

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 16, Section VI

The Bridge to the Real World

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
 - ~~struckthrough blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Overview of the Section

In this section, watch for recurrences of certain words: "help" the Holy Spirit asks us for; "the body;" "bridge;" "perspective;" "frame of reference;" and "reality." Try to get a picture of how crossing the bridge to the real world is being related to special relationships, the body, and the holy instant.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The search for the special relationship is the sign that you equate yourself with the ego and **not** with God. ²For the special relationship has value **only** to the ego. ³To ~~the ego~~ [*it*], **unless** a relationship **has** special value **it has no meaning**, ~~for~~ [**And**] it perceives **all** love as special. ⁴Yet this **cannot** be natural, for it is **unlike** the relationship of God and His Son, and **all** relationships that are unlike this one *must* be unnatural. ⁵For God created love as He would have it be, and **gave** it as it **is**. ⁶Love **has** no meaning except as its Creator defined it by His Will. ⁷It is impossible to define it otherwise and **understand** it.

• Study Question •

1. *What makes a special relationship unnatural?*
 - A. *We are not naturally monogamous or misogynous.*
 - B. *God's Love for us is not special, and His Love defines what love is.*
 - C. *Only the ego perceives all love as special.*

When the Course refers to "the search for the special relationship," as it does here in 1:1, I imagine that the word "the" is in italics: "the search for *the* special relationship." It's talking about the search for Prince or Princess Charming, the special relationship that

evokes the exclamation, “I think this is *the one!*” It might also be the search for the perfect job. A special relationship has no value except to the ego; only egos *like* the idea of receiving special attention that no one else receives (1:2). Therefore, a continued attachment to, and search for, special relationships, is a prime indicator that we are still identifying with the ego and not with God (1:1). The ego evaluates the meaningfulness of its relationships according to the amount of special value they bring, because it does not know any kind of love *except* special love (1:3). To the ego, then, unconditional love that is shared equally with everyone isn't love at all! When someone gives you *special* attention or recognition or affection, *that* is the ego's kind of love.

Jealousy and possessiveness in a relationship is a good example of the ego's craving for specialness, and most of us recognize such behavior as arising from the ego, especially when we see it in other people. If you find your partner feeling jealous when you spend time or gives attention to another person, that is an example of egoic specialness. On the other hand, if you are spending time with that other person because they seem to meet a need in you that your partner does not meet, *you* are the one searching for the special relationship.

This kind of love, *special* love, “*cannot* be natural,” the Course says, because God and His Son do not relate in that way, “and *all* relationships that are unlike this one *must* be unnatural” (1:4). Many people believe that even God's love is special, that is, that God loves those who believe or behave in a certain way or who perform certain rituals, those who are members of “the chosen few.” To most people, God's love is contingent on getting the right answers or strict “moral” behavior. To grasp what the Course is saying here, we need to divest our minds of any notion that the love of God belongs to some exclusive group. It is impossible to understand love unless you define it as God defined it by His Will (1:5–7). The next paragraph helps us understand what that definition is, but the full understanding cannot come by reading words; it comes through a direct, inner experience of that Love.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Love is freedom. ²To look for it by placing yourself in **bondage** is to **separate** yourself from it. ³For the Love of God, no longer seek for union in separation, nor for freedom in bondage! ⁴As you release, so will you **be** released. ⁵**Forget this not**, or love will be unable to find you and comfort you.

• Study Question •

2. *What other characteristic of love shows that special love is not really love at all?*
- A. *While special love seeks to bind or limit love, real love offers nothing but freedom and release.*
 - B. *Love cannot be found by those who seek for it.*
 - C. *Love is meant to be experienced only in relation to God.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

To repeat the closing thought from the previous paragraph: In order to understand love, you must define it as God defines it. Anything else is unnatural. For instance, possessiveness cannot be love, because (as this paragraph begins), “Love is freedom” (2:1). Possessiveness imprisons, it does not free. To accept the behavior of a jealous, possessive partner—to see such behavior and think, “My! How she/he loves me!” puts you in prison. It does not free you. Thus, it is actually *separating* you from love (2:2). We put ourselves in bondage to another, and at times, we try to put the other person in bondage to us. It’s called “expectations” or “making demands.” Each partner is under obligation to somehow make the other partner happy. It never works.

When we pursue special love relationships, we are seeking union in separation and freedom in bondage (2:3). It’s crazy! We need to *release* one another from all the demands, and “as you release, so will you *be* released” (2:4). It can seem scary to release our relationship partners from our demands, but it is the only way we can experience true freedom ourselves. It’s the only way love can “find you and comfort you” (2:5).

There is a subtle point in that last phrase that I want to call to your attention: You do not *find* Love; Love *finds* you. In the Bible, Jesus says, “Here I stand knocking at the door; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and he and I will eat together” (Revelation 3:20 REB). Jesus can be seen here as the symbol of divine Love. Love is everywhere present; it is all around us. It stands knocking at the door. We do not have to “find” it, we just need to open to it. If you sense some desire to experience union with God, to know the Love of God through personal inner experience, you are hearing Love knocking! Emilie Cady says, in *Lessons in Truth*, “Desire in the heart is always God tapping at the door of your consciousness with His infinite supply.” Therefore, “Ask, and you will receive; seek, and you will find” (Matthew 7:7 REB). It’s already yours.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹There is a way in which the Holy Spirit asks **your** help, if you would have His. ²The holy instant is His most helpful **aid** [tool] in protecting you from the attraction of guilt, the **real** lure in the special relationship. ³You do **not** recognize that this **is** its **real** appeal, for the ego has taught you that **freedom** lies in it. ⁴Yet the closer you look at the special relationship, the more apparent it becomes that it **must** foster guilt and therefore must **imprison**.

• Study Question •

3. *This paragraph says that guilt is "the real lure" in a special relationship. Explain why, in your understanding, special relationships foster guilt. (T-16.V.7 may help you; see footnote¹.)*

The opening sentences begin a line of thought, about the holy instant and the help that we are asked to give to the Holy Spirit, that is not completed until paragraph 12. From the second half of Sentence 2, the focus shifts to looking at what the *real* attraction of the special relationship is: guilt.

Consider, though, the clear teaching that there is a requirement for obtaining the help of the Holy Spirit. There is something that we must do. God never forces Himself on us. Love knocks, but we must open the door. We must ask, and the asking is not simply a set of words such as, "Please help me; please give me the experience of divine love." Yes, it is prayer, but as paragraph 2 indicated, it involves releasing our relationship partners from the demand for specialness. The asking is a kind of mental shift that results in action, as we shall see. It is the deliberate choice of a holy instant; it is a turning to God. The holy instant, we are told, "is His most helpful tool in protecting you from the attraction of guilt" (3:2). Contrast this with the earlier statement, "The special love relationship is the ego's chief weapon for keeping you from Heaven" (T-16.V.2:3). The special love relationship is the ego's chief weapon, but the holy instant is the Holy Spirit's most helpful tool against the lure that weapon possesses, which is not love or happiness, but guilt.

Jesus immediately acknowledges that we do not see guilt as the "real appeal" of a special love relationship (3:3). Guilt may be the farthest thing from our minds as we embark on a special love relationship, because the ego has tricked us into believing that special love relationships bring us freedom. If we examine these relationships closely, however, we will become aware that "it *must* foster guilt and therefore must *imprison*" (3:4), bringing us bondage instead of freedom.

We may wonder why special love relationships "foster guilt." I've given one explanation in the Answers to the Study Questions, but another occurs to me. A special love relationship places demands on both parties to make it succeed, and in practice, those demands prove to be impossible to meet. Neither party can live up to all the

1 "Most curious of all is the concept of the self which the ego fosters in the special relationship. This "self" seeks the relationship to make itself complete. Yet when it finds the special relationship in which it thinks it can accomplish this it gives itself away, and tries to "trade" itself for the self of another. This is not union, for there is no increase and no extension. Each partner tries to sacrifice the self he does not want for one he thinks he would prefer. **And he feels guilty for the "sin" of taking, and of giving nothing of value in return.** How much value can he place upon a self that he would give away to get a "better" one" (T-16.V.7:1-7).

expectations of their partner, and the inevitable result is guilt. That's why being "trapped in a relationship" is such a common phrase.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹The special relationship is totally meaningless **without a body**. ²If you **value** it, you must also **value the body**. ³And what you value you **will** keep. ⁴The special relationship is a device for limiting **your** self to a body, and for limiting your perception of others to **theirs**. ⁵The Great Rays would establish the total **lack** of value of the special relationship, **if they were seen**. ⁶For in seeing **them** the body **would** disappear, **because its value would be lost**. ⁷And so your whole **investment** in seeing it would be **withdrawn** from it.

• Study Question •

4. *Can you recall something said earlier about the Great Rays that seems to connect this paragraph to the remark about the Holy Instant in 3:2? (Earlier mentions of Great Rays are given in a footnote; they are also mentioned again in paragraph 6.²)*
- A. *We see the Great Rays in the holy instant.*
 - B. *The Great Rays replace our awareness of the body, and thus make special relationships without value.*
 - C. *Seeing the Great Rays in the holy instant shows us the meaning of relationships without limits.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

Sentence 4:1 is odd, if you think about it. It says that special relationships are meaningless without a body, but what kind of relationship could there be *without a body*? To me, this hints at the nature of true relationships: They are spiritual in nature; the body plays only an incidental part. But, "If you *value* it [the special relationship], you must also *value the body*" (4:2); thus, special relationships *require* bodies. Why?

Remember that special relationships involve what the Course calls "bondage" (No, not the S&M type!). The Course tells us, "Possession for its own sake is the ego's fundamental creed" (T-13.VII.10:12), but how can you *possess* a spirit? Special relationships involve keeping the other person's body close, as the previous chapter told us:

² "In many only the spark remains, for the Great Rays are obscured" (T-10.IV.8:1).

"As the ego would limit your perception of your brothers to the body, so would the Holy Spirit release your vision and let you see the Great Rays shining from them, so unlimited that they reach to God" (T-15.IX.1:1).

"In the holy instant, where the Great Rays replace the body in awareness, the recognition of relationships without limits is given you" (T-15.IX.3:1).

The illusion of the autonomy of the body and its ability to overcome loneliness is but the working of the ego's plan to establish its own autonomy. As long as you believe that to be with a body is companionship, you will be compelled to attempt to keep your brother in his body, held there by guilt (T-15.VII.12:1-2).

Thinking we are egos, we attempt to confirm the ego identity by limiting others *and ourselves* to our bodies; the special relationship serves that end admirably (4:4). We could say that special relationships are designed to validate the ego. Seeing our true Identity in Christ (the "Great Rays") would break our identity with the ego, and thus make special relationships totally valueless to us (4:5).

If the special relationship loses all value to us, then *the body* also would lose all value to us, and we would no longer be invested in perceiving bodies (4:6–7). It even says that “the body *would* disappear”! That’s a startling assertion, and more than one person has been distressed by the way the Course seems to dismiss the body and the value of the body. I can’t believe that the Course means that our body would *literally* disappear, like, “Poof! I’m outa here!” I think it is talking about the realm of *perception*, the relative value we place on things, and the degree of reality we accord to them. As our awareness of one another’s True Identity in Christ grows, the body will gradually decrease in importance to us; eventually, it will virtually disappear from our perception. Later, toward the end of the Text, the Course explains this more clearly:

By focusing upon the good in him, the body grows decreasingly persistent in your sight, and will at length be seen as little more than just a shadow circling round the good. And this will be your concept of yourself, when you have reached the world beyond the sight your eyes alone can offer you to see (T-31.VII.3:3-4).

Paragraph 6 also sheds more light on the “disappearance” of the body, as we will see momentarily.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹You see the world you value. ²On this side of the bridge you see the world of separate bodies, seeking to join each other in **separate unions** and to become one **by losing**. ³When two **individuals** seek to become **one**, they are trying to **decrease** their magnitude. ⁴Each would **deny** his power, for the **separate union excludes the universe**. ⁵Far more is **left outside** than would be taken in, for God is left **without** and *nothing* taken in. ⁶If one such union were made **in perfect faith**, the universe **would** enter into it. ⁷Yet the special relationship the **ego** seeks does **not** include even **one** whole individual. ⁸The ego **wants** but part of him, and sees **only** this part and nothing else.

• Study Question •

5. *What, according to this paragraph, is the real purpose of any two who seek "to join each other in separate unions" (i.e. special relationships)? (There is more than one correct answer.)*
- A. *To become one by losing*
 - B. *To decrease our own magnitude (that is, establishing the ego)*
 - C. *To deny our own power*
 - D. *To have the universe enter our relationship*
 - E. *To join with only certain parts of individuals*

The Course often teaches us that our perceptions of the world are dependent on what we want to see, or what we *value* (5:1). This is true whether our wants and values are for the Truth or for an illusion. On the positive side it tells us, "When you want only love you will see nothing else" (T-12.VII.8:1). On the negative side it says, "Dreams show you that you have the power to make a world as you would have it be, and that because you want it you see it" (T-18.II.5:1).

The image of the bridge to the real world continues. The world we see on this side of the bridge is a world of bodies engaging in special relationships because we *value* separation and our separate ego identities (5:2). Jesus uses some uncomplimentary ways of describing our foolish ego desires: "to join each other in *separate unions* and to become one *by losing*." We already understand the way that special love relationships as conceived by the ego lead to exclusiveness (separation) and sacrifice, but Jesus goes on to emphasize these characteristics of specialness. In Sentence 3, pay particular attention to the emphasis on the word "individuals." I believe it underlines the *separateness* of two ego selves. We might re-word this to say, "When two *egos* seek to become *one*..." He says the two individuals are trying "to become one by losing," or "trying to decrease their magnitude" (5:2–3). He is referring to the way each one tries to sacrifice themselves, or parts of themselves, to manipulate their partner to give of themselves in return. But even more, by seeking completion merely between two individuals they have excluded the universe (5:4)!

"You and me against the world." It's clear that in such a relationship, "Far more is left outside than would be taken in" (5:5). Not only does this relationship exclude the rest of the world, it excludes God.

Jesus does not hesitate to state the flip side, the great *potential* of any relationship : "If one such union were made *in perfect faith*, the universe [including God] *would* enter into it" (5:6). So there is at least a hint, here, that relationships *can be a good thing*, if only the union is not limited to just the two individuals, but rather extends to include the universe.

Alas! That is not the usual choice. In special relationships that the ego designs, there is not even *one* whole individual (5:7)! It is the futile attempt at union of two individuals who see *themselves* as incomplete, and who do *not* want the whole of the other person,

but only selected parts (5:7)! If we were seeking union with a *whole* individual it would automatically include the universe, because our true Self is one with the universe. But in the weird exchange of specialness, what we are seeking is the part of the other person that makes *us* feel special: his physical strength, her gorgeous figure, his fame, her talent, his earning power, her intelligence, and so on. That's how it is "on this side of the bridge" (5:2).

For this world *is* the opposite of Heaven, being made to be its opposite, and everything here takes a direction exactly opposite of what is true. In Heaven, where the meaning of love is known, love is the same as union. Here, where the illusion of love is accepted in love's place, love is perceived as separation and exclusion (T-16.V.3:6-8).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Across the bridge it is so different! ²For a time the body is still seen, but **not** exclusively, as it is seen here. ³The little spark that holds the Great Rays within it is **also** visible, and this spark cannot be limited long to littleness. ⁴Once you have crossed the bridge, the **value** of the body is so diminished in **your** sight that you will see no need at all to **magnify** it. ⁵For you will realize that the **only** value the body has is to enable you to bring your brothers **to** the bridge **with** you, and to be **released together** there.

• Study Question •

6. *The previous paragraph spoke about "this side of the bridge," and this paragraph speaks about "across the bridge." Try to list several of the ways in which things are different "across the bridge," contrasting things in the two paragraphs.*

"Across the bridge it is so different!" (6:1). That is perhaps the understatement of the millennium. On this side of the bridge, all we see is bodies trying to join together in exclusive relationships involving self-sacrifice. But on the other side, although we *do* still see bodies, that isn't all we see (6:2). Our spiritual eyes have been opened and we are able to see "the little spark that holds the Great Rays within it" (6:3), which is a *huge* difference. You of course remember that the Great Rays are a symbol for the shining nature of Christ that is within all of us. The "little spark" was a term first introduced back

The "little spark" is an idea introduced in T-10.IV.7 and 8. Even though the Great Rays have been obscured, the little spark remains. It is the remaining call of creation in each of us.

The "littleness" mentioned in 6:3 has been referred to several times in the previous section: V.9:1–2 primarily, but also the word "little" in 10:8 and 11:2–3. It refers to the small, limited view of ourselves represented by the ego and body, in contrast to the magnitude of Who we really are.

in Chapter 10; it represents little, positive clues that we can see in a person that betray the Presence of Something Much Greater hiding behind the veil of the ego :

In many only the spark remains, for the Great Rays are obscured. Yet God has kept the spark alive so that the Rays can never be completely forgotten. If you but see the little spark you will learn of the greater light, for the Rays are there unseen. Perceiving the spark will heal, but knowing the light will create. Yet in the returning the little light must be acknowledged first, for the separation was a descent from magnitude to littleness. But the spark is still as pure as the great light, because it is the remaining call of creation. Put all your faith in it, and God Himself will answer you (T-10.IV.8:1-7).

Once we see the spark and acknowledge it, whether in yourself or someone else, it won't be long until the Great Rays begin to shine through (6:3). And when that happens, when you have "crossed the bridge," the value of that shining Light will be so great and powerful that the value of the body will pale into insignificance.

When 19th Century pioneers travelled across America in their covered wagons, the wagons were a crucial and important tool. They served an invaluable purpose. But when the pioneers reached their destination in Oregon or California, the covered wagon was of little use. In getting them to their destination, it had served its purpose.

Like the wagons, once we have begun to discern the Great Rays in our relationships, our bodies will play only a minor role (6:4). We will understand that our bodies have served the valuable purpose of enabling us to connect with other individuals who, like us, believed we were separate beings, and to "bring [them] to the bridge with [us]" (6:5), but we no longer need to place so much importance on them.

This is central to the Course's understanding of the body.³

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The bridge itself is nothing more than a transition in the **perspective** of reality. ²On this side, everything you see is grossly distorted and **completely** out of perspective. ³What **is** little and insignificant is magnified, and what is strong

³ "The Holy Spirit sees the body only as a means of communication" (T-6.V.5:5).

"The ego separates through the body. The Holy Spirit reaches through it to others. You do not perceive your brothers as the Holy Spirit does, because you do not regard bodies solely as a means of joining minds and uniting them with yours and mine. This interpretation of the body will change your mind entirely about its value. Of itself it has none" (T-8.VII.2:3-7).

"When the body ceases to attract you, and when you place no value on it as a means of getting anything, then there will be no interference in communication and your thoughts will be as free as God's. As you let the Holy Spirit teach you how to use the body only for purposes of communication, and renounce its use for separation and attack which the ego sees in it, you will learn you have no need of a body at all" (T-15.IX.7:1-2).

and powerful cut down to littleness. ⁴In the transition there is a period of confusion, in which a sense of actual disorientation may [Ur: seems to] occur. ⁵But fear it not, for it means **only** [nothing more than] that you have been willing to **let go** your hold on the distorted frame of reference that **seemed** to hold your world together. ⁶This frame of reference is **built** around the special relationship. ⁷Without **this** illusion there could **be** no meaning you would still seek here.

• **Study Question** •

7. *This question actually covers several paragraphs. In paragraphs 7, 8, 11 and 12, the terms “perspective” and “frame of reference” each occur three times.*
- (a) Locate and write down all the references, just the paragraph and sentence number, for example, 7:1.*
- (b) What is the source of the new perspective; that is, what experience grants it to us?*
- (c) What is the content of the new perspective; that is, what do we see from this new frame of reference? (You may need to use other parts of the section and think a little about your answer.)*

Here the Course gives yet another interpretation of what is meant by the symbol of “the bridge.” We have been told previously that we *build* the bridge that crosses the gap between our little ego self and the true, divine Self (T-16.III.8:2-3), and that the Holy Spirit is the bridge (T-16.IV.12:2). Here, we are informed that, “The bridge itself is nothing more than a transition in the *perspective* of reality” (7:1). This accords with a remark made early in the Text about the Holy Spirit:

The ego's perception has no counterpart in God, but the Holy Spirit remains the bridge between perception and knowledge. By enabling you to use perception in a way that reflects knowledge, you will ultimately remember it (T-6.II.7:2-3).

We *do* build the bridge, and the Holy Spirit *is* the bridge. Both are true. It is as we join with the Holy Spirit and share His perception (T-14.VII.7:1), thus making “a transition in the perspective of reality,” that we figuratively cross the bridge. We begin to see things differently. Before our perception has been joined with the Holy Spirit, it is as if we are wearing goggles designed to blur and distort our vision; “everything you see is grossly distorted and *completely* out of perspective” (7:2). Insignificant things (like our bodies) are magnified in importance, while truly significant things (such as the little spark) seem unimportant and meaningless.

As our perception begins to clear, we go through a period similar to what occurs when you remove a pair of distorting glasses. For instance, experiments have been done

Notice the discussion of the “period of confusion” during the transition from one side of the bridge to the other. The confusion is actually a good sign because it means we have begun to let go of our old frame of reference (the ego and its specialness).

in which participants are fitted with glasses that turn everything they see upside down. At first, it is very difficult for them to do anything at all. They cannot read. Everything appears upside down; they can barely walk. But after a few days, somehow their brains adjust and invert the image, and everything looks right again—until they take the glasses off! Then, everything is upside down for a while, until their brains flip the picture again. That period of transition is a period of confusion.

The Course says that, "a world in which everything is backwards and upside down arose from this projection of error" (T-18.I.6:4). So when our perception suddenly turns right-side up, we go through a period of confusion. Jesus counsels us not to fear it (7:5). The confusion is actually a good sign! It means "that you have been willing to *let go* your hold on the distorted frame of reference that seemed to hold your world together" (7:5), a frame of reference that is "*built* around the special relationship" (7:6). In other words, the entire way we look at the world is *based on* the assumption of the value of special relationships as the ego understands them. "It's not what you know, it's *who* you know." Letting go of that entire frame of reference "that *seemed* to hold your world together" is bound to be distressing! Letting go of this means letting go of all hope of finding meaning in our physical existence (7:7). This is a complete reversal of everything we've ever believed about the world.

This is the final point to which each one must come at last, to lay aside all hope of finding happiness where there is none; of being saved by what can only hurt; of making peace of chaos, joy of pain, and Heaven out of hell (W-pI.200.2:1).

The purpose of the workbook is to train your mind in a systematic way to a different perception of everyone and everything in the world (W.Int.4:1).

So, then, do we need to be afraid of having our entire world ripped apart? Is being enlightened like having the carpet pulled out from under your feet? Not at all, as the next paragraph makes clear.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Fear not that you will be abruptly lifted up and hurled into reality. ²Time is kind, and if you use it ~~on behalf of~~ [for] reality, it will keep gentle pace with you in your transition. ³The urgency is only in dislodging your mind from its **fixed** position here. ⁴This will not leave you homeless and **without** a frame of reference. ⁵The period of disorientation, which precedes the actual transition, is far shorter than the time it took to fix your mind so firmly on illusions. ⁶Delay will hurt you now **more than before, only** because you realize it *is* delay, and that escape from pain **is really possible**. ⁷Find hope and comfort, rather than despair, in this: You could not long find even the **illusion** of love in **any** special relationship here. ⁸For you are no longer **wholly** insane, and you ~~would-see~~ recognize the guilt of **self-betrayal for what it is**.

• Study Question •

8. *When our special relationships do not satisfy us, our attitude should be one of “hope and comfort” in the fact. Why?*
- A. *Because the illusion of love doesn't last*
 - B. *Because it shows we are not wholly insane*
 - C. *Because the illusion cannot fool us any more; we can see the guilt behind it*
 - D. *Because not being fooled shows we are making progress*
 - E. *All of the above*

We are quite naturally fearful of being “abruptly lifted up and hurled into reality,” thus being roughly torn away from our ego underpinnings. Jesus says it won't happen that way (8:1); our transition will be taken at a gradual, “gentle pace” (8:2). But there is a condition: We must use time “for reality”; that is, we need to keep moving in the right direction.

To you who seem to find this course to be too difficult to learn, let me repeat that to achieve a goal you must proceed in its direction, not away from it (T-31.IV.7:3).

We need to remember what time is *for*: healing (T-9.III.8:3).

Forget not that the healing of God's Son is all the world is for. That is the only purpose the Holy Spirit sees in it, and thus the only one it has. Until you see the healing of the Son as all you wish to be accomplished by the world, by time and all appearances, you will not know the Father nor yourself (T-24.VI.4:1-3).

Healing, the achievement of inner peace, is all that time is for. It is all that our relationships are for. All that our jobs are for. All that life is for! And *if* we see time in this way, and use it in this way, then time will “keep gentle pace with you in your transition” (8:2). To me, that implies that I will feel neither rushed nor delayed; time will move along and it will all feel just right, as though things keep falling in place and

occurring just when they should occur. Wow! That's how I want to pass through life: a "joyful journey home" (T-13.VII.6:4),

...be not restless, for you undertake a quiet journey to the peace of God, where He would have you be in quietness...The Holy Spirit will teach you to awaken unto us and to yourself. This is the only real need to be fulfilled in time (T-13.VII.15:3, 16:5–6).

The only urgent thing is breaking up the log-jam of thought in our minds, "dislodging your mind from its *fixed* position here" (8:3). That launches you on the journey, but it does not knock you off your feet nor completely destroy your frame of reference (8:4). Other than in initiating that brain-thaw, getting you from "fixed" to "moving," there is no rush about reaching the final goal, and although the transition is a time of "disorientation," it will be a much shorter time than was required to freeze the illusions in our minds (8:5). Urgency exists only in getting us started (dislodging our minds from their stubborn holding on to the ego identity and its special relationships). If we *do* delay ourselves—for instance, by getting sidetracked trying to find self-completion in a special love relationship—it will hurt more than ever because we will recognize what we are doing (8:6). But this increased sensitivity is actually *good* news because it means that we can't even sustain our belief in "the illusion of love in any special relationship here" (8:7). We are no longer entirely insane. If we do get entangled in the ego ritual of self-sacrifice and guilt, we will recognize it quickly, and get out of it (8:8).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Nothing you seek to strengthen in the special relationship is **really** part of you. ²And you cannot keep **part** of the thought system that taught you it **was** real, and understand the Thought that ~~knows~~ [*really knows*] what you are. ³You **have** allowed the Thought of your reality to enter your mind, and because **you** invited it, it **will** abide with you. ⁴Your love for it will not allow you to betray yourself, and you **could** not enter into a relationship **where it could not go with you**, for you would **not want to** be **apart** from it.

• Study Question •

9. *Once you have really started A Course in Miracles you will never be satisfied with your special relationships, and you are destined to find true relationship with God and with the Sonship. Why?*
- A. *You have allowed the Thought of your reality into your mind, and you will never be able to enter a relationship where that awareness cannot go with you.*
 - B. *You love the truth too much to betray yourself again.*
 - C. *You can't have the Thought of what you really are in your mind and continue for long to hold on to the thought system that strengthens the ego, which is not what you are.*
 - D. *All of the above.*

In the ego's form of special relationships, we are constantly trying to prop up our egos and to reinforce our illusion of autonomy. But what we are trying to strengthen is not really part of us at all (9:1)! Once we've come in touch with that real Self, it will drive the belief in the reality of the ego right out of our minds. The two are incompatible (9:2). We've invited "the Thought of your reality" to enter, so it will stay with us (9:3). And because we love that Thought, we will find that we cannot really enter into an ego-based relationship any more, because that would require leaving the Thought of our reality behind (9:4). We can't go back! The only way for us now is *forward* to the goal.

Paragraph 10

10. ¹Be glad you have escaped the mockery of salvation the ego offered you, and look not back with longing on the travesty it made of your relationships. ²Now no one need suffer, for you have come too far to yield to the illusion of the beauty and holiness of guilt. ³Only the wholly insane could look on death and suffering, sickness and despair, and see it thus. ⁴What guilt has wrought is ugly, fearful and very dangerous. ⁵See no illusion of truth and beauty there. ⁶And be you thankful that there *is* a place where truth and beauty wait for you. ⁷Go on to meet them gladly, and learn how much awaits you for the simple willingness to give up nothing *because* it is nothing.

• Study Question •

10. *This section is speaking to those who have, to some degree, begun the journey but are having second thoughts, perhaps looking back with fond remembrance on some “pleasant memories” in special relationships. This description probably fits most of us! What seems to be the main message of the paragraph?*

- A. *No one needs to suffer.*
- B. *We have to be insane to see beauty and holiness in death and suffering.*
- C. *Do not look back on the seeming beauty of specialness, but go on to meet real truth and beauty.*



Maybe you have awakened to the realization of Who you are in Truth. Maybe you have stepped away from unholy relationships, or have begun to see them transformed into holy relationships. And yet, as you think back on your past, you remember some of the moments that seemed to make you happy. For instance, I can recall one time when I “fell head over heels in love” with a certain woman. I felt out of control, like a person who just started down a water slide. There was no way to stop myself from obsessing about this woman. It was a wild and wonderful feeling, I have to admit. I felt as though, if I could not have her, I’d be in enormous pain.

We all know the “love songs” about this kind of thing. “I can’t live, if living is without you.” Or this, from John Cougar Mellancamp:

Hurt so good
Come on baby, make it hurt so good
Sometimes love don't feel like it should
You make it hurt so good

Sometimes, if we look back on those tempestuous relationships, we feel nostalgic about them and wish we could go back—just for the good parts, of course! Jesus advises us to just forget it! “Be glad you have escaped,” he says, and don’t look back with longing (10:1). You’re too smart now to believe that guilt could somehow be beautiful or holy (10:2). We are no longer entirely insane (8:8)—maybe just *partly* insane to be even considering tempted to look back—and *only* someone wholly insane could think that guilt, with its sidekicks of death and suffering, sickness and despair, could seem attractive (10:3). We know, now, that guilt’s product is never happy; it “is ugly, fearful, and very dangerous” (10:4). Maybe from the distance of time we miss those relationships and think they look good, but they are really just skeletons with painted lips. We should no longer be deceived by the patina of truth and beauty the ego tries to paint on those guilt-based relationships (10:5).

On the contrary, we can be thankful that we have found the way to *real* truth and beauty (10:6), across that bridge. It’s all there waiting for us, and we can go to meet it

gladly. The only “cost” to us is the “willingness to give up nothing *because* it is nothing” (10:7).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹The new perspective you will gain from crossing over will be the understanding of **where Heaven is**. ²From ~~this side~~ [*here*], it seems to be outside and **across** the bridge. ³Yet as you cross to **join** it, **it will join with you and become one** with you. ⁴And you will think, in glad astonishment, that for all this **you gave up nothing!** ⁵The joy of Heaven, which **has** no limit, is **increased** with each light that returns to take its rightful place within it. ⁶Wait no longer, for the Love of God and *you*. ⁷And may the holy instant speed you on the way, as it will surely do if you but **let** it come to you.

• Study Question •

11. *What helps us on our way to crossing the bridge?*

- A. *The Love of God.*
- B. *The new perspective.*
- C. *The holy instant.*



We have believed that we could find heaven in a special relationship, but instead we found hell. The new perspective, gained when we cross the bridge, shows us that Heaven is not outside us on the other side of the bridge, but it is one with us (11:2–3). I like the reference to astonishment (11:4); it is a missing element in a lot of supposedly spiritual teaching. This is not a mere augmentation of intellectual understanding; it is a transformational, astonishing inner revelation: “For *all this*, I gave up *nothing!*” Richard Rohr, writing about the effect on people of reading the words of Jesus, remarks that all too often, “They will be ‘religion’ as we have come to expect it in our particular culture, but not any genuine ‘astonishment’ that rearranges everything”⁴. This kind of experience “rearranges everything.”

As each one of us “returns” to take our rightful place in Heaven (which is not a place, but a state of consciousness), the joy of Heaven increases, and it is capable of increasing without limit (11:5). “Wait no longer!” Jesus urges us, “for the Love of God and *you*” (11:6). Notice how the phrase “for the Love of God,” used in 2:3, is repeated here in 11:6, and how “and you” is added, so it means “for for Love of God and for the love of you.” If we truly love ourselves, we will not delay. We will allow the holy instant to come to us, speeding us on our way (11:7).

Also, this chapter has an unusually large number (21) references to “Heaven.” This paragraph’s references are some of the key ones. The ego is trying to provide a substitute illusion of Heaven in this world, and its chief weapon in doing so is the special love relationship. The holy instant, by giving us a foretaste of Heaven so we can begin to

4 Richard Rohr, *Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality*, p. 8)

understand its true nature as something that is within us, actually *one* with us, rather than outside of us, helps us to recognize the falsity of the ego's illusions of love.⁵

Paragraph 12

12. ¹The Holy Spirit asks only this little help of you: Whenever your thoughts wander to a special relationship which still **attracts** you, enter with Him into a holy instant, and there **let Him release you**. ²He needs only your willingness to **share** His perspective to give it to you completely. ³And your willingness need not be complete **because His is perfect**. ⁴It is His task to atone for your **unwillingness** by His perfect faith, and it is **His** faith you share with Him there. ⁵Out of **your** recognition of your **unwillingness** for your release, His **perfect** willingness is **given** you. ⁶Call upon Him, for Heaven is at His call. ⁷And **let Him call on Heaven for** you.

• Study Question •

12. In your own words, summarize what this paragraph has to say about our willingness, our unwillingness, and the Holy Spirit's willingness.

As you will recall, back in paragraph 3, Jesus said, "There is a way in which the Holy Spirit asks your help, if you would have His" (3:1). Jesus returns to the this point now, giving us specific instructions on how to obtain the help of the Holy Spirit in escaping from the ego's perception of relationships and of the world. Whenever we are tempted by a special relationship, we are to enter into a holy instant with the Holy Spirit, where we can share His perspective, and see things from a different frame of reference. This will release us All that is needed is our willingness to do this (12:1–2).

For a similar instruction on sharing the perspective (or perception) of the Holy Spirit, read over Chapter 12, Section I, "The Judgment of the Holy Spirit," and Chapter 14, Section VII, "Sharing Perception with the Holy Spirit." The words of 12:1–2 are very much like what was said earlier: "The Holy Spirit asks of you but this; bring to Him every secret you have locked away from Him" (T-14.VII.6:1). He "asks only this little help of you," and "The Holy Spirit asks of you but this." They must be speaking of the same thing: entering into a holy instant in which He enables us to see the situation or person from His perspective rather than the ego's. In T-12.I, we learned that His judgment sees everything as one of two things: an expression of love, or a call for help. All we have to do is *be willing to see things His way*. In regard to special relationships, this means letting go of the thrill of attraction, letting go of the whole, sick game of romance.

And if you doubt your own willingness to do that, good news! "Your willingness need not be complete *because His is perfect*" (12:3). Part of the function of the Holy Spirit is to make up for your *unwillingness*, using His perfect faith in you. When we connect with

⁵ "Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness..." (T-18.VI.1:5-6).

the Holy Spirit within, that perfect faith is transmitted to us; in that moment we share it with Him (12:4).

The paradoxical thing is that what releases and unleashes the Spirit's perfect willingness within our minds is our recognition of our *unwillingness* (12:5). It's similar to the First and Second Step in AA:

“We admitted we were powerless over alcohol— that our lives had become unmanageable” and “We came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.”

We may not be alcoholics, but nearly all of us are *relationship addicts*. We have to recognize the degree to which we are *unwilling* to be released from that insanity, that our egos are “unmanageable” (a great word!), and then to open to that “Power greater than ourselves,” to “Call upon Him, for Heaven is at His call” (12:6). One of my favorite verses in the Bible is Jeremiah 33:3: “Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.” (Jeremiah 33:3 NRSV). We have to *call*. We have to take initiative, desiring and being willing to be released, recognizing our reluctance and yet being willing to be made willing, willing to believe that we *can* do this, that in truth we *want* this. If we call, He will answer, and He will “*call on Heaven for you*” (12:7).

That's what it will take to release us: an infusion of power from on high. It is available to all of us. It is available to you. It needs only your willingness. Try to remember to put this into practice the next time that “your thoughts wander to a special relationship which still *attracts* you” (12:1). The reward is great, an experience that rearranges everything. “Be you thankful that there is a place where truth and beauty wait for you. Go on to meet them gladly, and learn how much awaits you for the simple willingness to give up nothing because it is nothing” (10:6–7).coda

Answer Key

1. B

2. A

3. In a special relationship, we are practicing sacrifice, and trying to get the other person to sacrifice for us in return. By "giving" sacrifice we are attempting to make the other guilty enough to "give" in return. We also feel guilty for taking from the other. (See Section V, paragraph 7.)

4. D

5. A, B and C

6. Contrast of how things are seen on the two sides of the bridge:

ON THIS SIDE

ACROSS THE BRIDGE

See world of separate bodies exclusively

Body seen but not exclusively

Little spark not seen

Little spark is also visible

Seek to join in separate unions, magnify the body and diminish our magnitude

See no need to magnify the body

7. (a) 7:1, 7:5, 7:6, 8:4, 11:1 and 12:2.

7. (b) Crossing the bridge (11:1), or the holy instant (11:7 and 12:1–2).

7. (c) The understanding of where Heaven is (11:1); real truth and beauty (10:6); our true magnitude in the Great Rays (6:3).

8. E

9. D

10. C

11. C

12. All that is needed is our willingness, and that does not have to be perfect or complete, because the willingness of the Holy Spirit *is* perfect. His faith can make up for (atone for) our unwillingness. If we are open enough to *recognize our unwillingness*, He will give us His own!