

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 17, Section VIII

The Conditions of Peace

Legend:

- blue text** = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)
bold blue text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext
red text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext
light blue text = editorial comments
~~striketrough-blue text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition
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Overview of the Section

The “conditions” of peace: The phrase here does not refer to a description of various states of peace; rather, the phrase is used in the sense of prerequisites, or things which must be established before peace can be realized.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The holy instant is nothing more than a special case, or an extreme example, of what **every** situation is **meant** to be. ²The meaning that the Holy Spirit's purpose has **given** it [**the holy instant**] is also given to **every** situation. ³It calls forth just the same **suspension** of faithlessness, withheld and left **unused**, that faith might answer to the call of truth. ⁴The holy instant is the shining example, the clear and unequivocal demonstration of the meaning of **every** relationship and **every** situation, **seen as a whole**. ⁵Faith has **accepted** every **aspect** of the situation, and faithlessness has not forced **any** exclusion on it. ⁶It is a situation of perfect peace, simply because **you have let it be what it is**.

• Study Question •

1. *In a given situation, what do we actively need to do to bring about perfect peace?*
 - A. *Nothing; we simply withhold faithlessness and do not use it.*
 - B. *We need to accept every aspect of the situation.*
 - C. *We must clearly see the meaning of the situation.*

The holy instant is the clear demonstration of what every situation is *meant* to be, when seen as a whole (1:1). When it says it is “an extreme example,” I think it means that every situation is meant to display the same characteristics as a holy instant, but in the

holy instant those elements are starkly prominent. An ordinary situation “seen as a whole,” will display the same elements as a holy instant, but they will be more subdued.

Every situation shares the same purpose that the Holy Spirit has given to the holy instant (1:2). If we suspend our faithlessness in any situation, choosing not to give in to our doubts and suspicions, faith is already present in the amount we need, ready to answer truth's call for faith (1:3). The holy instant that gives birth to a holy relationship is like a template—a shining example, a clear and unequivocal demonstration of what every situation and every relationship can be, and the meaning that can be imparted to it (1:4).

What does it mean to see each situation “as a whole”? It means that nothing is excluded, and everything is accepted (1:5). There is no condemnation in play, no rejection of anyone. Everyone involved is seen as whole and complete. You have simply let the situation be what it is (1:6). In the Workbook, one of the short lessons in Part II addresses this issue of letting things be from a slightly different perspective:

LESSON 268

Let all things be exactly as they are.

1. ¹ *Let me not be Your critic, Lord, today, and judge against You.* ² *Let me not attempt to interfere with Your creation, and distort it into sickly forms.* ³ *Let me be willing to withdraw my wishes from its unity, and thus to let it be as You created it.* ⁴ *For thus will I be able, too, to recognize my Self as You created me.* ⁵ *In Love was I created, and in Love will I remain forever.* ⁶ *What can frighten me, when I let all things be exactly as they are?*

2. ¹ Let not our sight be blasphemous today, nor let our ears attend to lying tongues. ² Only reality is free of pain. ³ Only reality is free of loss. ⁴ Only reality is wholly safe. ⁵ And it is only this we seek today.

You may think you are not a judging person. But notice how you react to the idea, “Let all things be exactly as they are.” Aren't you reluctant, as I am, to apply that universally to everything in your life? To let all things be, you must totally refrain from judging, and if you are not at ease with the idea of letting all things be exactly as they are, *you are judging*. Some things, in your judgment, should not be left “as they are.” “It is necessary for the teacher of God to realize, not that he should not judge, but that he cannot.” (M-10.2:1) To say “let it be” is to realize this, and to affirm that God's judgment is perfect. We are not to judge anything that happens. “This day I will judge nothing that occurs” (W-pII.243). That means we don't judge anything bad, and neither do we judge it good. We don't judge at all. What is, is. Period. Let it be.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹This simple courtesy is all the Holy Spirit asks of you. ²Let truth be what it is. ³Do not **intrude** upon it, do not **attack** it, do **not** interrupt its coming. ⁴Let it encompass **every** situation and bring you peace. ⁵Not even faith is asked of you, for truth asks nothing. ⁶Let it [truth] enter, and **it** will call forth and **secure** for you the faith you need for peace. ⁷But rise you not **against** it, for against **your** opposition it **cannot** come.

• Study Question •

2. *Is the Course asking us to produce faith? What does this paragraph say about where faith comes from, and about our part in faith's functioning as the means to bring us to peace?*

Jesus calls this a “simple courtesy,” and says it is all the Holy Spirit asks of us (2:1)—to just “let truth be what it is,” and to “not *intrude* upon it,” “*attack it*,” or “interrupt its coming” (2:2–3). Let’s unpack that a bit. What is the “truth” that is “coming” in this (and every) situation? From 1:3, we learn that the truth is something that calls for faith. Thus, it is the intended *object* of our faith. It is the higher perception of the situation that the Holy Spirit wants us to share with Him.

So, then, in practice, certain events transpire. Certain words are spoken. Seen from the perspective of our ego, these events may present some kind of problem, or represent some form of attack or threat. From within, the Holy Spirit offers His perception of the situation, *which is the truth* of the situation. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Section I (“The Judgment of the Holy Spirit”), His judgment is always simple:

Every loving thought is true. Everything else is an appeal for healing and help, regardless of the form it takes. (T-12.I.3:3-4).

This is the truth that is attempting to come into the situation. We are asked, first, not to interrupt its coming. Our egos will attempt to persuade us that to perceive the situation in this light is not safe, and we may resist the inner impulse to see only the loving thoughts as real, and everything else as a call for help, leaving *nothing* to judge or condemn. We are asked to allow the truth to enter our minds, not to resist.

Second, we are asked not to attack the truth. Basically, this means refusing to listen to or give credence to the arguments of our egos against the Holy Spirit’s perception.

Third, we are asked not to intrude upon the truth. What this conjures up in my mind is allowing myself to poke at the truth, to prod it, to look into it suspiciously, with a kind of skeptical attitude: “Is this perception *really* reliable?” Don’t do that.

Fourth, summing it all up, we are to simply let the truth be what it is¹. Instead of resisting, allow it to “encompass *every* situation and bring you peace” (2:4). You don’t even have to supply faith in this truth. Let it be, and it will generate and *secure* the faith that you need (2:5–6). You don’t have to *do* anything. You just have to *refrain* from fighting against it when it rises up within you (2:7)! If we are *courteous* to this inner Guest, allowing truth to do its thing, the faith will come. As Jesus said in the first paragraph: Don’t *use* your faithlessness. It may speak up. If it does, just say, “No, thanks.”

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Would you not **want** to make a holy instant of **every** situation? ²For such is the gift of faith, freely given wherever faithlessness is laid aside, **unused**. ³And **then** the power of the Holy Spirit’s purpose is free to use instead. ⁴This power **instantly** transforms **all** situations into one sure and continuous means for **establishing** His purpose, and **demonstrating** its reality. ⁵What has been **demonstrated** [through the holy instant] has called for faith, and has been **given** it. ⁶Now it becomes a fact, from which faith can no longer **be** withheld. ⁷The strain of **refusing** faith to truth is enormous, and far greater than you realize. ⁸But to **answer** truth with faith entails no strain at all.

¹ The idea of letting what is *just be* is very similar to the teaching of Byron Katie’s “The Work,” which is presented in detail, with great simplicity and clarity, in the book, *Loving What Is*. You may wish to read it if you find this teaching to be challenging. Katie does an excellent job of presenting the idea of not judging “what is,” but stops short of the Holy Spirit’s vision of the ultimate Truth behind appearances.

• Study Question •

3. Which of the following things are examples of faithlessness, things we are to lay aside and not use (based on what we've read up till now)?
- A. Seeing our own mind as in conflict with our brother's mind, under attack
 - B. Viewing the relationship in terms of physical bodies.
 - C. Looking for a substitute outside the relationship to fill our imagined needs.
 - D. Seeing the sins of our brother as a justification for lack of faith in him.
 - E. All of the above.

Faith will make a holy instant of every situation, if we lay aside our faithlessness without using it. Isn't that something you *want* (3:1–2)? When we lay aside faithlessness we gain access to “the power of the Holy Spirit's purpose” (3:3). This power turns all situations into something that *establishes* the Holy Spirit's purpose and *demonstrates* its reality (3:4). When we allow truth to enter, bringing with it faith in its reality, we come to see the truth as *fact*. Doubt is no longer possible (3:5–6). In fact, resisting the truth causes us a great deal of strain, while exercising faith in truth “entails no strain at all” (3:7–8).

The strain of constant judgment is virtually intolerable. It is curious that an ability so debilitating would be so deeply cherished (T-3.VI.5:6-7).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹To you who have **acknowledged** the call of your Redeemer, the strain of **not** responding to His call **seems** to be **greater** than before. ²This is not so. ³Before, the strain was there, but you attributed it **to something else**, believing that the “something else” **produced** it. ⁴This was **never** true. ⁵For what the “something else” produced was sorrow and depression, sickness and pain, darkness and dim imaginings of terror, cold fantasies of fear and fiery dreams of hell. ⁶And it was nothing but the intolerable strain of **refusing** [your refusal] to give faith to truth, and see its evident reality.

• Study Question •

4. *When we have responded to the call of Christ, this often seems to introduce a great deal of new strain into our lives. In fact, this strain is not new at all, we are just more accurately attributing it to a different source.*
- (a) What did we perceive as being the source of our sorrow, depression, and so on before?*
- (b) What was, and still is, the real cause?*
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Jesus here adds supporting argument to his assertion that “the strain of refusing faith to truth is enormous.” Before we offered any relationship to the Holy Spirit, before we acknowledged the inner call of God, it probably never occurred to us that much of the strain we felt in life, if not all of it, came from *resisting that inner call*. We thought the strain came from something else (4:1–3)—something outside of us, like another person, or a sudden loss of some kind. Those things seemed to produce many terrible things (4:5), those things were really all “the strain of not responding to His call,” our “refusal to give faith to truth, and see its evident reality.” That strain has always been there. Now, having *acknowledged* His call, we realize that the strain comes from our resistance to the Spirit. Before, we blamed things outside for the strain, but they were never really the cause (4:4–6).

The Greek Stoic Philosopher Epictetus (60 AD - 135 AD) knew all about this when he wrote:

“People are not disturbed by things, but by the view they take of them,” and, “It's not what happens to you, but how you react to it that matters.”

It isn't what happens to us or what other people do that causes our suffering. It is our *thoughts* about those things that bring us grief.

What the world is, is but a fact. You cannot choose what this should be. But you can choose how you would see it. Indeed, you *must* choose this (M-11.1:9-12).

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Such was the crucifixion of the Son of God. ²His faithlessness did this to him. ³Think carefully before you let yourself use faithlessness against him. ⁴For he **is** risen, and **you** have accepted the Cause of his awakening **as yours**. ⁵You have assumed your part in his redemption, and you are now fully responsible to him. ⁶Fail him not now, for it has been given you to realize what your lack of faith in him **must** mean to **you**. ⁷His salvation is your **only** purpose. ⁸See only this in **every** situation, and it **will** be a means for bringing **only** this.

• Study Question •

5. *What is now our only purpose, in any relationship, in any situation?*
 - A. *The salvation of the Son of God*
 - B. *The meeting of our higher emotional needs*
 - C. *Realizing what our lack of faith means to ourselves*

When the Course speaks here of “the crucifixion of the Son of God” (5:1), most people’s thought probably go immediately to the death of Jesus on the cross. But that isn’t what the phrase means here, so please, get that out of your mind at once. The Son of God is the Christ, Who is the Self we *all* share. It is referring to the suffering that has been experienced by humanity in all of its history, and it is saying that, “*His* faithlessness did this to him” (5:2).

Our own faithlessness—our decision to *refuse* to acknowledge our true Identity, our egos’ insistence on autonomy or separateness—has been the cause of all our pain (our “crucifixion”). Every time we repeat that failure, failing to see the Christ in ourselves or in our brothers and sisters—we repeat the same error and perpetuate the suffering. Jesus asks us to “think carefully,” to realize just what we are doing (5:3).

But the Son of God has risen (5:4). I believe this *does* refer to Jesus, who, in his resurrection, opened the door to the redemption of the entire Sonship. The Course says we rose with him:

...you arose with him when he began to save the world (C-6.5:5).

I will awaken you as surely as I awakened myself, for I awoke for you. In my resurrection is your release (T-12.II.7:2-3).

He began the work. He led the way. The Course uses the term *resurrection* as a symbol of spiritual awakening, and of remembering the Truth in all things:

Very simply, the resurrection is the overcoming or surmounting of death. It is a reawakening or a rebirth; a change of mind about the meaning of the world. It is the acceptance of the Holy Spirit's interpretation of the world's purpose; the acceptance of the Atonement for oneself. It is the end of dreams of misery, and the glad awareness of the Holy Spirit's final dream. It is the recognition of the gifts of God...Christ's face is seen in every living thing, and nothing is held in darkness, apart from the light of forgiveness" (M-28.1:1-5; 2:6).

In beginning a holy relationship, we have accepted our part in the Son’s redemption, and we have become responsible to bring redemption to the world (5:5). We are among the ministers of God (W-pI.154); the salvation of the world depends on us (W-pI.70.10:4 & W-pI.186). He urges us not to fail “him,” meaning, I think, both the universal Son of God and our relationship partner (5:6). He points out that we now know what lack of faith in our brother does to *us*. It crucifies us; it causes our suffering and lack of peace.

In aligning ourselves with Jesus, with the Christ in all humankind, we have taken on a crucial new purpose: “His salvation [the salvation of the Sonship, and of the person in

front of us] is your *only* purpose” (5:7). In the story of Cain and Abel in Genesis, after killing Abel and being asked by God where Abel is, Cain replies, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” God probably answered, “Yes.” Because here, He is telling us that our only purpose in the world is to be a savior to our brothers and sisters. We are here to communicate redemption to them. “I am the light of the world. That is my only function. That is why I am here” (W-pI.61.5:3-5). You probably did not realize, when you became a student of ACIM, that this is what you signed up for. But it is!

Imagine seeing this as your only purpose “in *every* situation” (5:8). Instead of giving in to your ego and coming back with a snappy counter-attack, imagine saying “No” to your faithless thoughts, and instead silently affirming, “I am here to be the light of the world. I am my brother’s savior, not his judge.” “I am here only to be truly helpful. I am here to represent him who sent me” (T-2.V.18:2–3). If we make that choice, the situation will become a means for *bringing* salvation. This is what the Course means when, talking about every encounter being a holy encounter, it urges us, “Do not leave anyone without giving salvation to him and receiving it yourself” (T-8.III.4:7).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹When you accepted truth as the goal for your relationship, you became a giver of peace as surely as your Father gave peace to **you**. ²For the goal of peace cannot **be** accepted **apart** from its conditions [that you become a giver of peace], and you had faith in it for no one accepts what he does **not** believe is **real**. ³**Your purpose has not changed**, and **will** not change, for you **accepted** what can **never** change. ⁴And nothing that it needs to **be** forever changeless can you now **withhold** from it. ⁵Your release is certain. ⁶Give as you have received. ⁷And demonstrate that you have risen **far** beyond **any** situation that could hold you back, and keep you **separate** from Him Whose call you answered.

• Study Question •

6. *What, from this paragraph, do “the conditions of peace” seem to be?*

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In the last paragraph we saw what it means to have “accepted truth as the goal for your relationship” (6:1): We become givers of peace, and “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9 ESV). That’s the trick, the hook in God’s invitation. You cannot accept the goal of peace for *yourself* without becoming a giver of peace to everyone else; that is the *condition* of peace, in both senses of the word. It is a prerequisite: You must give peace to have peace (“To have peace, teach peace to learn it” (T-6.Vb.7:5)). It is also the *characteristic* of peace: Peacemakers *are peaceful*, and to be peaceful means to be a giver of peace. Giving peace is what makes you peaceful! And we *have* accepted that goal; we had faith in it, and the proof is that we accepted it, because “no one accepts what he does *not* believe is *real*” (6:2).

Allen Watson's Commentary on the Text of *A Course in Miracles*

At the start of a holy relationship the purpose was peace, and that never changes. It *cannot* change (6:3). The goal is still peace. Our cooperation is inevitable (6:4). As the Borg character/civilization told the Star Trek folks, “Resistance is futile.” In this case, that isn’t a fiction; it’s true. But the end isn’t being trapped in something you do not want. The end is release into everything you ever wanted. “Your release is certain” (6:5).

So, the summary of the lesson is simply this: “**Give as you have received**” (6:6). Give peace as you have been given it. And, as Jesus taught when he walked the earth:

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. (Luke 6:38 ESV)

We are students of *A Course in Miracles*. How, then, shall we live? We are asked to become living demonstrations of truth, people who “have risen *far* beyond *any* situation that could hold you back, and keep you separate from” God (6:7). We are to become people whose peace cannot be shaken, people whose very presence *brings peace* into every situation. Getting there is a process; the Course recognizes that. But that goal—unshakable peace, infectious peace—should ever be before us.

It will be necessary, however, that you learn to require no special settings in which to apply what you have learned. You will need your learning most in situations that appear to be upsetting, rather than in those that already seem to be calm and quiet. The purpose of your learning is to enable you to bring the quiet with you, and to heal distress and turmoil. This is not done by avoiding them and seeking a haven of isolation for yourself.

You will yet learn that peace is part of you, and requires only that you be there to embrace any situation in which you are. And finally you will learn that there is no limit to where you are, so that your peace is everywhere, as you are (W-r1.4:2-5:2).

Answer Key

1. A

2. The Course is not asking faith of us; faith is called forth by truth, if we allow the truth to enter, and refrain from interfering with it. Our part is only in *not opposing* the truth in any situation; if we do, truth will give us faith, and faith will lead us to peace.

3. E

4. **(a)** Before, we attributed the strain we felt as sorrow and pain to “something else” outside of ourselves. **(b)** Now, we see that this strain was, and still is, caused only by our refusal to give faith to the truth, our refusal to respond to God’s Call.

5. A

6. To give as we have received; to become a giver of peace, as God created us to be.