

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 18, Section VIII

The Little Garden

Legend:

Sans serif text = Material from ACIM 3rd edition (FIP)

Italic or underlined sans serif text = words emphasized in all caps in Urtext

Bold sans serif text = alternate or omitted material from the Urtext

Typewriter text = editorial comments

~~strikethrough sans serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Section

The central image of this section is that our illusionary self is like an infinitesimal piece of mind (or of our Christ Self) that we have walled off with the body and claimed as our kingdom, a little garden ruled by the ego. It is not saying our “I” is a tiny part of *God*, but a tiny part of *our mind* (see 3:3). Thus the sun or ocean refers to Christ, the Self; the sunbeam and ripple refer to our extremely limited self-concept.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹It is only the awareness of the body that makes love seem limited. ²For the body *is* a limit on love. ³The belief in limited love was its origin, and it was made to limit the unlimited. ⁴Think not that this is merely allegorical, for it was made to limit *you*. ⁵Can you who see yourself within a body know yourself as an idea? ⁶Everything you recognize you identify with [**by**] externals, something outside itself. ⁷You cannot even think of God without a body, or in some form you think you recognize.

• Study Question •

1. Which of the following is not true about our bodies? (More than one.)
 - A. Only awareness of the body makes love seem to be limited.
 - B. The Course is speaking allegorically when it says we made the body as a limit on love. (The opposite of allegorically is “literally.”)
 - C. As long as we conceive of ourselves as within a body we cannot know ourselves as an idea.
 - D. We are unlimited beings existing in limited bodies.
 - E. Our identification with the body causes us to perceive everything in some physical form, even God.

This paragraph continues to speak of the crippling effects caused by our awareness of and identification with the body—a theme that has run through the last two sections as well. We made the body to limit unlimited love (1:3). Our awareness of the body is what makes love *seem* limited (1:1). Because the ego believed in limited love, it made the body to express that limit (1:2–3). The Course means this quite literally; your body was made to limit *you* (1:4).

Take a moment to consider your concept of yourself. Nearly everyone, unless they are quite spiritually advanced, see themselves as living within a body. Most likely, that is true of you. If so, when the Course tells us that we are an idea, a thought in the mind of God, do you find that a bit difficult to relate to? I certainly do. I can think of it and understand the concept intellectually, as a specific application of Platonic notions of idealist philosophy, that all things originate from ideas and that ideas are a deeper, greater reality than material things like bodies. But do I really *see myself as an idea* (1:5)? Not really. What the Course is getting at is that my belief that I am a body—that all that I am exists within this body—severely circumscribes my awareness of my true Self, and blocks my comprehension that what I am is not physical at all, but rather I am a non-material *idea*.

Jesus points out that my points of reference in recognizing other things (including other *people*) are all *external* (1:6). I recognize people by their bodily shape and appearance, which isn't *what* they are at all. Our mental lock-in on externals goes so deep that even when we think about God, we nearly always think of God in some bodily form, or some other external, material form (1:7).

Paragraph 2

2. ¹The body cannot know. ²And while you limit your awareness to its tiny senses, you will not see the grandeur that surrounds you. ³God cannot come into a body, nor can you join Him there. ⁴Limits on love will always seem to shut Him out, and keep you apart from Him. ⁵The body is a tiny fence around a little part of a glorious and complete [**completely limitless**] idea. ⁶It draws a circle, infinitely small, around a very little segment of Heaven, splintered from the whole, proclaiming that within it is your kingdom, where God can enter not.

• **Study Question** •

2. *What are the two major effects of limiting our awareness to our bodily sense that are described in this paragraph?*
 - A. *God is apparently kept out.*
 - B. *We cannot see the grandeur of our whole Self.*
 - C. *A part of Heaven is splintered from the whole.*

Only a mind can *know* anything; a body does not possess conscious intelligence in that sense (2:1). Therefore, in the Course's understanding, limiting our source of knowledge to the five physical senses cuts us off from real knowledge of our true Self, which I believe is what is meant by "the grandeur that surrounds you" (2:2). Empiricism is a theory that states that knowledge comes only or primarily from *sensory* experience, via our five senses. What the Course espouses is a kind of *idealism*, in the philosophical sense of the term: "a theory that ultimate reality lies in a realm transcending phenomena; a theory that the essential nature of reality lies in consciousness or reason; a theory that only mental states or entities are knowable" (Merriam-Webster). Idealism and the Course teach that there is a realm of existence that is invisible to the senses. The Course repeatedly tells us that "the body's eyes" are not enough:

"The body's eyes see only form. They cannot see beyond what they were made to see. And they were made to look on error and not see past it" (T-22.III.5:3-5).

"These eyes, made not to see, will never see" (T-22.III.6:1).

Since God is invisible to the senses, the body is not the locus in which we can encounter and unite with God (2:3). The Bible refers to God as "the invisible God" (Col. 1:15) and "immortal, invisible, the only wise God" (I Tim. 1:17). God is Love; therefore, the body, being a limit on love, always shuts God out and keeps us *apart* from Him (2:4).

Sentences 3 and 4 have been speaking about God. In the lines that follow (5 and 6), it might seem that the body is presented as a "fence" around a tiny portion of *God*, but I believe what is being fenced off is a part of the grandeur of our true Self. 2:5 says that the body is a "fence around a little part of...[an] *idea* [my emphasis]," an idea that is "glorious and completely limitless." The Course says that God is an idea, and so are we:

That is because you recognize, however dimly, that God is an idea, and so your faith in Him is strengthened by sharing. What you find difficult to accept is the fact that, like your Father, *you* are an idea" (T-15.VI.4:4-5).

At this point, then, "idea" could refer to either one. But in the next paragraph, it is clear that what is being fenced off is "your mind" (3:3).

So it is *your mind*, which is your true Self,¹ that is "glorious and completely limitless"! Incidentally, I think it is a shame that in the FIP edition, the words "completely limitless" have been changed to the lackluster word, "complete." "Complete" is one thing, "limitless" is something totally different. Lesson 95 has us practice with the idea of

¹ "What has been given you? The knowledge that you are a mind, in Mind and purely mind" (W-pl.158.1:1-2).

our limitlessness: “I am one Self, united with my Creator, at one with every aspect of creation, and **limitless** in power and in peace” (W-pI.95.11:2). Another lesson asks: “Can I lay limits on the Son of God, whose Father willed that he be **limitless**, and like Himself in freedom and in love?” (W-pII.280.1:6). Let that settle into your consciousness; your mind is limitless. *You* are limitless. Your awareness of that limitless mind is blocked by identification with the body and what its senses show us.

The emphasis here is on the contrast between our bodily identity—“tiny,” “a little part,” “infinitely small,” “very little,” and “splintered”—and our true Identity—“grandeur,” “glorious and completely limitless,” “Heaven,” and “the whole.” Our conception of our self is unbelievably disproportionate to the Self’s reality. The ego draws this infinitely small circle, building a “tiny fence” around it, and proclaims that *this* is “*your* kingdom, where God can enter not” (2:6). When we hear the popular phrase that we are spiritual beings having a human experience, we probably have no conception of how limiting and diminishing that is! It’s the contrast between limitless and tiny, between the whole and a small splinter! In accepting the body, and the separated self we are conscious of, as what describes and circumscribes our being, we are leaving out far, far, *far* more than we are including! I believe that when the awareness of our true Self dawns on us it will take our breath away!

Paragraph 3

3. ¹Within this kingdom the ego rules, and cruelly. ²And to defend this little speck of dust it bids you fight against the universe. ³This fragment of your mind is such a tiny part of it that, could you but appreciate the whole, you would see instantly that it is like the smallest sunbeam [**is**] to the sun, or like the faintest ripple on the surface of the ocean. ⁴In its amazing arrogance, this tiny sunbeam has decided it **is** the sun; this almost imperceptible ripple hails itself as the ocean. ⁵Think how alone and frightened is this little thought, this infinitesimal illusion, holding itself apart against the universe. ⁶The sun becomes the sunbeam’s “enemy” that would devour it, and the ocean terrifies the little ripple and wants [**“wants”**] to swallow it.

• Study Question •

3. *In comparing our Self to the sun or the ocean, and our self-concept of being within a body to the smallest sunbeam or the faintest ripple, what can you deduce about the relationship between our Self and what we think we are? Think in terms of size; of independence; of the emotional reaction of the part to the whole.*

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In the kingdom of your separate body identity, the ego is king—a particularly mean-spirited and vicious king (3:1). Again, Jesus takes a jab at the minuscule size of our personal, bodily identity compared to the reality of our true Identity: “this little speck of dust” (3:2). The ego sees itself, within the body, as at war with the universe (3:2).

I've always liked the two analogies here (3:3), that of the sunbeam to the sun, or a surface ripple to the entire ocean. I especially like the ripple analogy, because it shows how our personal identity is still part of the whole of our true Self, and a transitory thing, just a insignificant, temporary movement within a vast unity. How absurd for the sunbeam to think it is the sun, or the ripple to believe it is the ocean (3:4)! It is just that absurd for you or me to think that what we have been calling our self *is* the whole of the Self! And no wonder, as Thoreau said, "Most men live lives of quiet desperation." Our one, small self at war with the universe (3:5)? That's scary!

Sadly, what we end up being scared of is not what we believe is outside of us; we are terrified of *our Self* (3:6)! The sunbeam fears being devoured by the sun; the ripple fears being swallowed up by the ocean. We think, in being asked to give up our egos and to dis-identify with our bodies, that we are going to *lose* something precious, when in reality we are going to step *into* something *magnificent*.

Try to get a sense of the magnitude of what you really are. Stop a moment, and really try to understand that all those seemingly incredible statements of the Course about you are really, completely true:

"I am one Self, united with my Creator, at one with every aspect of creation, and limitless in power and in peace" (W-pI.95.11:2).

"You are one Self, complete and healed and whole, with power to lift the veil of darkness from the world, and let the light in you come through to teach the world the truth about yourself.

You are one Self, in perfect harmony with all there is, and all that there will be. You are one Self, the holy Son of God, united with your brothers in that Self; united with your Father in His Will" (W-pI.95.12:3-13:2).

"Spirit am I, a holy Son of God, free of all limits, safe and healed and whole, free to forgive, and free to save the world" (W-pI.97.7:2).

"Your Self is radiant in this holy joy, unchanged, unchanging and unchangeable, forever and forever" (W-pI.190.6:5).

"I am God's Son, complete and healed and whole, shining in the reflection of His Love. In me is His creation sanctified and guaranteed eternal life. In me is love perfected, fear impossible, and joy established without opposite. I am the holy home of God Himself. I am the Heaven where His Love resides. I am His holy Sinlessness Itself, for in my purity abides His Own." (W-pI.pII.14.1:1-6).

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Yet neither sun nor ocean is even aware of all this strange and meaningless activity. ²They merely continue, unaware that they are feared and hated by a tiny segment of themselves. ³Even that segment is not lost to them, for it could not survive apart from them. ⁴And what it thinks it is in no way changes its total dependence on them for its being.

⁵Its whole existence still remains in them. ⁶Without the sun the sunbeam would be gone; the ripple without the ocean is inconceivable.

• **Study Question** •

4. *How would you express the main thought of this paragraph?*
- A. *The feverish activity of the segments is meaningless.*
 - B. *The reality of the Self, and the parts' relationship to It, is completely unaffected by what the parts think or do.*
 - C. *The parts are completely dependent upon the Whole.*

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Our Christ Self is not even aware of the desperate fight and fright of the tiny fragments to be separate (4:1). The little walled-off “kingdoms” are not separate, no matter what they think. Our Self simply *is*—It *continues*—serene, at peace, and even “unaware” of the fear and hatred of our tiny egos, which are actually segments of the Self (4:2). From the standpoint of the Self, nothing has been lost, nothing has been splintered off, nothing has really changed the wholeness of the Self (4:3).

The ego *thinks* it is separate, yet it is totally dependent on the Self for its very existence. The Self is the very being of the ego, and without the Self, the tiny, deluded fragment would not exist at all (4:4–6). It is a permanent part of the Whole.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹Such is the strange position in which those in a world inhabited by bodies seem to be. ²Each body seems to house a separate mind, a disconnected thought, living alone and in no way joined to the Thought by which it was created. ³Each tiny fragment seems to be self-contained, needing another for some things, but by no means totally dependent on its [**their**] one Creator for everything; [**And**] needing the whole to give it any meaning, for by itself it does [**by themselves they do**] mean nothing. ⁴Nor has it [**Nor have they**] any life apart and by itself [**themselves**].

• **Study Question** •

5. *What statement below best describes the reality of our condition?*
- A. *Each of us is disconnected, living alone, in no way joined to God's Thought.*
 - B. *By ourselves we mean nothing, nor do we have any separate life; we are totally dependent on our Creator.*
 - C. *By our mistakes we have become separate beings who need to recognize our dependence upon one another and God.*

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All of the imagery in this paragraph describes *us*, who think we are in a world inhabited by bodies, each body housing a separate mind (5:1). Isn't that how you think of yourself—a *separate* mind, *disconnected* from the minds of everyone else in the universe, and “in no way joined” to the Mind of God, which created your mind (5:2)?

Oh, we have “connections” with other people in the world. We are self-contained, and we need one another for *some* things, but the idea that we are *totally* dependent upon our Creator for *everything*? Perish the thought! (5:3) That without our connection to the Whole we have no meaning? “Ridiculous!” say our egos. We cannot believe that, apart from God and the One Self, we have *no life* (5:4). We may even believe that there is a God, but still utterly reject the idea that we are irrevocably joined to God, dependent on It for everything including any meaning, and even for life itself. Absurdly, we imagine that we can be separate from God and still alive.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹[Yet] Like to the sun and ocean your Self continues, unmindful that this tiny part regards itself as you. ²It is not missing; it could not exist if it were separate, nor would the whole be whole without it. ³It is not a separate kingdom, ruled by an idea of separation from the rest. ⁴Nor does a fence surround it, preventing it from joining with the rest, and keeping it apart from its Creator. ⁵This little aspect is no different from the whole, being continuous with it and at one with it. ⁶It leads no separate life, because its life *is* the oneness in which its being was created.

• Study Question •

6. Complete this sentence to summarize the thought behind the images of this paragraph: “My separate self _____.”

Once again we are reminded that our Self is “unmindful that this tiny part regards itself as you” (1). This thought may, at first, seem disturbing: “My True Self, the Christ, doesn’t know that I think I am a separate mind in a body? How can It *not* know?” But look at it this way: Your self is unmindful of your separateness and completely undisturbed by it because, from its vantage point, it sees that *nothing has really happened*. If the “tiny fragment” were actually separate *it would not exist* and the Whole would not be whole (6:2). That it exists, and that the Whole exists, is the proof that nothing is separate! So there is nothing to be mindful *of*, nothing to be disturbed *about*!

What has been pictured as a separate kingdom, “ruled by an *idea* of separation from the rest,” is not separate at all (6:3). There is no fence around it. Nothing prevents it from joining with the rest of the Self and with God (6:4). The little part of you that thinks it is separate is in fact “*no different* from the whole, being continuous with it and at one with it” (6:5).

You are already one with God.

You have always been one with God.

You always will be one with God.

Your very “life *is* the oneness in which [your] being was created” (6:6).

Have you been seeking to be one with God? Then stop! You are *always* one with God. This is the truth that sets us free. This is why we can shout with such great joy, “I need do nothing!”

Paragraph 7

7. ¹Do not accept this little, fenced-off aspect as yourself. ²The sun and ocean are as nothing beside what you are. ³The sunbeam sparkles only in the sunlight, and the ripple dances as it rests upon the ocean. ⁴Yet in neither sun nor ocean is the power that rests in you. ⁵Would you remain within your tiny kingdom, a sorry king, a bitter ruler of all that he surveys, who looks on nothing yet who would still die to defend it? ⁶This little self is not your kingdom. ⁷Arched high above it and surrounding it with love is the glorious whole, which offers all its happiness and deep content to every part. ⁸The little aspect that you think you set apart is no exception.

• Study Question •

7. Which of the following is meant when the Course speaks of “this little, fenced-off aspect,” “this little self,” and “the little aspect that you think you set apart.”
- A. The negative thoughts I have about myself.
 - B. The entire separate self that I believe myself to be: an ego in a body.
 - C. My body, my physical self.

We must stop believing that “this little, fenced-off aspect” is all that we are (7:1). We are so much more than this!

"What you think you are is a belief to be undone. But what you really are must be revealed to you. The belief you are a body calls for correction, being a mistake. The truth of what you are calls on the strength in you to bring to your awareness what the mistake conceals" (W-pI.91.6:7-10).

If you have ever sailed across the ocean you probably, at some point, felt awe at its immensity. If you have witnessed a storm at sea, you have some idea of the power of the sea. Yet the sea’s power seems like nothing next to the power of the sun. Next time you feel the warmth of the sun on your face or body, remind yourself that it is close to 93 million miles away. Imagine how hot it must be for you to feel its warmth! The mass of the sun is about 1,300,000 times that of the earth. That’s *huge!* But, “The sun and ocean are as nothing beside what *you* are” (7:2). As I intimated above, we really have *no concept* of the magnitude of our True Identity. This comparison with the sea and the sun gives us some feel for it—they are *as nothing* compared to you! Your power far exceeds the power of the ocean and even the power of the sun (7:4)!

When we contemplate this and begin to accept the truth of it, we will surely begin to question the wisdom of clinging to the paltry identity represented by our egos and our

bodies, an identity that affords us nothing and calls for us to defend it to the death (7:5). The poet George MacDonald writes of the foolishness of clinging to the “rag-rights” of the self when we could be grasping “the whole God”:

Lord, I have fallen again—a human clod!
Selfish I was, and heedless to offend;
Stood on my rights. Thy own child would not send
Away his shreds of nothing for the whole God!
Wretched, to thee who savest, low I bend:
Give me the power to let my rag-rights go
In the great wind that from thy gulf doth blow.

“This little self is *not* your kingdom” (7:6). Rather, “the glorious whole” of our Christ-Self arches high above this shriveled “kingdom” and surrounds it with love, offering to *every* part of Itself (including the foolish rebel still clinging to its rag-rights (7:8)) “happiness and deep content” (7:7). Which do you want? Happiness and deep content, or bitterness, terror, and death?

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Love knows no bodies, and reaches to everything created like itself. ²Its total lack of limit *is* its meaning. ³It is completely impartial in its giving, encompassing only to preserve and keep complete what it would give. ⁴In your tiny kingdom you have so little! ⁵Should it not, then, be there that you would call on love to enter? ⁶Look at the desert - dry and unproductive, scorched and joyless - that makes up your little kingdom. ⁷And realize the life and joy that love would bring to it from where it comes, and where it would return with you.

• Study Question •

8. *Remember that the little self fears the true Self, terrified of being devoured if it lets the barriers down. What will really happen if we do this?*

What a curious statement: “Love knows no bodies” (8:1). This does not mean that divine Love isn’t aware of our bodies, nor that it disregards them entirely. Remember what was said earlier:

"The body was not made by love. Yet love does not condemn it and can use it lovingly, respecting what the Son of God has made and using it to save him from illusions" (T-18.VI.4:7-8).

So, this can’t mean that love does not know about bodies; what, then, might it mean? I think the clue is in the second sentence: “Its [love’s] total lack of limit *is* its meaning” (8:2). Love does not respect the limitations of the body. Its reach takes no account of bodily forms; rather, Love “reaches to everything created like itself” (8:1). The shape, size, color, or condition of the body is completely overlooked by Love. Its giving is “impartial,” and note the emphasis: “*completely* impartial” (8:3).

Remember, our “tiny kingdom” (8:4) of the ego is *afraid* of the Whole, afraid of being swallowed up and obliterated, so the idea of being encompassed by Love seems terrifying. Jesus is trying to reassure us that there is no *threat* here. Any “encompassing” that is going on is “*only* to preserve and *keep complete* what it [Love] would give” (8:3). Instead of being *afraid* of Love, we should recognize our poverty and *invite* Love to enter (8:4–5). He invites us to “look at the desert—dry and unproductive, scorched and joyless” (8:6). Is that how you conceive of your mind, your “kingdom”? It well describes the mind apart from God. Isn’t it strange how we can be depressed by what we are, by how unfruitful we are, how empty we feel, and yet fight tooth and nail to hold on to it?

He invites us to take a realistic self-inventory, recognize that what we’ve been defending is a dry and unproductive desert, and wake up to “the life and joy that love would bring to it from where *it* comes, and where it would return *with you*” (8:7). Love wants to pour life and joy into our minds, and carry our minds back to the Wholeness of the Self as God created It. Let us invite It in, asking for “the power to let my rag-rights go in the great wind” of love that blows forcefully but caressingly into our minds. With MacDonald let us send away our “shreds of nothing,” and welcome “the whole God.” Allowing this to happen is what we are practicing in the holy instant.

Paragraphs 9 & 10

9. ¹The Thought of God surrounds your little kingdom [your mind], waiting at the barrier you built [your body] to come inside and shine upon the barren ground. ²See how life springs up everywhere! ³The desert becomes a garden, green and deep and quiet, offering rest to those who lost their way and wander in the dust. ⁴Give them a place of refuge, prepared by love for them where once a desert was. ⁵And everyone you welcome will bring love with him from Heaven for you. ⁶They enter one by one into this holy place, but they will not depart as they had come, alone. ⁷The love they brought with them will stay with them, as it will stay with you. ⁸And under its beneficence your little garden will expand, and reach out to everyone who thirsts for living water, but has grown too weary to go on alone.

10. ¹Go out and find them, for they bring your Self with them. ²And lead them gently to your quiet garden, and receive their blessing there. ³So will it grow and stretch across the desert, leaving no lonely little kingdoms locked away from love, and leaving you inside. ⁴And you will recognize yourself, and see your little garden gently transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven, with all the love of its Creator shining upon it.

• **Study Question** •

9. *What do you think is symbolized by “offering rest to those who lost their way,” giving them “a place of refuge,” and “welcoming” and “leading” them to our garden?*
- A. *Teaching other people what we have learned.*
 - B. *Doing service towards others, helping them in their pain.*
 - C. *Through forgiveness, recognizing our brothers as parts of our Self.*

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The Thought of God surrounds our minds, waiting to come inside (9:1). *Waiting!* Oh, the amazing respect It shows for our minds, our choices! It *waits to be invited*. It honors the barrier of our body until we lower the barrier. As the Thought of God enters our little kingdom, “life springs up everywhere” (9:2), the desert is first transformed into a garden, “green and deep and quiet” (9:3). What a lovely image! The garden then expands as we welcome others to it, until eventually it is “gently transformed into the Kingdom of Heaven” (10:4). Notice again the Course’s emphasis that the completion of *our* transformation—the way our mind is totally renewed—is through giving a place of refuge and rest “to those who lost their way and wander in the dust” (9:3–4). It is as we welcome others into the Kingdom that our mind, itself, is returned to that Kingdom. Those we welcome bring love from Heaven for us (9:5). Eventually our “little garden will expand, and reach out to everyone who thirsts for living water” (9:6).

Therefore, Jesus urges us to “go out and *find* them” (10:1). Not just wait for them to come to us, but actively seek them out. Why should we? “They bring your Self with them” (10:1)! That’s a pretty amazing statement, isn’t it? We find our Self by going out and finding the thirsty ones who are too tired to go on alone.

It’s worth thinking about what it might mean to “lead them gently to your quiet garden,” where you can receive their blessing (10:2). Your tiny self, which is just a “fragment of your mind” (3:1), and limited to the body and its senses, has called on the Thought of God (9:1), love, to enter (8:5). What was a desert has become a garden. So the garden to which you lead those who have lost their way and wander in the dust *is your own mind*, which has joined with the Holy Spirit.

To me, what this seems to mean is that I invite these people into my love. I open my heart to them. I include them, in my mind, in God’s Kingdom.

This is how God’s garden grows (10:3)! The imagery of the desert and garden now expands to a much wider scope. The desert refers to the state in which all those live who “wander in the dust.” The garden includes everyone who opens to God’s love and lets themselves be liberated from the limited ego-body self. Your little garden becomes the Kingdom of Heaven (10:4), in which you *recognize* yourself, bathed in the love of God (10:4).

Paragraph 11

11. ¹ The holy instant is your invitation to love to enter into your bleak and joyless kingdom, and to transform it into a garden of peace and

welcome. ²Love's answer is inevitable. ³It will come because you came without the body, and interposed no barriers to **[which would] interfere** with its glad coming. ⁴In the holy instant, you ask of love only what it offers everyone, neither less nor more. ⁵Asking for everything, you will receive it. ⁶And your shining Self will lift the tiny aspect that you tried to hide from Heaven straight to Heaven. ⁷No part of love calls on the whole in vain. ⁸No Son of God remains outside His Fatherhood.

• **Study Question** •

10. *We invite love to enter our bleak kingdom by means of the holy instant. Love will inevitably answer. What must be so for this holy instant to come to us? (More than one.)*
- A. *We must be willing to see ourselves without a body, without that barrier to love.*
 - B. *We must not ask for any kind of special love.*
 - C. *We must be willing to receive all love would give.*

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The holy instant, last mentioned in the previous section (VII, or VI if you don't count VII which was inserted at a later time), returns as a central factor in the desert-to-garden transformation. Offering the holy instant to a brother is an invitation to love to enter the kingdom of your mind and transform it into a garden of peace and welcome (11:1). You are forgetting about your individual needs (represented by your body), and setting aside notions of sin and guilt based on the past (11:3), choosing to see yourself and your brother as equally one with God; you are asking God's love to enter, which is *exactly* what God's love desires to do, so Its "answer is inevitable. It will come" (11:2-3). Of course it will come! You are only asking for what love "offers everyone, neither less nor more" (11:4). Love offers everyone *everything*, so that's what you receive (11:5). As you open yourself to the love of God, "your shining Self," with a capital S, "will lift the tiny aspect that you tried to hide from Heaven" (that's the limited identity that you've lived with most of your life) "straight to Heaven" (11:6). You are part of love, and you are calling on the whole of love; that never fails (11:7). The Fatherhood of God includes *all* of the Sonship, and that includes you (11:8).

Paragraphs 12 & 13

12. ¹Be sure of this; love has entered your special relationship, and entered fully at your weak request. ²You do not recognize that love has come, because you have not yet let go of all the barriers you hold against your brother **[against each other]**. ³And you and he will not be able to give love welcome separately. ⁴You could no more know God alone than He knows you without your brother. ⁵But together you could no more be unaware of love than love could know you not, or fail to recognize itself in you.

13. ¹You have reached the end of an ancient journey, not realizing yet

that it is over. ²You are still worn and tired, and the desert's dust still seems to cloud your eyes and keep you sightless. ³Yet He Whom you welcomed has come to you, and would welcome you. ⁴He has waited long to give you this. ⁵Receive it now of Him, for He would have you know Him. ⁶Only a little wall of dust [the body] still stands between you and your brother [**between you**]. ⁷Blow on it lightly and with happy laughter, and it will fall away. ⁸And walk into the garden love has prepared for both of you.

• Study Question •

11. *From the appeals made in these two paragraphs, what seems to be the main practical method by which we will begin to experience the transformation of our little, desert kingdoms into gardens, and eventually into the full experience of our Self in the Kingdom of God?*
- A. *Removing the remaining barriers between me and my brother by experiencing holy instants of forgiveness with him.*
 - B. *Seeking frequent experiences of direct awareness of God.*
 - C. *Using meditation or self-denial to achieve detachment from my body and its barriers.*

Jesus, in 12:1–2, is once again specifically referring to Helen's and Bill's relationship. They *have* let love into their special relationship, even though their request was “weak” (12:1). That should reassure all of us that, as he told us earlier, “—your willingness need not be complete because His is perfect” (T-16.VI.12:3). If love entered at their *weak* request, and “entered fully,” then if we ask for the holy instant, love will come to us as well. We may not recognize it when it comes; *they* didn't, because they had not yet fully relinquished all the barriers they held against each other (12:2). Quite likely you and I still hold some grievances against those with whom we are in relationship, so in all probability, we, too, will not “recognize that love has come.” Therefore, neither of us will fully welcome love in our individual lives (12:3). It's very informative, and reassuring, to realize that the process of awakening to love can be so gradual; that we may have experienced a change at a deep level that is only slowly working its way to the surface.

The emphasis on *mutuality*, though, which runs all through the Course, is exceedingly clear here. What could be clearer than this: “You could no more know God alone than He knows you without your brother” (12:4). God does not know me alone; he only knows me *with* my brothers and sisters. I am a part of a Whole, not a separate “thing” at all. And knowing God by myself is impossible; I can only know God in conjunction with the rest of the cosmic Me. It must be a together-knowing. And when we *are* together, “you could no more be *unaware* of love than love could know you not, or fail to recognize *itself* in you” (12:5). For me, when the Course tells us that “love is what you are” (T-6.I.13:2), it *must* be referring to the corporate me, not me as an individual, because how can I express love *by myself*? Love requires a meeting of minds. Until my individual lovingness finds

an object to love, it is unexpressed. Of course, "In this world, God's Son comes closest to himself in a holy relationship" (T-20.V.1:1).

If we have entered into holy relationship, we have "reached the end of an ancient journey," whether or not we realize it (13:1). Like Helen and Bill we have wandered through a barren desert for most of our lives, the desert of our "little kingdom" of the ego, a life lived retracted into a protective ball like a frightened armadillo. We are worn and tired, and our eyes are still blinded with the dust of that desert (13:2). We can't see how close we are to home. The Holy Spirit *has* come to us and wants to welcome *us* to the Kingdom. He has been *waiting* for a long time to give us His welcome (13:3–4). He wants us to receive His welcome and to get to really *know* Him (13:5). We receive His welcome by opening fully to our relationship partners. The only thing standing between us now is our bodies, "a little wall of dust" (13:6). He asks us to blow on that dust, laughing happily, that it may fall away (13:7), allowing us to "walk into the garden love has prepared for *both* of you" (13:8). I believe that blowing on the dust is a symbol for overlooking the body, decreasing its importance to us. When we do, "it will fall away," that is, as we were urged to do in a previous section, it will disappear from our awareness, and we will become fully, deeply aware of the common Being we share.

In sum: The breakdown of our barriers begins in one relationship, which becomes a holy relationship when love enters it. The extension of the garden seems to depend on how fully we let down the barriers between us.

Answer Key

1. B and D
2. A and B
3. What we are is vastly larger than what we think we are. What we think we are is actually a tiny part of what we are, and is wholly dependent on that Self. Yet because we try to hold this tiny self apart, we fear our Self, afraid it will devour us.
4. B
5. B
6. My separate self does not exist. (Or, "is not real.")
7. B
8. The glorious whole will surround us with love, and offer us all its happiness and deep content. It will preserve and complete us, bringing life and joy to our dry, scorched little kingdoms.
9. C
10. A, B and C

11. A