

Study Guide and Commentary

ACIM® Text, Chapter 22

The Function of the Holy Relationship

Section IX (22.VI.10–15 (FIP))

Only the Different Can Attack

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary.

Overview of Section IX

Having established in Section VIII that our gifts of forgiveness and love to one another, in a holy relationship, provide the means through which the Holy Spirit can save the world, Jesus now turns to examine the cause of the error that leads us to fear and perceive attackers in one another (and in God), rather than saviors. It begins and ends with statements of the importance of the holy relationship in bringing salvation to the world (1:1; 5:6–6:1), but in the middle points out an important connection between the ideas of separation and attack, showing how the holy relationship is intended to provide us with experiences that are in line with Truth, experiences that demonstrate Oneness instead of separateness.

Paragraph 1 (10 (FIP))

On your learning depends the welfare of the world. ²And it is only arrogance that would deny the power of your will. ³Think you the will of God is powerless? ⁴Is this *humility*? ⁵You do not see what this belief has done. ⁶You see yourself as vulnerable, frail and easily destroyed, and at the mercy of countless attackers more powerful than you. ⁷Let us look straight at how this error came about, for here lies buried the heavy anchor that seems to keep the fear of God in place, unmovable and solid as a rock. ⁸While this remains, so will it seem to be.

• **Study Question** •

1. *Paragraph 1 contains a somewhat puzzling sentence. Sentence 3 says, “Think you the Will of God is powerless?” In the context of this paragraph, what does this mean?*
 - A. *Do you think that your forgiveness of your holy relationship partner is too powerless to save the world?*
 - B. *Do you think that God’s Will is not powerful enough to overcome your arrogance?*
 - C. *Do you think that God’s Will is not strong enough to save the world, that you have to do it all yourself?*

2. *Sentence 1:7 begins by saying, “Let us look straight at how this error came about...” What is this error that it is talking about here? Please choose the most accurate answer.*
 - A. *A. The error of not forgiving your brother.*
 - B. *B. The error that you are powerless, at the mercy of more powerful attackers.*
 - C. *C. The original error of separation from God.*
 - D. *D. The error of trying to figure out this paragraph.*

When Jesus refers here to “your learning,” upon which the welfare of the world depends, I think he is speaking about what we learn in a holy relationship. That mutual learning of oneness and forgiveness is what saves the world. This has been the entire context of what just preceded this line (1:1; VIII.4:1; VIII.10:4). It seems as though Jesus realizes that we have a hard time believing this. Maybe we think, “Hey! Isn’t *he* the Savior? Saving the world is *his* job, not ours.” Or maybe our objection is, “What, *me* save the world? Who am I? I don’t have the power to save *anything*.”

Jesus responds to the implied objection: “Denying the power of *your* will isn’t humility; it’s *arrogance*. After all, your will *is* God’s; you *know* that *that* isn’t powerless!” (1:2–4). The previous section made it clear in more than one place that when two people’s wills join together it brings healing to the entire Sonship, because in doing so we have willingly chosen to serve God’s will, which is all-powerful.

Only in your joint will does healing lie. (T-22.VIII.4:6)

And in your healing is the Sonship healed, because your wills are joined. (VIII.4:8).

God would let nothing interfere with those whose wills are His. And they will recognize their wills are His because they serve His will, *and serve it willingly*. How can it not be theirs? (VIII.7:4–6)

Refusing to accept the power of our will has far-reaching effects, effects we often fail to recognize (1:5). Basically, we become victims in our own minds, believing we are helpless against the onslaughts of the world (1:6). Jesus tells us that we very much need

to understand “how this error came about.” He says that this is the belief about ourselves that keeps us terrified of God and afraid to approach Him, so profoundly that our fear seems “unmovable and solid as a rock.” As long as this weird denial of the power of our will, with its accompanying belief in our weakness and vulnerability, persists, so too will our fear of God (1:7–8). We need to understand not only the *origin* of our belief in weakness, but also its connection to our resistance to union with God.

Paragraphs 2 & 3 (11:1–12:5 (FIP))

2 Who can attack the Son of God and not attack his Father? ²How can God’s Son be weak and frail and easily destroyed unless his *Father* is? ³You do not see that every sin and every condemnation which you perceive and justify is an attack upon your Father. ⁴And that is why it has not happened, nor could be real. ⁵You do not see that this is your attempt, because you think the Father and the Son are separate. ⁶And you *must* think that they are separate, because of fear. ⁷For it seems safer to attack another or yourself than to attack the great Creator of the universe, Whose power you know.

3 If you are one with Him and recognized this oneness, you would know His power is yours. ²But you will not remember this while you believe attack of any kind means anything. ³It is unjustified in *any* form because it has no meaning. ⁴The only way it could be justified is if each of you were separate from the other, and all were separate from your Creator. ⁵For only then would it be possible to attack a part of the creation without the whole, the Son without the Father, and to attack another without yourself, or hurt yourself without the other feeling pain.

• Study Question •

3. *Paragraphs 2 and 3 give what was promised to us in paragraph 1—an explanation of “how this error arose.” These two paragraphs give a very logical argument that answers this issue. Try now to place the following parts of the argument in their proper logical order (list the letters).*
- A. *Then you can attack in safety, without fearing God’s retribution.*
 - B. *So you envision God and yourself separate from the rest of creation, from what you want to attack.*
 - C. *You want to attack.*
 - D. *You believe now that attack on another does not affect you, or vice versa.*
 - E. *You are afraid to attack God because of His power.*

The fact of the matter is: As egos, we *want* to be able to attack other people without feeling any pain ourselves (3:5–4:1). We want to believe that *sometimes* attack is *justified* (3:4). But if we are all one with God, to attack *anyone* would be equivalent to attacking

God, and that would be terrifyingly dangerous (2:1), and—Alas!—*never* justified. But if we all were *separate* from God, attacking another would seem *relatively safe*. So, because of our desire to justify attack and the fear of attacking God, we *must* think that God and His creations are separate (2:6; 3:4). The result? God's Son (His creation) must be weak and frail, and that includes yourself!

If we recognized our oneness with God we would realize that attack on God “has not happened, nor could be real” (3:1, 2:4). Instead, we would realize that God's power is our power (3:1). But this won't happen as long as we place any value at all on attack, thinking that sometimes, attack is justified, can be meaningful, and achieve positive results. As long as we think in that way, then in order to make attack seem to be even possible, we must believe we and God are separate (3:2). *Attack has no meaning; it cannot be justified* (3:3). Justified attack presupposes all of us are separate from one another, and from God, and *that is not the case* (3:4–5).

Referring then back to the first paragraph: The origin of our belief in weakness is our desire to justify attack. It fuels our resistance to union with God because such union would make attack impossible.

Paragraph 4 (12:6–13:4 (FIP))

4 And this belief you *want*. ²Yet wherein lies its value except in the desire to attack in safety? ³Attack is neither safe nor dangerous. ⁴*It is impossible*. ⁵And this is so because the universe is one. ⁶You would not choose attack on its reality if it were not essential to attack to see it separate from its Creator. ⁷And thus it seems as if Love could attack and become fearful.¹ ⁸Only the different can attack, so you conclude: *Because you can attack, you must be different*. ⁹Yet does the Holy Spirit explain this differently: Because you are *not* different, you *can't* attack.

¹. “Love,” which Helen changed to a capital “L” in the Notes, seems to refer to God, the Creator of the universe from the previous sentence. Remember that this section is meant to lay bare the error “that seems to keep the fear of God in place,” and this sentence is about the appearance that “Love could attack and become fearful.” So its meaning seems to be that when you see the universe as separate from its Creator so that you can attack it, this by extension makes the Creator (Who is really Love) seem separate and therefore capable of attack.

• **Study Question** •

4. Paragraph 4 presents two arguments, both stemming from the premise that only the different can attack; both arguments are logical, but mutually exclusive, taking different premises. The first is that because you can attack your brother, you and he must be different. The second (based on oneness) is that because you and he are not different, you cannot attack. Which argument seems more in line with your experience, the first or the second?

What is the belief we *want*? Sentence 1 is a reference to the preceding paragraph, which does not use the word “belief” anywhere. We might think it refers to 3:5, to our desire to attack. But the next sentence goes on to say that the only value “this belief” has is in our “desire to attack in safety” (4:2). It would be completely redundant to say that our desire to attack only has value in our desire to attack! So “this belief” must be something else. We have to look a little further back, to 3:4, where it speaks of this “...if each of you were separate from the other, and all were separate from your Creator.” What is the belief we want? The belief in separation!

The ego arose from the separation, and its continued existence depends on a continuing belief in the separation. (T-4.V.7:2; T-4.III.3:2 (FIP))

The only value of that belief is in our “desire to attack in safety” (4:2). But we are concerned about the wrong thing if we are thinking about safety or danger: *Attack is impossible* (4:4). Why? “...because the universe is one” (4:5). Attacking God is impossible, of course. But everything is part of God, all is one; therefore, *all* attack is impossible.

The only way it’s possible to believe that we can attack one another is to attack the reality of Oneness (4:6). But, if we are *not* one, then it would be possible for Love (a.k.a., God) could attack us and be afraid of our attack (4:7).

The fact is, “Only the different can attack” (4:8). From this, we falsely conclude, “I can attack; therefore, I must be different” (separate) (4:8). The Holy Spirit reasons the exact opposite: “Because you are *not* different, you *can’t* attack” (4:9).

Paragraph 5 (13:5–10 (FIP))

5 Either position is a logical conclusion if only the different can attack. ²Either could be maintained, but never both. ³The only question to be answered to decide which must be true is *whether you are different*. ⁴From the position of what you understand, you seem to be, and therefore can attack. ⁵Of the alternatives, this seems more natural and more in line with your experience. ⁶And therefore it is necessary that you have other experiences more in line with truth, to teach you what *is* natural and true.

• **Study Question** •

5. *What is the key question that must be answered to decide which argument is correct?*
- A. *Whether or not you and your brother are different.*
 - B. *Whether or not the different can attack.*
 - C. *Whether or not attacking makes you different.*

Both the conclusion of the Holy Spirit and the ego's conclusion are perfectly logical, based on the premise that "only the different can attack" (5:1). But only one conclusion can be true (5:2). There are actually two premises at play here: we are different, and we can attack. If either one is true, both must be true, because only the different *can* attack. If either one is false, both must be false. If we cannot attack, we must not be different. If we are one, and not different, we cannot attack.

Jesus says that we really need pay attention to the first premise, that we are different (5:3). Disprove that one and the other is equally disproven. It would be more difficult, I think, to disprove the idea that we can attack. Our physical senses, and the external world we perceive, all seem to support the idea that attack is real. That's one major difficulty of depending on "the body's eyes." If we depend on the physical perceptions, we *do* seem to be separate beings who are capable of attacking one another (5:4). So it seems "more natural" to us to follow that logical path: that because we can attack we must be different.

But what about the idea of being different? Is that easier to disprove? Jesus thinks it is, *if* we "have other experiences more in line with truth, to teach [us] what *is* natural and true" (5:6), which is, of course, our oneness, our unity. Such experiences are *necessary*, he says, to overcome the seemingly conclusive proof of our physical senses.

He says something similar in Lesson 91. I'll highlight the relevant phrase:

If you are not a body, what are you? You need to be aware of what the Holy Spirit uses to replace the image of a body in your mind. You need to feel something to put your faith in, as you lift it from the body. **You need a real experience of something else**, something more solid and more sure; more worthy of your faith, and really there (W-pI.91.7:1-4).

In other words, to overcome the "obvious" evidence of separation provided by our bodies, we need the experience of "something else," something *beyond* the body, that we can put our faith in. How can we find such experiences? The next section provides the answer.

Paragraph 6 (14 (FIP))

6 This is the function of your holy relationship. ²For what one thinks, the other will experience with him.² ³What can this mean except your minds are one? ⁴Look not with fear upon this happy fact, and think not that it lays a heavy burden on you. ⁵For when you have accepted it with gladness, you will realize that your relationship is a reflection of the union of the Creator and His Son. ⁶From loving minds there *is* no separation. ⁷And every thought in one brings gladness to the other because they are the same. ⁸Joy is unlimited, because each shining thought of love extends its being and creates more of itself. ⁹There is no difference anywhere within it, for every thought is like itself.

• Study Question •

6. Paragraph 6 opens by saying that the function of a holy relationship is to give you a new kind of experience: the experience of being one with your brother, of being the same, not different. According to this paragraph and the preceding one, what does this single fact of sameness with your brother establish for you (there may be more than one right answer)
- A. That you cannot attack.
 - B. That you are also one with your Father.
 - C. That your will is all-powerful.
 - D. That your loving thoughts can save the entire world.

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Providing experiences that disprove separateness and validate our oneness “is the function of your holy relationship” (6:1). How so? In a holy relationship, when one person has certain thoughts, the other person experiences the effect of those thoughts along with the thinker (6:2) (see footnote #2). It isn’t possible for either person to experience thoughts and feelings *alone*, and when fear thoughts arise, they must be dealt with by both parties, not separately. Unfortunately, we don’t always *realize* this, so that even in a holy relationship, negative feelings do not always get resolved promptly if one person or the other attempts to resolve them by themselves. The fact that attempts at separate self-healing do not work well, however, is in itself an experience that disproves separateness! It proves that “your minds are one” (6:3).

Even in a holy relationship, there will probably be a tendency to resist accepting the fact that minds are one; it may seem to be a fearful thing. I may find it burdensome for a

². The idea here is that once two people join in a holy relationship, their underlying unity—which has always been there—suddenly becomes far more apparent and manifest. As a result, mental states in one will instantly affect the other. This same idea is discussed in Chapter 18: “But forget not that your relationship is one, and so it must be that whatever threatens the peace of one is an equal threat to the other. The power of joining *and its blessing* lie in the fact that it is now impossible for either of you to experience fear alone or to attempt to deal with it alone” (T-18.V.6:3-4).

few reasons (6:4). I may resent the fact that thoughts of my partner have a resonant effect on *my* mind. I may wish that we were not so closely inter-twined, and that I could handle my own emotions without involving the other person. I may not like being responsible for the effects of *my* thoughts on the other person. All of these are reasons our egos use to promote separateness. We need to say “no” to all such thoughts, and “look not with fear” on the fact of our shared minds.

It is, rather, a “happy fact” (6:4). Once we *accept* it as fact, “with gladness,” we will realize that this different experience is proof of our union with our Creator (6:5). This is the kind of experience that can combat our ingrained belief in separation: “From loving minds there *is* no separation” (6:6). Because in a holy relationship our minds are joined, your thoughts of joy bring joy to me, and vice versa (6:7). When one mind experiences joy, that thought “creates more of itself,” thoughts in the other mind that are “like itself,” in every mind it touches (6:8–9).

You very likely have already experienced this kind of non-verbal communication. Let its implications dawn on you and bring you joy: the realization that separation is a lie, and only union is true.

Paragraph 7 (15 (FIP))

7 The light that joins you shines throughout the universe. ²And because it joins you, so it makes you one with your Creator. ³And in Him is all creation joined. ⁴Would you regret you cannot fear alone, when your relationship can also teach the power of love is there, which makes *all* fear impossible? ⁵Do not attempt to keep a little of the ego with this gift. ⁶For it was given to be used, and not obscured. ⁷What teaches you that you cannot separate denies the ego. ⁸Let truth decide if you be different or the same, and teach you which is true.

• Study Question •

7. *We might think oneness with another is a burden because it makes us responsible for how others feel; if we are in fear, they will be, too. What is the answer this paragraph gives to this idea.*
- A. *Because minds are joined, you can dispel fear in all minds with your love.*
 - B. *Your fear cannot affect another; only your love.*
 - C. *Your fear can affect others, but the Creator will forgive you.*

This paragraph returns to clean up the concern we might have that our thoughts of fear can infect our brother, and vice versa. He spoke about this in the previous chapter:

If you choose sin instead of healing, you would condemn the Son of God to what can never be corrected. You tell him by your choice that he is damned; separate from you and from his Father forever, and without a hope of safe return. You teach him this, and you will learn of him exactly what you taught. For you

can teach him only that he is as you would have him, and what you chose he be is but your choice for you.

7. Yet think not this is fearful. That you are joined to him is but a fact, not an interpretation. How can a fact be fearful, unless it disagrees with what you hold more dear than truth? Reason will tell you that this fact is your release. Neither your brother nor yourself can be attacked alone. But neither can accept a miracle instead without the other being blessed by it and healed of pain. (T-21.VI.6-7; T-21.VI.6:1-7:2 (FIP))

Yes; it's true that attack thoughts are shared, but so are thoughts of blessing, and it is *that latter* truth that is our release. As I said above, whether we experience sharing of fear or sharing of loving thoughts, we are experiencing the fact of joined minds. Accept that *gladly*, welcome it, and it will begin to unravel the buried strands of belief in separation.

What a blessing to realize, to affirm with deep faith, that the light that joins me with another—demonstrated by our shared thoughts—extends its blessing “throughout the universe” (7:1) and joins us equally with God Himself (7:2). Since this is true of everyone, by our connection with God, we and all creation are joined (7:3).

Why waste time lamenting that I cannot fear alone, that negative thoughts are shared? “I am not alone in experiencing the effects of my thoughts,” says Lesson 19. Does that scare you or delight you? The experiences of joined minds in a holy relationship “can also teach the power of love is there,” a power “which makes *all* fear impossible” (7:4). Let's not try to hold on to a little bit of separateness while attempting to experience oneness (7:5). It cannot be done! Oneness and the realization of oneness is something we have to actively put to use in our lives; we can't brush it aside whenever we wish (7:6). The experience of shared minds, which proves that you *cannot* truly separate, is a *denial* of the ego (7:7). You cannot have it and *not* deny the reality of the ego.

The final answer to the question raised above—are we different or the same?—is clear. May we allow ourselves to be taught this precious truth by the experiences of truth we share with one another. And recall the original statement: “Only the different can attack.” The experience of shared thoughts can, if we allow it, prove to us that we are *not* different. If that is the truth, then the conclusion must be that “Attack is impossible.” This perception of the invisible truth of oneness must, then, be allowed to overwhelm and replace the evidence of apparent separateness and attack shown to us by our physical senses.

I believe it was Eric Butterworth who once shared this illustration of a union we can't see. Imagine, he said, that you are flying over New York City. What do your eyes show you? A grouping of several islands: Manhattan, Staten Island, Long Island, Governor's Island, Liberty Island...All separated from one another. But on a higher level, or maybe I should say a *deeper* level, you know that beneath the surface of the water, these islands are all connected, all one, part of the Earth.

Likewise, we appear to be separate on the surface, from what our eyes perceive. But on a deeper, spiritual level, we are all one. We are joined. And the proof of it is that what

affects one mind also affects minds that are associated with it. In fact, *all* minds are affected, but initially, our experience is probably limited to the range of our holy relationship. That experience *proves* that oneness is real. We do not need to let our perception of one another stop at the level of the body; we can allow ourselves to see that which is invisible to the eye, but nevertheless irrefutably real.

Thus will your thought be multiplied a thousandfold and tens of thousands more. And when it is returned to you, it will surpass in might your little thought as much as does the radiance of the sun outshine...a firefly....The steady brilliance of this light remains and leads you out of darkness, nor will you be able to forget the way again (W-pI.97.6).

• **Study Question** •

8. *Please explain how, according to this section, all of the following themes are answered, fulfilled, satisfied in the holy relationship. Write a sentence or two about each.*
- A. *Seek true freedom by using your mind and body to serve the Holy Spirit's plan of saving the world. He can use your little part to save the entire world.*
 - B. *Your experience supports the idea that you can attack your brother and so must be different from him. Therefore, you need a new kind of experience.*
 - C. *You see yourself as being too powerless to save the world because you want to attack in safety. And to do so you needed to see yourself as separate from God and His power.*

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Legend:

Light underscoring indicates emphasis that appears in the Urtext or shorthand notes.

Text is taken from the Circle of Atonement's Complete and Annotated Edition (which I refer to as the "CE" for "Complete Edition" or "Circle Edition"). Please be aware that, even when the wording is exactly the same as the FIP version, the division into paragraphs is often quite different in the CE, which restores the paragraph breaks found in the original notes. This results in different reference numbering as well. I will indicate for each paragraph the corresponding sentences in the FIP edition. You should be able to locate specific sentences in that edition if you need to, with a minimum of visual clutter in the commentary. Passages that lie outside the current section will continue to have footnoted references. References to quotations are from the CE unless another version is being quoted, in which case that version is indicated.

Footnotes by the commentary author are shown in this font and size. Other footnotes come from the Complete Edition itself.

Answer Key

1. A
2. B
3. C,E,B,A,D
4. For most people, the answer is, the first: because you can attack your brother, you and he must be different.
5. A
6. A,B,C,D
7. A
8. Three parts:
 - A. You can serve the Holy Spirit's plan only by joining with your brother, and only by serving him, sanctifying him. Simply by forgiving your brother will the Holy Spirit save the entire world, by using your forgiving thoughts to save others.
 - B. Because you and your brother experience the same thing, you will see that you are the same, and thus cannot attack.
 - C. By seeing that you and your brother are the same, you will realize that you and your Father are one, that you are all-powerful and that your thoughts can save the world.