense of completion, however, can be blocked when we decide that something else, something less, can satisfy us—something like a special love relationship (10:2). It need not be a relationship with another person. Anything that arouses the thought, "If I had that, I would be happy," erodes our sense of completion, and thus "denies the Wholeness of your Father" (10:2). When the Course speaks of our fantasies and illusions, this is the core meaning: Anything we think will bring us happiness or satisfaction that is less than union with God. These fantasies veil the truth in us (10:3). They cause us to see ourselves as lacking something we need to complete us, which denies the Truth that we *are* complete in God. All that is asked of us is to refuse to settle for second best, to value the Truth of Wholeness above and beyond every fantasy of something or someone in this world that will fill up our imagined emptiness (10:4).

*"But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."* (Philippians 3:13–14 ESV)

## Paragraph 11

11. <sup>1</sup>Would you not go **through** fear to love? <sup>2</sup>For such the journey **seems** to be. <sup>3</sup>Love calls, but hate would ~~have~~ [bid] you stay. <sup>4</sup>Hear not the call of hate, and see no fantasies. <sup>5</sup>For your completion lies in truth, and **nowhere else**. <sup>6</sup>See in the call of hate, and in every fantasy [of yours] that rises to delay you, but the call for help that rises ceaselessly from you to your Creator. <sup>7</sup>Would He not answer you whose completion is **His**? <sup>8</sup>He loves you, wholly **without** illusion, as you must love. <sup>9</sup>For love *is* wholly without illusion, and therefore wholly **without fear**. <sup>10</sup>Whom God remembers **must** be whole. <sup>11</sup>And God has **never**

forgotten what makes **Him** whole. <sup>12</sup>In **your** completion lie the memory of **His** Wholeness and His gratitude to you for His completion. <sup>13</sup>In His link with you lie both His **inability** to forget and **your** ability to remember. <sup>14</sup>In Him are joined your **willingness** to love and all the Love of God, Who forgot you not.

• **Study Question** •

*11. What is the real meaning of our craving for the fantasy of special love, a meaning that can free us from our guilt, to accept our completion in God's love?*



This journey across the bridge *seems* frightening. It means leaving the world behind, in the sense of giving up all hope or expectation that anything in the world can ever satisfy us or complete us or bring us complete happiness, and letting go of all that is downright scary. Everyone around you is looking for happiness. Some of them are looking for the perfect relationship. Some are obsessed with their career, with recognition or fame or money. Some try to lose themselves in entertainment or in extreme danger sports. There are thousands upon thousands of options to choose from. How can you ever try them all? And surely, if so many people are convinced that *this* is the way to happiness, at least *some of them* must be right. Right? Let go of *all of those options*? *What?!*

Seek not outside yourself. For it will fail, and you will weep each time an idol falls. Heaven cannot be found where it is not, and there can be no peace excepting there (T-29.VII.1:1-3).

Jesus says that we have to go through that fear.

There is no choice where every end is sure. Perhaps you would prefer to try them all, before you really learn they are but one. The roads this world can offer seem to be quite large in number, but the time must come when everyone begins to see how like they are to one another. Men have died on seeing this, because they saw no way except the pathways offered by the world. And learning they led nowhere, lost their hope. And yet this was the time they could have learned their greatest lesson. All must reach this point, and go beyond it (T-31.IV.3:1-7).

“All must reach this point, and go beyond it.” Everyone must confront that existential fear, the realization that the roads of this world lead nowhere. In a relationship, the fear gets even more specific: “What will my partner think if I no longer think of her or him as special? How will they react to the idea that I am to love everyone equally?” This can be quite a radical shift! But the Course advises us:

"Set firmly in the unholy relationship, there is no course except to change the relationship to fit the goal. Until this happy solution is seen and accepted as the only way out of the conflict, the relationship may seem to be severely strained.



It would not be kinder to shift the goal more slowly, for the contrast would be obscured, and the ego given time to reinterpret each slow step according to its liking. Only a radical shift in purpose could induce a complete change of mind about what the whole relationship is for. As this change develops and is finally accomplished, it grows increasingly beneficent and joyous. But at the beginning, the situation is experienced as very precarious" (T-17.V.4:5-5:4).

Indeed it *does* seem like a journey through fear, but it is a journey *to* true love, and that makes it worthwhile (11:1–2). The Course is very clear that although there really is *nothing* to fear, facing that fear is essential to getting past it:

For to recognize fear is not enough to escape from it, although the recognition is necessary to demonstrate the need for escape. The Holy Spirit must still translate the fear into truth. If you were left with the fear, once you had recognized it, you would have taken a step away from reality, not towards it. Yet we have repeatedly emphasized the need to recognize fear and face it without disguise as a crucial step in the undoing of the ego (T-12.I.8:2-5).

We are being called out of our egos by love (11:3); only hate tries to hold us back. Jesus appeals to us not to listen to the voice of hatred, which means not being sucked in by fantasies of special love (11:4). Nothing and no one on earth can complete us, “For your completion lies in truth, and *nowhere else*” (11:5).

What are we to think of this contrary voice we all find within us, the voice that pulls us away from the absolute love of God, the voice that tempts us with “looking for love in all the wrong places”? Here we find a powerful, and unbelievably reassuring assertion: That voice that *seems* so incredibly negative is, in fact, nothing more than “the call for help that rises ceaselessly from you to your Creator” (11:6). This is key! Learning to translate our apparently negative impulses into something positive, realizing that the powerful attraction of a special love relationship is in reality a misdirection of our powerful love for God, and allowing the force of that attraction to re-attach itself to the true Source of the attraction—this is how we transmute our ego impulses into mystical experiences of Divine Love. In our relationships, instead of looking to the personality and personhood of our partner to complete us, we learn to look to them to show us God. We seek the Beloved in our beloveds.

And of course, when we recognize our own call for God as what it is, God will answer (11:7). How could He not, since God *is* Love? The love we long for is love with no illusions, and we find that only in God’s love of us and our love for God (11:8–9). When we tune into that love, all fear disappears: “Perfect love casts out fear” (see T-1.VI.5:4-8<sup>8</sup>).

God has never forgotten us; we exist now and always in the mind of God as whole and complete (11:10–11). When we harmonize with the current of love flowing from God

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8 “There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.”  
(1 John 4:18 NRSV)

to us, and from us to God, we remember His Wholeness and our own (11:12). We are so powerfully linked with God that God cannot forget us, and we cannot help but remember Him (11:13). Your willingness, and mine, to *love* God is virtually the same thing as God's love for us. As the Bible says, "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John 4:19 KJV). God sings the old Nat King Cole love song to us, "Unforgettable, that's what you are" (11:14).

## Paragraph 12

12. <sup>1</sup>Your Father can no more forget the truth in you than you can fail to remember it. <sup>2</sup>The Holy Spirit is the bridge to Him, made from your willingness to **unite** with Him and created by His joy in union **with** you. <sup>3</sup>The journey that **seemed** endless is **almost** complete, for what *is* endless is very near. <sup>4</sup>**You have almost recognized it.** <sup>5</sup>Turn with me firmly away from **all** illusions **now**, and let nothing stand in the way of truth. <sup>6</sup>We will take the last **useless** [**foolish**] journey **away from** truth together, and then **together** we go straight to God, in joyous answer to His call for His completion.

### • Study Question •

*12. What, in the context of this discussion of our special love relationships and their illusions of love, do you think is meant by "the last foolish journey away from truth" that we are asked to take with Jesus?*

What a powerful idea in that first sentence! Our ability to remember the Truth that is in us is equated to God's inability to forget it (12:1). Wow! So if you are ever wondering, "Will I *ever* get this? Will I ever remember What I am?", the answer is, "Will God ever forget it?" Our remembering is as certain as God's forgetting is impossible.

The bridge, which is the Holy Spirit, is the conjunction of God's joyous union with us and our willingness to unite (12:2). I note the use of the two words, "made" and "created." God creates, and creation is eternal. What we "make" is the outcome of our choices in this world. The full experience of the Holy Spirit, our crossing of the bridge, requires both God's part and ours, His joy combined with our willingness.

This paragraph is a powerful reassurance that we *can* cross the bridge. Indeed, we *almost* have crossed already (12:3–4)! We have the Father; we have the Holy Spirit. The seemingly endless journey is almost over! We have almost recognized that which truly *is* endless. As was said earlier (2:5), we are too near to be unwilling any longer. We need only to firm up our decision to relinquish all our illusions and to do so *now*, refusing to let anything remain to hide the truth (12:5). Stop making excuses. Stop dragging your feet. Choose the truth and choose it now.

The phrase "the last foolish journey *away from* truth" is an interesting one (12:6). It seems to refer to several things: to phrases earlier in the section ("last undoing" (2:3) and "last step in the readiness for God" (2:4)), as well as to the "journey to the cross" (see

T-4.In.3:1-5), and to the journey “through fear to love” mentioned in this section (11:1–2). I believe Jesus is asking us to turn our attention, briefly, to the shadow side of our minds, to the veiled hatred there, the crucifixion of love—to take his presence with us into our relationships, examining *and exposing* the illusion of love in them before we turn “firmly away from *all* illusions” and “then *together* we go straight to God” (12:5–6). We cannot avoid it; we *have to* look at the illusion and see it clearly for what it is before we can, once and for all, leave it behind. As we shall see in the next section, it’s a dark picture. It like lancing a boil. It hurts, its ugly and even disgusting, but it is the path to healing.

In one of the novels of Narnia by C. S. Lewis, one of the children is seduced by the dark powers and, as a result, turns into a giant toad. Finally, realizing his mistake, he turns to the lion, Aslan (the symbol of Christ in the books), and asks to be healed. Aslan asks him if he is sure he wants it, and he says he does. So the lion leaps on him and rakes his claws deeply down the toad’s back. The skin splits, and out crawls the little boy. “Ow!” he cries in distress. “That hurt!” And Aslan replies, “I never said it wouldn’t hurt.”

Looking at the underbelly of our egos in our relationships may be painful. And I think that’s what Jesus is implying here by speaking of “the last foolish journey away from truth.” Painful, but necessary.

## Paragraph 13

13. <sup>1</sup>If special relationships of **any** kind would **hinder** God’s completion, **can** they have any value **to you**? <sup>2</sup>What would interfere with God **must** interfere with you. <sup>3</sup>Only in time does interference in God’s completion **seem** to be possible. <sup>4</sup>The bridge that He would carry you across lifts you **from** time into eternity. <sup>5</sup>Waken from time, and answer fearlessly the call of Him Who gave eternity to you in your creation. <sup>6</sup>On this side of the bridge to timelessness you understand nothing. <sup>7</sup>But as you step lightly across it, upheld *by* timelessness, you are directed straight to the Heart of God [knowledge]. <sup>8</sup>At its center, and **only** there, you are safe forever, **because you are complete forever**. <sup>9</sup>There is no veil the Love of God in us together **cannot** lift. <sup>10</sup>The way to truth is open. <sup>11</sup>Follow it with me.

• Study Question •

13. Notice the references to time, timelessness, and eternity. What seems to be the connection between time and special love relationships?
- A. Special relationships are our attempt to find, in time, what can only be found in eternity.
  - B. Only by connecting with the timelessness on the other side of the bridge can we find our true completion.
  - C. Special relationships seem to interfere in God's completion, but only in time.
  - D. Special relationships hold us in time, and block our crossing from time to eternity.
  - E. All of the above.

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In 9:1, we were told that we are “completing Him [God] by [our] completion”. Special relationships, in which we make the mistake of seeking completion *outside* of ourselves, are hindering our completion and thus hindering God's! How could anything that would have that effect be of value to us (13:1)? Surely it is obvious that interfering with God “*must* interfere with you” (13:2). That cannot be desirable!

Of course it really is not possible to interfere with God, although in time it *seems* to be possible (13:3). But as we cross the bridge, carried by God, we transition from time into eternity (13:4). We become aware of, and part of, God's eternal joy over His union with us, given to us in our creation (13:5). Hear that call from deep within ourselves and “answer fearlessly.” You may think you don't really understand, and it's true; you don't, here in time (13:6). But the timeless Truth carries you across the bridge, into timelessness, and “straight to the Heart of knowledge” (13:7). From understanding nothing to the Heart of Knowledge! What a trip! This is the experience the gnostics spoke about centuries ago. *Gnosis* is the Greek word for knowledge, a spiritual, direct knowing via immediate insight.

In that place of intimate knowing, of interpenetration with the Mind and Spirit of God, “you are safe forever, *because you are complete forever*” (13:8). This is what awaits us—after we take that last foolish journey. Be assured: “There is no veil the Love of God in us together *cannot* lift” (13:9). This is the way to truth, and it is *open!* (13:10). “Be not afraid to look upon the special hate relationship” (1:1). Don't be afraid. Follow this path with Jesus by your side. The goal is unbelievably desirable, and “the outcome is as certain as God” (T-2.III.3:10). You cannot fail.

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All of these encouraging words, urging us to press on, are given here because, in the next section, Jesus is about to dive deep into the ego in special relationships. So fasten your seat belts! We are in for a ride.

## Answer Key

1. (a) The hate that lies hidden behind our special love relationships. (b) We must realize the extent of the split that lies in our attempts to balance love with hate in special love relationships.
2. B
3. A
4. D
5. C
6. F
7. (a) Bringing love into separation means trying to create a special pocket of love in a separated world; trying to make loving one special person (or group) a substitute for universal love; trying to have a special love relationship that excludes the rest of the world, and even acts as a “haven” *against* the world.
7. (b) The illusion of love in specialness; our trying to solve the seeming conflict between love and hate by forming special love relationships.
8. B, D
9. C, D
10. D
11. Our call for hate and our distraction with fantasies is really our call for help, which we are ceaselessly making to God.
12. The last foolish journey, in this case, seems to be the journey of looking for one last time at our special love relationships, seeing through the illusion of love to the hate that is behind it, and finally recognizing them as something we do not want, so that we can let them go. It is what is being asked of us, very concretely, in the rest of this chapter. It seems like a journey through fear. It seems like it is useless or foolish because of the emptiness of our illusions. It is “away from truth” in the sense that it focuses on illusions. It seems like we are dying or sacrificing something. But it is the doorway to love’s reality.
13. E