

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 19, Section IV Intro and Section IV(A).1–9

The Obstacles to Peace, The First Obstacle: The Desire to Get Rid of It

Legend:

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

Italic 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

~~sansk serif text~~ = Not in Urtext, in FIP edition

Overview of the Entire Section

This is the longest section in the entire Text: Over 18 pages long, subdivided into four quite long sections, each of which has a secondary subsection! Compared to the average section in the course, this huge section is the equivalent of 8 or 9 “normal” sections, and will likely take as many weeks for us to complete.

It is perhaps the most important section in the Text, the core presentation of its central ideas. The concept of the fear of God that it presents is referred to again and again throughout the three volumes of the Course, as are many of its other ideas. The later sections of the Course make reference to it repeatedly.

To help you navigate the section as a whole, I will include two pages (as Appendix 1) that summarizes all four obstacles. Please hold onto this and review it often during the weeks to come.

As you will see, the entire 18 ½ page section is *organized around the holy relationship*. Peace enters a relationship, and then gradually overcomes the obstacles to peace that remain, the remnants of the goal of “sin” given the relationship by the ego. Finally, peace overflows the relationship and spreads to everyone who encounters it.

The Obstacles to Peace, introductory paragraphs 1-3

Overview of Introductory Paragraphs

Here is where the broad general outline of the entire journey of peace through the holy relationship is laid out. As Helen and Bill joined in a goal of discovering “a better way,” this allowed the Holy Spirit to enter and install peace at the core of their relationship (1:6), at an unconscious level. From there, peace begins to expand, moving into the conscious level. It first begins to invade every aspect of their two lives (1:6); it then expands beyond, to the whole Sonship (1:1). On the way it encounters obstacles: those that arise from within the relationship (1:2), and those arising from the world (1:3). (The latter class of obstacle is *not* covered in this section.) That expansion of peace beyond the relationship is symbolized in the image of their relationship becoming a temple of healing, which takes in all the weary travelers and gives them rest (first sentence; was T-19.III.11:3 in the FIP version).

The break between sections I have used seems to me to be at a more logical place than in the FIP version. I have included what were the final sentences of the previous section again here, as the beginning of the first paragraph. There were also an unusual number of minor (and some not so minor) changes from the URText, which I have indicated by formatting, allowing the reader to read it either way.

Paragraph 1

1. [Your relationship is now a temple of healing, a place where all the weary ones can come and find rest. Here is the rest that waits for all, after the journey. And it is brought nearer to all, by your relationship.] ¹As [this] peace extends [expands] from deep inside yourself [yourselves] to embrace all the Sonship and give it rest, it will encounter many obstacles. ²Some of them you will try to impose [interpose]. ³Others will seem to arise from elsewhere; from your brothers, and from various aspects of the world outside. ⁴Yet peace will gently cover them, extending past completely unencumbered [unhindered]. ⁵The extension of the Holy Spirit's purpose from your relationship to others, to bring them gently in, [has already begun. This] is the way in which He will bring means and goal in line. ⁶The peace He lay [laid], deep within ~~you and your brother~~ [both of you], will quietly extend to every aspect of your life [lives], surrounding ~~you and your brother~~ [both of you] with glowing happiness and the calm awareness of complete protection. ⁷And you will carry its message of love and safety and freedom to everyone who draws nigh unto your temple, where healing waits for him. ⁸You will not wait to give him this, for you will call to him and he will answer you, recognizing in your call the Call for [of] God. ⁹And you will draw him in and give him rest, as it was given you.

• Study Question •

1. This paragraph sketches a process that will occur in your holy relationship. Listed below are parts of that process, which are either stated or implied in this first paragraph. Please put these parts in order.
 - A. This peace will quietly extend to every aspect of your lives.
 - B. You will call to these travelers and they will answer. You will thus draw them into the temple of your relationship and give them rest.
 - C. You will carry this peace to everyone who comes near the temple of your relationship.
 - D. The Holy Spirit lays peace deep within your relationship.

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By including these first three sentences, it becomes much clearer that the section that follows is about the *holy relationship*. The *first sentence* sets the scene: The holy relationship is “now a temple of healing, a place where all the weary ones can come and find rest.” The holy relationship *has* become that, but in embryonic form. The essential shift has been made deep within the relationship, but to manifest as the temple of healing, the relationship needs to go through a considerable growth process, overcoming many obstacles on the way.

The rest referred to is meant “for all, after the journey” (*second sentence*). It is not limited to the two (or more) participants in this particular relationship. It is meant for *all*.

But this particular relationship plays a role. It brings the rest nearer to all (*third sentence*), expanding from deep inside the relationship partners to all the Sonship (1:1).

Along the way—"as this peace expands from deep inside...it will encounter many obstacles" (1:1). These are the obstacles with which this section deals, detailing how we encounter them and how we surmount them.

As I said above, there are two general categories of obstacles: those that arise from within (1:2), and those that "seem to arise from elsewhere" (1:3), from other people (all kinds of inter-personal problems) and the outside world (economics, politics, weather, illnesses, etc.). "Peace," says Jesus, "will gently cover them" (1:4), all of them. None of them can hinder the progress of peace in the slightest (1:4)! This long section only deals with the internal obstacles, but there are other parts of the Course that deal with the (apparently) external ones, for instance, Workbook Lesson 14, "God did not create a meaningless world." Ultimately, I believe, the seemingly external obstacles all prove to be internal in the end. As the Workbook asserts in Lesson 5, "I am never upset for the reason I think."

Already, in *your* relationship, as well as that of Bill and Helen, the Holy Spirit has begun to extend peace "to others, to bring them gently *in*" (1:4). The work has begun within you, and within the relationship of any people who have, for a moment at least, joined together in a common purpose, seeking peace.

Do you recall, back in Chapter 17, Jesus told Helen and Bill that, although they were united in one purpose, they had not agreed on the means for accomplishing it?

"You *are* joined in purpose, but remain still separate and divided on the means" (T-17.V.14:7).

Then, in the next section, he dealt with "Setting the Goal." Now, in Chapter 19, he says he can "bring the means and end in line" (1:5) through extending the peace that the Holy Spirit has laid at the heart of the relationship, surmounting the obstacles to bring rest to others. In other words, the relationship (which is the "means") will be brought in line with the purpose of nurturing and extending peace. The remainder of the paragraph outlines the process by which means and end become aligned.

First, the peace of God will extend from within the members of the relationship to encompass every aspect of their lives. They will glow with happiness, and with the calm certainty of complete safety (1:6). Then, they will carry the message of that "love and safety and freedom" to everyone they encounter, everyone who comes to them to find rest and refuge (1:6, 2nd part). In fact, the relationship partners will take the initiative, reaching out to others, others who will hear God calling them through these holy relationship partners (1:7). Upon hearing God's call, they will answer it, gratefully receiving the rest (from guilt, from fear) that is being offered to them (1:8). This is the same rest the relationship partners have received from God through one another.

Clearly, this is a highly condensed picture of a life-long process.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹All this will you do. ²Yet the peace that already lies deeply within must first expand, and *flow across* the obstacles *you* placed before it. ³This will you do [***This will it do***], for nothing undertaken *with* the Holy Spirit remains unfinished. ⁴You can indeed be sure of *nothing* you see *outside* you, but of this [“this” refers to the previous sentence] you *can* be sure [in the Urtext, there was no colon here, but a paragraph break]: The Holy Spirit asks that you offer Him a resting place where *you* will rest in Him. ⁵He answered you, and entered your relationship. ⁶Would you not now *return* His graciousness, and enter into a relationship with Him? ⁷For it is *He* who offered *your* relationship the gift of holiness, without which it would have been forever impossible to appreciate your brother [***each other***].

• Study Question •

2. *Before the peace the Holy Spirit has planted in your relationship can cover every aspect of your lives and extend out to the weary travelers, what must happen?*
 - A. *You must let this peace flow across the obstacles you erected to block it.*
 - B. *You must join your brother in a holy instant and allow the Holy Spirit to enter your relationship.*
 - C. *You must let the peace go beyond just the two of you to reach the entire Sonship.*

Does this seem like something that is beyond your expectation or beyond your capability? Yet Jesus assures us: “All this will you do” (2:1). This is not out of your reach because it is God’s Will and purpose for you. For this you came to this life! In Workbook Lesson 100 (“My part is essential to God’s plan for salvation.”), we are told:

Now let us try to find that joy that proves to us and all the world God’s Will for us. It is your function that you find it here, and that you find it now. For this you came. (W-pI.100.8:1-3)

This ministry of becoming part of a relationship that is a radiant temple of healing to the world is within possibility for everyone. Even you; even me.

First, however, that deeply planted seed of peace must take root, grow, and bear fruit in your lives. It must transcend the seemingly solid obstacles this section will discuss (2:2). And *peace will do that* (2:3)! Please note that the Urtext says “it” will do that, not that “you” will. This is a work begun by the Holy Spirit within you, and while you cannot be certain of anything in the external world, you *can* be certain that what He begins, He will see through to the end (2:4).

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Phil. 1:6, ESV)

I think this is what Jesus meant when he compared the Kingdom of God to leaven mixed into a loaf; it may be a very small percentage of the whole at the start, but by the end the entire loaf *will* be leavened. The peace planted in us is like that; its growth is inexorable, and it will transform us entirely.

What He needs to do His work is “a resting place,” not for *His* rest, but for *yours* (2:5). I believe this refers to the same resting place mentioned in “I Need Do Nothing”:

To do nothing is to rest, and make a place within you where the activity of the body ceases to demand attention. Into this place the Holy Spirit comes, and there abides. He will remain when you forget, and the body's activities return to occupy your conscious mind.

Yet there will always be this place of rest to which you can return. And you will be more aware of this quiet center of the storm than all its raging activity. This quiet center, in which you do nothing, will remain with you, giving you rest in the midst of every busy doing on which you are sent (T-18.VII.7:7-8:3).

Thus, the Holy Spirit is asking us to turn within, to be still, and to connect with that quiet center, there to meet with the Holy Spirit. If we are to succeed in fostering the transformation of our special relationships from unholy to holy ones, we need these regular times of quiet meditation. That is what will give birth to a transformed perception of one another, to the change from perceptions of “sin” to perceptions of calls for love.

He asks us to enter “a relationship with Him” (2:6). He answered our call and entered our relationship; now He is calling us to return the favor (2:5–6). He has given us “the gift of holiness,” which is what enables us to see one another differently and to truly love and appreciate each other (2:7). His gift deserves ours in return.¹

¹ In my personal belief system, I hold the ultimate truth to be that there is only One. That is, God is all there is, and we are aspects of that Divine Mind. The image of engaging in a relationship between “me” and “the Holy Spirit” presupposes *two*. I believe that in the end we will all discover that the Holy Spirit is simply another aspect of our Self, that “part” of us that *knows*. Trying to speak about this in a way that completely embodies the truth of Oneness is difficult if not impossible. I believe the Course uses this admittedly dualistic language because it communicates very well what our experience is: We turn within and we encounter thoughts that seem to come from beyond our “self,” as indeed they do! But only because the “self” we think we are is constricted, the “tiny kingdom” we have mistaken for our whole Self, with our divinity *perceived* as outside that tiny self.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The gratitude you owe to Him He asks but that *you receive for* Him. ²And when you look with gentle graciousness upon your brother [each other], you *are* beholding Him. ³For you are looking where He *is*, and *not* apart from Him. ⁴You *cannot* see the Holy Spirit, but you *can* see your brothers truly. ⁵And the light in them will show you all that you *need* to see. ⁶When the peace in you has been extended to encompass everyone, the Holy Spirit's function here will be accomplished. ⁷What *need* is there for *seeing*, then? ⁸When God has taken the last step Himself, the Holy Spirit will gather *all* the thanks and gratitude that you have offered Him, and lay them gently before His Creator in the name of His most holy Son. ⁹And the Father will *accept* them in *His* Name. ¹⁰What *need* is there of seeing, in the presence of *His* gratitude?

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraph 3 says that you cannot see the Holy Spirit, and that you need not return His graciousness directly to Him. How, then, do you see Him and how do you return His graciousness? Please pick the sentence in this paragraph that answers both parts of this question.*

When it speaks here of the gratitude that we (in our relationship) owe to the Holy Spirit, it must be referring to what has just been said: that He answered our call, entered our relationship, and brought the gift of holiness to it that allows us to truly appreciate one another. But, in a unique twist, Jesus then says that instead of *giving* gratitude to the Holy Spirit, we should *receive* that gratitude in His place (3:1).

It seems to me that this is evidence that, in reality, the Holy Spirit is the unacknowledged part of ourselves that knows the Truth and is working to win back the part of mind that has shut Truth out. We should receive gratitude for what the Holy Spirit has done because, in truth, the Holy Spirit *is* us.

And look at what comes next! We are told that when we look on each other “with gentle graciousness” we *are* beholding the Holy Spirit (3:2). We are giving and receiving gratitude at the same time. When we are looking with graciousness on each other we are “looking where He *is*, and *not* apart from Him” (3:3). When we see Who our brother or sister really is, we discover that they *are* the Holy Spirit.

We cannot see the Holy Spirit as He is. But we *can* see one another truly, see the light in them, and that is all we *need* to see (3:4–5).

“No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12 ESV)

There have been times in my life when I looked at another person and, because of what I saw in them (not with my eyes), I simply *knew* there was a God. I saw God in them. I think that’s what these sentences are getting at.

The mission of the Holy Spirit is to extend the peace that He has planted within us to “encompass *everyone*.” Once that is done there will be no further “function” for the Holy Spirit (3:6). The job entrusted to Him will be done; nevertheless He will remain as part of creation:

"The Voice of the Holy Spirit is the Call to Atonement, or the restoration of the integrity of the mind. When the Atonement is complete and the whole Sonship is healed there will be no call to return. But what God creates is eternal. The Holy Spirit will remain with the Sons of God, to bless their creations and keep them in the light of joy" (T-5.I.5:4-7).

The topic of seeing, and the lack of any need to see once the Holy Spirit’s function is done, and all have been healed and entered God’s peace, is taking off from the fact that we cannot see the Holy Spirit, but we can see one another truly. Seeing presupposes form—something to see. But when God has taken the final step, and all the thanks and gratitude of the entire Sonship has been offered to the Father and accepted, there will be no form left. There will be no separate bodies. Thus, there will be no need of seeing at all (3:7–10). As the Workbook says in the discussion, “What is the Last Judgment?”:

"Bodies now are useless, and will therefore fade away, because the Son of God is limitless" (W-pI.pII.10.2:6).



We now begin the lengthy discussion of the four internal obstacles to peace’s extension. I suggest that you read, now, the Appendix to this section commentary, which is an overview of the four obstacles and how they are related to one another, written by Robert Perry. This will help us all to keep the overall picture in mind as we go through the obstacles one at a time.

IV(A).1-9: The First Obstacle: The Desire to Get Rid of It

Overview of the Section

The first obstacle, the desire to get rid of our peace, and the sub-section, "The Attraction to Guilt," are the opposite sides of the same coin. We want to get rid of peace because we are attracted to guilt. We choose see guilt in our brothers and to attack it in order to maintain our own guilt.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The first obstacle that peace must flow across is your desire to get *rid* of it. ²For it cannot extend *unless* you keep it. ³You are the center from which it radiates outward, to call the others *in*. ⁴You are its home; its tranquil dwelling place from which it gently reaches out, but *never* leaving you. ⁵If you would make it homeless, how can it abide within the Son of God? ⁶If it would spread across the whole creation, it *must* begin with you, and *from* you reach to everyone who calls, and bring him rest by *joining* you.

• Study Question •

4. *Remember; throughout this entire section, that we are talking about obstacles in the way of peace as it wants to flow out from our holy relationship to call others into that same peace, so that it can “spread across the whole creation” (1:1–6). Name one or two ways in which you have noticed yourself unwilling to be at peace.*

We all want peace; of course we do! How, then, can the first obstacle to our experiencing the perfect peace promised by the Course be “the desire to get rid of it” (1:1), that is, the desire to get rid of *peace*?

Think about what we’ve read in the last two sections. We’ve discovered that we have an unconscious attraction to *guilt and sin*. The ego craves guilt because it perpetuates the illusion of separation. If we are in the throes of guilt, and of perceiving guilt in others, how could we possibly be at peace? And if we *were* to be at peace, how could we possibly hold on to guilt?

Guilt and peace are mutually exclusive. The ego does not *want* peace because it would eradicate guilt, and when we identify with our egos, although we may *think* we want peace, we really don’t. The desire for guilt results in the desire to get rid of peace.

If peace is to extend from us to others, we have to retain peace in our own heart and mind. We are the center where peace lives and from which peace will radiate (1:2–4). But

if we give in to the ego's desire to get rid of peace, the whole chain of peace will be broken. Peace *extends*; it does not transfer from us to others, it *spreads* to them, so that we are *joined* in peace (1:5–6)

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Why would you want peace homeless? ²What do you think that it must *dispossess* to dwell with you? ³What *seems* to be the cost you are so unwilling to pay? ⁴The little ~~barrier~~ **[barriers]** of sand still stands between you ~~and your brother~~ [see 18.VIII.13:6]. ⁵Would you reinforce it **[them]** now? ⁶You are *not* asked to let it **[them]** go for **yourself** **[yourselves]** alone. ⁷Christ asks it of you for *Himself*. ⁸He would bring peace to everyone, and how can He do this *except* through you? ⁹Would you let a little bank of sand, a wall of dust, a tiny seeming barrier, stand between your brothers and salvation? ¹⁰And yet, this little remnant of attack you cherish still against your brother *is* the first obstacle the peace in you encounters in its going forth. ¹¹This little wall of hatred would *still* oppose the Will of God, and keep it limited.

• Study Question •

5. *Our desire to get rid of peace is referred to as a “little barrier of sand,” “a little bank of sand, a wall of dust.” It is also described more explicitly. What is this wall of dust? More than one answer is correct. (See also T-18.VIII.13:6. The meaning of the wall of dust in 18.VIII is the body; here, it is more abstract, more what the body symbolizes.)*
 - A. *A remnant of attack against our relationship partner.*
 - B. *A wall of hatred (against our brother).*
 - C. *The cost we are unwilling to pay*

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The natural question that arises is: Why do we want to get rid of peace? (2:1) We must believe that keeping our peace would cost us something that is more valuable to us than peace. This “something” is not fully identified until the opening two paragraphs about the second obstacle (see T-19.IV(B).1:2 and 2:1). There we see that it is the attraction to guilt, which is given form in the body, that we consider more valuable than peace.

For now, the Course asks us to consider what we *think* peace would displace, what we would lose by allowing peace to live in us, what price we *think* we would be paying (2:2–3). It’s an interesting exercise.

I remember my friend, Diane Berke, who years ago led a Course study group in West Nyack, NY, that I attended. She related the story of how she was nursing her anger at someone who had “done her wrong,” when the thought from the Course came to mind, “I could see peace instead of this.” Her first reaction was, “But I don’t *want* to be at peace about that!” She realized that, to be at peace, she had to let go of her grievances against

her “attacker,” and—in her ego—she did not want to let go of the advantage that seeing him or her as guilty seemed to give her. She didn’t want to let them off the hook. She was not (at least at first) willing to pay that cost.

When we find ourselves resisting being at peace, we can benefit from a little self-examination, asking ourselves, “What seems to be the cost I’m not willing to pay to be at peace?” We may recognize the ego at work. Jesus pointedly asks us to watch our minds, to recognize what we are thinking:

Watch carefully and see what it is you are really asking for. Be very honest with yourself in this, for we must hide nothing from each other. If you will really try to do this, you have taken the first step toward preparing your mind for the Holy One to enter (T-4.III.8:1-3).

There are “little barriers of sand...between you” and your brother or sister (2:4). The barriers are our grievances and judgments about one another. When peace is knocking at our inner door, they stand in the way. As Lesson 69 says, “My grievances hide the light of the world in me.” Do we *really* want to reinforce them, or are we willing to let them go (2:5–6)?

We need to do this for our own peace, but not just for ourselves. We do it for Christ, to participate in the desire of God to extend peace to all creation (2:6–8). God’s Will is for *everyone*. How else can He do it except through us? The Course repeats over and over that our part is essential to God’s plan of salvation, that the salvation of the world depends on us, that Jesus needs our voice and eyes and hands and feet:

My eyes, my tongue, my hands, my feet today Have but one purpose; to be given Christ To use to bless the world with miracles (W-pII.353).

For this alone I need; that you will hear the words I speak, and give them to the world. You are my voice, my eyes, my feet, my hands through which I save the world (W-rV.9).

He calls our grievances “a little bank of sand, a wall of dust, a tiny seeming barrier,” and asks if we really want to preserve such worthless things if they are preventing salvation from reaching our brothers (2:9).

We may recognize how foolish it is to hold on to these grievances, and yet, we do! The first obstacle that peace encounters is just this “remnant of attack” we stubbornly hold onto (2:10), thinking it somehow protects us or punishes the wrong-doer, not realizing that it serves the ego’s need to keep *us* guilty. So, our “little wall of hatred” blocks the flow of spirit, the extension of God’s peace (2:11).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The Holy Spirit's purpose rests in peace within you. ²Yet you are *still* unwilling to let it *join* you wholly. ³You still oppose the Will of God, just by a little. ⁴And that little *is* a limit you would place upon the whole. ⁵God's Will is one, *not* many. ⁶It *has* no opposition, for there is none *beside* it. ⁷What you would still contain behind your little barrier and keep *separate* from *your brother [each other]* *seems [is]* mightier than the universe, for it would *hold back* the universe *and its Creator*. ⁸This little wall would hide the purpose of Heaven, and keep it *from* Heaven.

• Study Question •

6. *The Will of God, in 2:11 and 3:3 and 5, seems to be that peace would extend to include all creation completely. According to this paragraph (if we read carefully), which of the following is the form our resistance to God's Will takes?*
 - A. *We resist allowing the peace to flow out from us to include all our brothers.*
 - B. *We resist allowing the peace to flow in to us, to join with us wholly.*

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According to the Course, when two people join together in common purpose, a holy relationship is formed, and the Holy Spirit deposits peace at the heart of their relationship. His purpose is to spread peace from there to all the world, or as much of it as you can reach (3:1). Assuming you are in such a relationship, as Helen and Bill were, there probably exists in you, as it did in them, a little opposition to the notion of joining yourself wholly to that purpose (3:2–3).

But the truth is that there is only one Will, the Will of God, which “*has* no opposition, for there is none *beside* it” (3:5–6). We may think we have an independent will, and that we can oppose God’s Will, but—as hard as it may be to accept this—our experience of having independent wills is an illusion. We talked about this recently in our study group. The Course is quite clear on this point. Lesson 74 says, “There is no will but God’s,” and adds:

"The idea for today can be regarded as the central thought toward which all our exercises are directed. God's is the only Will" (W-pI.74.1:1-2).

This is not a minor point in the Course’s thought system, *it is the central thought, and having us realize its truth is the goal of all the Workbook exercises!* “There is no will but God’s.” It is clear that the belief in a separate will that differs from God’s is an illusion:

"Every special relationship you have made is a substitute for God's Will, and glorifies yours instead of His because of the illusion that they are different" (T-17.IV.2:7).

We *are* the will of God, and as such, despite any appearance to the contrary, we really have no choice: His will *is* our will:

"I said before that you are the Will of God. His Will is not an idle wish, and your identification with His Will is not optional, since it is what you are. Sharing His Will with me is not really open to choice, though it may seem to be. The whole separation lies in this error" (T-7.X.6:4-7).

Why, then, does the Course spend so much time telling us to "choose again," to choose between the ego and the Holy Spirit? We have made the illusion of choice, so the Holy Spirit uses that illusion to teach us that it *is* an illusion:

"You need to be reminded that you think a thousand choices are confronting you, when there is really only one to make. And even this but seems to be a choice. Do not confuse yourself with all the doubts that myriad decisions would induce. You make but one. And when that one is made, you will perceive it was no choice at all. For truth is true, and nothing else is true. There is no opposite to choose instead. There is no contradiction to the truth" (W-pI.138.4:1-8).

"As long as you must be vigilant against anything, however, you are not recognizing this mutual exclusiveness, and still believe that you can choose either one. By teaching *what* to choose, the Holy Spirit will ultimately teach you that you need not choose at all. This will finally liberate your mind from choice, and direct it towards creation within the Kingdom" (T-6.V.4:8-10).

Thus, to the degree that we believe we can resist the Will of God, we limit the effects of that Will in our lives (3:4). We are clinging to our independent self, the tiny kingdom behind the barrier we have built (or imagined). We think our little ego is capable of holding back the universe and its Creator (3:7)! We think we can "hide the purpose of Heaven" and prevent Heaven from fulfilling its purpose (3:8). Maybe you don't believe you think these things, but that *is* what you are thinking when you doubt that your will is entirely one and identical with God's, and when you hesitate to throw yourself wholeheartedly into carrying out God's Will in the world.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Would you thrust salvation away from the *giver* of salvation? ²For such have *you* become. ³Peace could no more *depart* from you than from God. ⁴Fear not this little obstacle. ⁵It *cannot* contain the Will of God. ⁶Peace *will* flow across it, and join you *without* hindrance. ⁷Salvation cannot *be* withheld from you. ⁸It *is* your *purpose*. ⁹You *cannot choose* [will] apart from this. ¹⁰You *have* no purpose apart from *your brother* [each other], nor apart from the one you asked the Holy Spirit to *share* with you. ¹¹The little wall will fall away so quietly beneath the wings of peace. ^[!] ¹²For peace will send its messengers from you to all the world, and [the world's] barriers will fall away before their coming as easily as those that *you* interpose will be surmounted.

• Study Question •

7. *By refusing to allow peace in we are blocking its flowing out. What reasons are given here why our resistance to peace cannot stand? More than one is correct.*
- A. *The obstacle cannot contain the Will of God.*
 - B. *God's Will is greater than ours and will break it down.*
 - C. *Peace is our own purpose, as well as God's.*
 - D. *Our wall will be crushed by a superior force.*
 - E. *Our wall will fall away quietly beneath the wings of peace.*
 - F. *The peace in us cannot be contained; its messengers will go forth.*
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Partners in a holy relationship have become givers of salvation, the lynchpin in the fulfillment of God's plan for salvation in the world. In other words, if it is going to happen, it will happen *through you*. Do you really think you can divest yourself of the peace of God (4:1–2)? That is no more possible than divesting God Himself of His peace (4:3).

Yes, you still retain a desire to be rid of peace, but it cannot happen. Don't be afraid of this obstacle; the Will of God cannot be held back by it (4:4–5). Like a river that encounters some blockage will inevitably flow over it and past it, peace will surmount your desire to be rid of it and will "join with you *without hindrance*" (4:6). Salvation will be yours in spite of your resistance (4:7); salvation is what you are *for* (4:8). You may imagine that you have a will in conflict with God's, but in fact (as we have discussed above), willing apart from God's purpose for you simply isn't possible (4:9).

It's important to realize that all this discussion is about a holy relationship, not an individual. The next sentence makes that abundantly clear (in the Urtext): "You *have* no purpose apart from each other" (4:10). The central plan of salvation in the Course lies *in relationships*, and not in any individual person or persons. It all has to do with breaking down the barriers to union, ending separation. This is the purpose you (in your relationship) have "asked the Holy Spirit to *share* with you" (4:10). There is no other.

The wall between us will fall away, quietly (not by force) (4:11). It is from the holy relationship that peace will dispatch its messengers of peace to all the world, and as individuals in the world encounter those messengers, their barriers will fall away as easily as yours will fall away (4:12).

The mention of messengers here anticipates the discussion in Section IV(B) of the two messengers we can send forth: either fear or love. They represent the way we respond to the world around us. If we "send forth" fear, we perceive the world as attacking, dangerous and guilty. If we "send forth" love, we perceive the world as either loving or calling for love.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹To overcome the world is no more difficult than to surmount your little wall. ²For in the miracle of *your* holy relationship, *without* this barrier, is every miracle contained. ³There is no order of difficulty in miracles, for they *are* all the same. ⁴Each is a gentle *winning over* from the appeal of guilt to the appeal of love. ⁵How can this *fail* to be accomplished, *wherever* it is undertaken? ⁶Guilt can raise no *real* barriers against it. ⁷And all that seems to stand between you and your brother *must* fall away because of the appeal *you* answered. ⁸From you who answered, He Who answered you would call. ⁹His home is in your holy relationship. ¹⁰Do not attempt to stand *between* Him and His holy purpose, for it *is* yours. ¹¹But let Him quietly *extend* the miracle of your relationship to everyone *contained* in it as it was given.

• Study Question •

8. (a) What does “*the appeal you answered*” refer to?
 - A. *The appeal of peace.*
 - B. *Our brother’s call for help.*
 - C. *The appeal of love.*
- (b) A miracle is simply “*a gentle winning over from the appeal of guilt to the appeal of love*” (5:4). The “*appeal of guilt*” will be the topic of discussion in the next sub-section; *guilt* is what we are afraid of losing by allowing *peace* to enter (2:2). Put the following items in the correct order by listing the letters in the proper sequence.
 - A. *The Holy Spirit calls to all the world through us.*
 - B. *The Holy Spirit’s appeal to love reaches us through our brother.*
 - C. *The miracle of our relationship is extended to everyone.*
 - D. *We receive the miracle of our holy relationship which contains everyone and all miracles.*

There seem to be two barriers: our “little wall,” the barrier between us and our brother keeping out the peace of God, and the barrier between the whole world and God’s peace (4:12, 5:1). Yet if we will allow our little wall to fall, we will overcome the barriers of the whole world! This is true because all miracles are one, and are contained in our holy relationship (5:2).

While the present focus of these sections is breaking down the barriers *within* a holy relationship, which involves the miraculous transformation of consciousness and perception so that the participants have come to see love or a call for love rather than guilt in one another, the *purpose* of this transformation is to perfect the relationship as an outlet of the love of God into the world. The barriers within break down *so that* the barriers in the world can be overcome with equal ease and grace.

This goes back to the very first principle of miracles: "There is no order of difficulty in miracles" (T-1.I.1:1; 5:3). Every miracle involves weaning us away from our attraction to guilt and fostering an attraction of love (5:4). To me, this is a charming and practical definition of what the Course means by a miracle: "a gentle winning over from the appeal of guilt to the appeal of love." When a miracle is given, and received, something shifts in our minds and in our perceptions. Our egos attraction to guilt is set aside, and we welcome the warm flow of love. We no longer see others through the lens of guilt. Instead, we look on them with eyes of love.

I especially like the phrase, "a gentle winning over." There is no compulsion, no threat, no effort, no force involved. We are not pushed. We are *won over* by love, and we cooperate with love *because we want to*.

The appeal of love cannot fail (5:5), no matter the circumstance. All the remaining barriers *must* fall away under the irresistible flow of love, once you have invited that love into your relationship (5:6–7).

Now, the Holy Spirit wants to call through you to others. The Spirit of God is within your relationship, and Jesus is asking us not to stand in the way of His outreach through us, because His purpose is ours as well (5:8–11).

Paragraph 6

6. ¹There is a hush in Heaven, a happy expectancy, a little pause of gladness in acknowledgment of the journey's end. ²For Heaven knows you well, as you know Heaven. ³No illusions stand between you and your brother now. ⁴Look not upon the little wall of shadows. ⁵The sun has risen over it. ⁶How can a shadow keep you from the sun? ⁷No more can *you* be kept by shadows from the light in which illusions end. ⁸Every miracle is but the end of an illusion. ⁹Such was the journey; such its ending. ¹⁰And in the goal of truth which you accepted must *all* illusions end.

• Study Question •

9. "Such was the journey; such its ending." (a) What does this sentence mean? (b) What is the illusion that disappears as our journey ends?

•

The idea that Heaven itself would experience "a little pause of gladness," "a hush, a happy expectancy" (6:1) over the beginnings of a holy relationship, is quite inspiring. I'm not quite sure what a "pause" is like in the realm of eternity, but as a figure of speech it gets across the idea that our spiritual journey is noticed and known in Heaven (6:2).

It might be appropriate here to share what I think the Course understands by the term *Heaven*. Perhaps the defining line in the Course about Heaven is this:

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

It is our home, where we join in eternal, timeless oneness with God and His creations, in an endless exchange and extension of love. Heaven is formless and timeless, a spiritual realm of absolute perfection.

So when the Course says, “Heaven knows you well,” it isn’t talking about a bunch of angels and archangels flying around, beaming down on us on earth—although if that symbolism helps your understanding, go with it. What I get from it is that this Wholeness knows I am a part of it, and in my deepest part I know it too.

In our holy relationship, the barriers are already gone. All that is left is a “little wall of shadows” (6:3–4), something so unsubstantial that it cannot keep us apart. In the physical world, a shadow cannot keep us from the sun. In fact, the shadow is evidence of the sun’s shining. Likewise, the wall of shadows within is only proof that “the light in which illusions end” is shining there as well (6:5–6).

That’s all that a miracle is, the end of an illusion, like the sunlight eradicating a shadow (6:8). The light comes and shows us that what we thought was there does not exist.

In 6:9, “Such was the journey” means that the journey was an illusion; we never left Heaven, so our apparent return was nothing but the end of an illusion. “...such its ending” could mean either that the ending is the end of the illusion, or perhaps, the illusion of an end (since the journey is “without distance” (T-8.VI.9:7)).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹The little insane wish to get rid of Him Whom you invited *in* and push Him *out must* produce conflict. ²As you look upon the world, this little wish, uprooted and floating aimlessly, can land and settle briefly upon *anything*, for it *has* no purpose now. ³Before the Holy Spirit entered to abide with you it *seemed* to have a *mighty* purpose; the fixed and unchangeable dedication to sin and its results. ⁴Now it is aimless, wandering pointlessly, causing no more than tiny interruptions in love’s appeal.

• Study Question •

10. Even though we may have entered a holy relationship, we still experience conflict. Yet the conflict now is different. What is the major change described here that has occurred since we joined with a brother or sister in a holy relationship?

- A. We have a fixed and unchangeable dedication to sin and its results (guilt).
- B. The appeal of love is heard more clearly.
- C. The desire to get rid of peace floats randomly from one thing to another, without any real aim, causing only tiny interruptions.

•

All that is left of the barriers is a shadow, but that shadow is still enough to produce conflict. We still experience “the little insane wish to get rid of Him Whom you invited in,” that is, into our relationship, and that wish is all it takes to rock our boat (7:1). But this little wish no longer has a root in us. (Recall that sin has been *uprooted*.) So it floats around like a feather in the wind, briefly landing on one thing after another and coloring our perceptions momentarily—but not permanently, as it did previously (7:2).

Before, when we perceived guilt in someone, it was pretty much for good. What was only perception seemed to us to be fact, set in concrete. Now, that has changed. Yes, there are still interruptions in our awareness of love’s presence, but they are “tiny” interruptions. The false perceptions are detached and aimless, more easily seen to be without any real purpose behind them. There has been a shaking of the foundations. The roots of our thinking have been transplanted, and something new is growing within us (7:3–4).

Paragraph 8

8. ¹This feather of a wish, this tiny illusion, this microscopic remnant of the belief in sin, is all that remains of what once *seemed* to be the world. ²It is no longer an unrelenting barrier to peace. ³Its pointless wandering makes its results *appear* to be more erratic and unpredictable than before. ⁴Yet what *could* be more unstable than a tightly organized delusional system? ⁵Its *seeming* stability is its pervasive *weakness*, which extends to *everything*. ⁶The *variability* the little remnant induces merely indicates its *limited* results.

• Study Question •

11. *We may be disturbed because our desire to get rid of peace seems to cause results now that are “more erratic and unpredictable than before” (8:3). Why is this actually a good sign?*

- A. *It indicates the instability and limited results of the ego.*
- B. *It shows that the ego is only a delusion.*
- C. *It shows that the ego is no longer a tightly organized delusional system.*

•

The first two sentences (8:1–2) sum up what was said in the last paragraph: A major shift has occurred in our psychological makeup, whether or not we were aware of its happening. All that is left is a tiny illusion, a belief in sin that is *microscopic* in comparison to the way we previously viewed things. Before, we may have heard the 60s song, “Give peace a chance,” but peace didn’t *have* a chance due to the mountainous blockade of the ego’s commitment to sin and guilt. Now, the remaining belief is “no longer an unrelenting barrier to peace” (8:2).

When we become aware of that belief cropping up in one place after another, it may seem to be poisoning our thoughts in an out-of-control way (8:3). The out-of-control-ness of it is actually a *good sign*, because it results from the belief being cut loose of its moorings. It can't stick anywhere long enough to have lasting effects (8:6).

The ego's thought system is "a tightly organized delusional system" (8:4). The wording here causes me to think that the ego's thinking is wound so tight that it's ready to explode (8:5). The slightest chink will instigate catastrophic disintegration.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹How mighty can a little feather be before the great wings of truth?
²Can it oppose an eagle's flight, or hinder the advance of summer? ³Can it interfere with the *effects* of summer's sun upon a garden covered by the snow? ⁴See but how easily this little wisp is lifted up and carried away, never to return, and part with it in gladness, not regret. ⁵For it is nothing in itself, and *stood for* nothing when you had greater faith in its protection. ⁶Would you not rather greet the summer sun than fix your gaze upon a disappearing snowflake, and shiver in remembrance of the winter's cold?

• Study Question •

12. *Twice our wish to be separate or to keep peace out is compared to a feather, and once to a snowflake (9:6). What are the qualities of these objects that are drawn out here and applied to our "remnant of belief in sin?" Name several such abstract qualities (for instance, "insubstantial") and how they apply to this "obstacle" to peace.*

Many people think of these sections on "The Obstacles to Peace" as being intimidating and discouraging, but paragraphs like this one should disabuse us of that impression. It sings with confidence, comparing our remaining belief in sin (which fuels our desire to get rid of peace) to a single feather trying to resist "the great wings of truth" (9:1). Imagine a little feather attempting to block the flight of an eagle; what chance would it have (9:2)? Clearly, none! Even more absurdly, try to imagine this little feather trying to "hinder the advance of summer"! Could a single little feather somehow keep the sun from melting winter's snow and revealing the budding garden beneath it (9:2–3)? How utterly ridiculous!

That, my friends, is how certain Jesus is that what has been planted in our hearts will overwhelm and dismiss our egos. It is as certain as the coming of summer. Yes, there is an obstacle to the flow of peace between us, a "microscopic remnant of the belief in sin," but it is as nothing before the mighty Spirit of God, before the Truth of Who We Are. It is nothing but a "little wisp (that) is lifted up and carried away, never to return," and as we watch it go we can be glad. No regrets (9:4)!

In truth “it is nothing in itself” (9:5). Once we had faith that a belief in sin would protect us, that we needed to ferret out guilt in others to guard ourselves against it. But even then it “*stood* for nothing.” There was no sin to be found.

The wise thing to do is not to continue to fix our perception on the faults and flaws of our brothers and sisters, shivering in the memory of sins of the past, but to “greet the summer sun,” that is, open our hearts to the reality of love (9:6). This is the stated purpose of the Course: “It [aims]...at removing the blocks to the awareness of love’s presence, which is your natural inheritance” (T-Int.1:7).

When you find yourself discouraged as the ego once again rears its head, remember these images. Remind yourself that the belief in sin is only a feather trying to shield an entire garden from the sunlight. It cannot succeed. The snow will melt. The garden will bloom. And you, like the eagle, will take flight:

“They who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31 ESV)

Answer Key

1. D,A,C,B
2. A
3. Sentence 2: When you look with graciousness on your brother, you are beholding Him.

Section IV(A): The First Obstacle: The Desire to Get Rid of It

4. Can be anything from personal experience. Examples: Choosing to hold a grievance; choosing to become upset rather than to have peace; choosing to worry.
5. A and B
6. B
7. A, C, E, F
8. (a) C (b) B, D, A, C
9. (a) The journey was an illusion, and the end of the journey is the end of illusions. (b) The illusion that is ending is the illusion of separateness.
10. C
11. A
12. **Insubstantial:** As a feather cannot oppose mighty wings, so this obstacle cannot stand before truth. **Irrelevant:** As a feather cannot stop the coming of summer, no more can this obstacle stand in the way of God's Love. **Light or weightless:** As a feather is easily blown away by the wind, this obstacle will easily be removed. **Nothingness:** The feather is nothing in itself, and even when we thought it was a solid wall, it was still nothing; the obstacle is the same. **Short-lived:** As a snowflake in the sun is destined to quickly disappear and does not merit any attention, so too this obstacle is destined to melt away in the warmth of God's Love.

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

Appendix 1

A Brief Summary of

"THE OBSTACLES TO PEACE"

Text, Chapter 19, Section IV
*The obstacles that the ego erects
to the peace that entered the holy relationship*

"The Obstacles to Peace" is the longest and perhaps the most important section in the Text. Ideas that it grounds (especially the fear of God) are referred to again and again throughout the Text, Workbook and Manual. What is little understood is that it is really about the process of the holy relationship, the process of holiness gradually replacing sin in a relationship in which two people have joined. In this process, holiness enters the relationship, displaces the goal of sin, and then goes through a process of flowing over several resistances (or obstacles) erected by the tiny remnant of the belief in sin. This process culminates in the two partners forgiving each other and joining, and thereby passing beyond the final veil and uniting with God.

The belief in sin

You are attracted to the goal of sin and so try to make it real by giving it real results, showing that it is more powerful than God and beyond correction. Since its results are fearful, being attracted to its results means being attracted to fear. This goal of sin and attraction to fear is the underlying basis for the special relationship.

The Holy Spirit's peace enters your relationship

When you joined with your brother, the Holy Spirit's peace (elsewhere spoken of as the Holy Spirit's goal or holiness) entered your relationship, uprooting your belief in sin and leaving only a tiny remnant of that belief.

Peace seeks to flow over the obstacles to peace

The peace He lay deep within your relationship would extend to every aspect of your lives and then extend out to encompass the entire Sonship. To stop this, the tiny remnant of sin places obstacles before it, blocking its extension. Peace, however, will flow over these obstacles, as the belief in sin is now only a powerless, tiny feather.

The obstacles to peace

Four obstacles to peace are described. Each obstacle is actually a protection for the next obstacle, so that all of the obstacles together are layered protection for the final obstacle, the fear of God. This system of obstacles revolves primarily around the body, its pleasure, its punishment and its death.

I. The First Obstacle: The Desire to Get Rid of It

The first obstacle is the desire to get rid of the peace (the holiness) that entered your relationship. You want to get rid of it because you are attached to your body and you think that the Holy Spirit would ask you to give up your body. This attachment to the body stems from the tiny remnant of the belief in sin, which would use your body to seek evidence of sin and guilt in the world so that this evidence can feed your fear.

II. The Second Obstacle: The Belief the Body is Valuable for What It Offers

The second obstacle is the attraction of bodily pleasure. The second is the reason for the first: You would get rid of the peace that entered because you think it asks the sacrifice of bodily pleasure. The reason you are attracted to the body for its pleasure is because of the remnant of the belief in sin. This remnant causes you to seek pleasure for reasons entirely opposite to your conscious reasons. Here is the logic: The ego has dedicated the body to the goal of sin and uses it as a wall of separation. To seek for happiness through bodily pleasure, then, is to really reinforce sin and separation. Hence, it produces guilt. Therefore, the real reason you seek physical pleasure is the attraction of guilt. You want to use the body to find guilt. Once you do so, you project that guilt onto it and so become attracted to bodily pain, as the "just" punishment that your "guilty" body deserves. The attraction to physical pleasure, then, results in the attraction to physical pain.

III. The Third Obstacle: The Attraction of Death

To recap: Peace entered your relationship when you and your brother joined. You want to get rid of this peace (first obstacle) because you are attracted to bodily pleasure (second obstacle). You are attracted to bodily pleasure because it will bring you guilt, for which you will punish your body in the form of bodily pain. This will culminate in the ultimate punishment of the body: death. And this is the goal you have been looking for. You are attracted to death.

IV. The Fourth Obstacle: The Fear of God

This is the source of all the obstacles. The fear of God's Life produces the attraction of death, which in turn produces the rest of the obstacles. When you are afraid of God's Life, you become attracted to death. For death is the alternative to life, into which you must escape in order to save yourself from the "threat" of life. Death is not only an escape from life, it is a *conqueror* of life. It proves that you have conquered God's Life, that the ego's wish for death is mightier than God's Will for Life. Finally, death produces a decoy fear that diverts your attention from your real fear. By thinking it is death you fear, you never become aware that your real fear is the insane fear of life.

Surmounting the obstacles

Each obstacle is surmounted in the same way: the fear that it raises yields to the love beyond. You fear that giving up the obstacle is a sacrifice, but then find it is a release. You see that it is the obstacle that demanded sacrifice, not the Holy Spirit.

- I. Your desire to get rid of the Holy Spirit goes as you realize you love Him.
- II. The glorifying of the body fades as you realize you love the spirit more than the body.
- III. The attraction of death also fades as love's appeal begins to stir in you.

You surmount the final obstacle by forgiving and joining with your brother

The attraction of fear—the love of fear and the fear of God's Love—produced all of the obstacles. The final obstacle (the fear of God) yields at last to the attraction of the Love beyond the veil. The way you reach this final veil, and the way you go beyond it, is through union with your brother. You must forgive your brother and receive forgiveness from him. Each of you must be savior to the other, giving and receiving the same gift of release from guilt. Join with each other and with Jesus as you stand before the veil. Have faith in the goal as well as in the Holy Spirit Who led you here. Together, you will disappear into God's Presence and know His peace. In other words, the way that you surmount the final obstacle, the way that you find union with God, is to achieve the goal of the relationship and find union with your partner.