

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM® Text, Chapter 6, Section V(B)

The Lessons of Love

The Lessons of the Holy Spirit: To Have Peace, Teach Peace to Learn It

Overview of the Section

To review our synopsis of the three lessons:

In this spiritual journey, we transition from an allegiance to the ego and its premises, into an intermediate state of an allegiance divided between ego and God, and finally to full allegiance to God. The first lesson (or “step” as it is also called) begins to let in God’s thought system, initiating conflict between the two ways of thinking. The second step is mainly one in which we come to *prefer* God’s way of thinking to the ego’s, but we still don’t entirely let go of the ego. The third step completes our choice for God and against the ego. It ends the conflict; we steadfastly set our minds against the ego and its thinking.

The careful reader of the Text will find that this pattern is consistently repeated throughout the Course (see my booklet, *The Journey Home*). It is a template of the spiritual journey. We saw a preview of the same three lessons as far back as Chapter 2, in Section III, paragraphs 3 and 4. There, the first lesson is described as a situation in which a mind with an imprisoned will realizes that its situation has become intolerably painful and begins to look for “a better way” (T-2.III.3:6). This is the initial change of direction, which begins the journey home. As the previous section pointed out (T6.V(A).6:4), this change creates an allegiance split between two thought systems, which “is usually experienced as conflict, which can become very acute” (T-2.III.3:9).

The paragraph that follows (T-2.III.4) goes on to talk about spiritual vision and how it works to help dissolve the conflict. We learn to distinguish between truth and error and to become willing to choose love instead of attack. It is the same stage as the second lesson of the Holy Spirit in our current section, in which we become increasingly aware that attack is not justified, and that to have peace, we must teach peace to learn it.

The end of that fourth paragraph goes on to describe a state of increasing mental vigilance against the ego, a state corresponding to the third lesson of the Holy Spirit, which we will study in the next commentary. The repeated use of the word “increasingly” in T2.III.4 makes it evident that this is a gradually accelerating process. In this third stage, our progress proceeds steadily rather than coming in spurts. In this last stage we become vigilant *against* the ego, quickly reacting to the least intrusion of any thoughts of

conflict or attack, or any blockage to the flow of love which has warmed our hearts as we have allowed it to pass through us.

These three broad steps on the spiritual journey are a helpful guideline to us. In *The Song of Prayer*, Jesus says that understanding the stages of the journey is *necessary* if we are to attain the state beyond learning:

Being beyond learning, this state cannot be described. *The stages necessary to its attainment, however, need to be understood*, if peace is to be restored to God's Son, who lives now with the illusion of death and the fear of God. (S-1.II.8:7-8, my emphasis)

In any journey it helps to know where you are going; it helps to know the goal. Being aware of the expected pitfalls along the way (such as the mental conflict between the two thought systems) helps you not to be taken by surprise, and to know how to deal with them when they occur. And it helps, also, to know the stages you necessarily pass through, so that you will not try to skip over them, disdaining them as unneeded.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹All who believe in separation [Ur: All the separated ones] have a basic fear of retaliation and abandonment. ²[Ur: This is because] they believe in attack and rejection, so that is what they perceive and teach and learn. ³These insane ideas are clearly the result of [Ur: their own] dissociation and projection. ⁴What you teach you are, but it is quite apparent that you can teach wrongly, and can therefore teach yourself wrong. ⁵Many thought I was attacking them, even though it was apparent I was not. ⁶An insane learner learns strange lessons. ⁷What you must recognize [understand] is that when you do not share a thought system, you are weakening it. ⁸Those who believe in it therefore perceive this as an attack on them. ⁹This is because everyone identifies himself with his thought system, and every thought system centers on what you believe you are. ¹⁰If the center of the thought system is true, only truth extends from it. ¹¹But if a lie is at its center, only deception proceeds from it.

• Study Question •

1. (a) *Why did people believe that Jesus was attacking them?*
- (b) *How does this apply to how other people may perceive you?*

Lesson Two states, "To have peace, teach peace to learn it." This sounds almost identical to the first lesson, "To have, give all to all." Certainly the same basic idea that giving is receiving is contained in both lessons. What makes this second lesson different? What makes it an advance over the first lesson?

The difference is that in the second lesson you have identified something specific that you want: peace. You are not talking about having and giving in general terms; you are making *peace* your goal, and are teaching peace *in order to* learn it.

Think about this in relation to the second of the ego's three premises given in the Introduction to this chapter: "...your attack is justified in return..." (T-6.In.1:3). It is easy to see how this lesson counteracts that premise. If my goal is peace, clearly I do not want to attack! I don't want conflict; I want peace. If I want peace, I have to *teach* peace, or offer it to others. Peace and attack are mutually exclusive concepts.

In the first step we allowed a holy thought to enter our minds, a thought contrary to the ego. That brought about conflict between the two thought systems, between love and fear in our minds. Now, in the second step, we are beginning to move beyond that conflict. We have made a clear choice; we prefer Spirit to ego. We prefer peace to attack. We haven't yet let go of the ego entirely, so there may still be *some* conflict, but we know we want peace. Therefore, when conflict arises, we no longer think of it as natural and inevitable; we recognize conflict as a signal that our minds need healing.

As we shift from the first to the second step, we are going to be challenging our identification with the ego's thought system. The ego is going to *expect* retaliation and abandonment, so it will perceive the benign instruction of the Holy Spirit as an attack (1:1). Egos believe in attack and rejection, so egos *perceive* attack and rejection on all sides, and teach it and learn it (1:2). "Clearly," says Jesus, such ideas grow out of "dissociation and projection" (1:3). That is, as we have seen earlier in the chapter, the attack and rejection that we are perceiving are coming only from our own minds. We have disowned them and have attempted to thrust them outside of our minds; we have *chosen* to see them in God and in others, rather than in ourselves.

When I feel threatened in any way by Jesus, by the Holy Spirit, or by the Course, I need to recognize the real source of the attack I am seeing. I need to remember that my perceptions are the result of dissociation and projection.

Jesus himself is a good example of how the ego misperceives attack everywhere. The scribes and Pharisees in his day, and perhaps even some Romans, perceived Jesus as attacking them because he did not share their thought system (1:5–8). This will happen to us concerning the Holy Spirit; we will think He is attacking *us*. It will happen in reverse as we open our minds to His thought system, and people who still strongly identify with the ego's thought system will see us as attacking *them* because we no longer share the ego's thought system with them (1:7–9).

We can't really blame people who feel this way, in my opinion. Any thought system "centers on what you believe you are" (1:9). Thus, a person's self-concept is closely tied to his thought system. Anything that undermines that thought system is going to feel like a challenge to one's own self. A healthy thought system (one founded on truth) will not foster attack in response, because truth can extend only truth (1:10). Thus, a person holding the thought system of the Holy Spirit will not *misperceive* people who do not share that thought system; he will perceive them truly, seeing God's creation in them with the vision given by the Holy Spirit. But the ego's thought system is based on a lie, and therefore, when someone does not share it, "deception proceeds from it" (1:11). It exudes a polluted perception; denial and projection produce what appears as attack and rejection.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹All good teachers realize that only fundamental change will last, but they do not begin at that level. ²Strengthening motivation for change is their first and foremost goal. ³It is also their last and final one. ⁴Increasing motivation for change in the learner is all that a teacher need do to guarantee change. ⁵Change in motivation is a change of mind, and this will inevitably produce fundamental change because the mind is fundamental.

• Study Question •

2. *What do you think “fundamental change” refers to? (Hint: Read also 3:4 and compare with T-6.V(C).5:8.)*

The ultimate goal is “fundamental change,” but good teachers do not attempt to begin at that level! (2:1). They work, at first and for the most part, with “strengthening motivation for change” (2:2). Really, that is *all* a teacher needs to do, because once a learner is *motivated*, he or she *is guaranteed* to learn, and the desired change will *inevitably* result (2:3–4). “...the mind is fundamental” (2:5); that is, it is at the root of everything. Change the mind and everything else follows. Changing your motivation is all that is needed because that *is* the change of mind that will always lead to the desired goal, the “fundamental change” (2:5).

What is this “fundamental change” being spoken of? The phrase occurs twice in this paragraph, once more each in paragraphs T-6.V(B).4; T-6.V(B).9; and T-6.V(C).3, *and nowhere else*, so it is central to the teaching of this section. It appears to refer to the ultimate goal of the spiritual path, which can be described as entering the Kingdom, returning the mind fully to God and creation, transferring perception to knowledge, or translating *having* into *being* (see 3:4 and T-6.V(C).5:8). The Holy Spirit targets that fundamental change for us, knowing it alone will last. The three lessons or steps He is leading us through are simply *preparing us* for that final change, when our minds let go of the ego entirely and turn back to their natural function of creation in and with God.

I find it helpful to realize that the first aim of the Holy Spirit is simply *to increase or strengthen my desire* for the things of God. I cannot expect *fundamental change* at the beginning of my path. I need to become clear about what I want. I may be impatient, wishing the learning process to be over *now*. But the Holy Spirit is perfectly happy if, as each day goes by, my motivation is becoming stronger. He knows that given a strong enough motive, the change must inevitably follow. Once I am perfectly sure of what I want, I will make a final and irrevocable choice for it. When I want *only* love, I will see nothing else (T-12.VII.8:1), and my thoughts will parallel God's, enabling Him to shift my perception to knowledge.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹The first step in the reversal or undoing process is the undoing of the getting concept. ²Accordingly, the Holy Spirit's first lesson was "To have, give all to all." ³I said that this is apt to increase conflict temporarily, and we can clarify this still further now. ⁴At this point, the equality of *having* and *being* is not yet perceived. ⁵Until it is, *having* appears to be the opposite of *giving*. ⁶Therefore, the first lesson seems to contain a contradiction, since it is being learned by a conflicted mind. ⁷This means conflicting motivation, and so the lesson cannot be learned consistently as yet. ⁸Further, the mind of the learner projects its own conflict [Ur: split], and thus [therefore] does not perceive consistency in the minds of [consistent minds in] others, making him suspicious of their motivation. ⁹This is the real reason why, in many respects, the first lesson is the hardest to learn. ¹⁰Still strongly aware of the ego in yourself, and responding primarily to the ego in others, you are being taught to react to both as if what you do believe is not true.

• Study Question •

3. *Reflect a bit on your own experience. Have you experienced an increase in mental conflict since starting the Course? Does it help you to realize that this is the normal, expected experience?*

Though we've started to talk about the second lesson, Jesus now returns to the first lesson ("the first step," 3:1). The second lesson becomes more understandable by contrasting it with the first lesson. The first lesson introduced the concept, "To have, give all to all," and served to undo "the getting concept" (3:1-2). At first, as has been said already, this increases our conflict because "having appears to be the opposite of giving" (3:5). Whereas eventually, in the Kingdom, we will know that having and giving are identical (T-4.III.9:7; T-4.VII.5:7), *now* we can't see that. So, when our minds are instructed to "give all to all" they balk! Our conflicted minds (3:6) cannot help thinking, "If I give everything I'll have nothing left." It's the same thing that happens when we are told to give up all attack thoughts, release all grievances, stop defending ourselves, and forgive *everything*—we inevitably think, "If I do that I'll be everybody's doormat!" In fact, as I've said, learning to give all and learning to overlook attack are really part of the same lesson, and no matter which aspect of it we run into, all our well-trained reaction patterns run counter to what the Holy Spirit is trying to teach us. Giving to have *seems* to contain an inherent contradiction (3:6). We don't know yet that the conflict is not in the lesson, but in the mind that hears it (3:6).

Since a part of our mind does not believe the lesson, our motivation is conflicted, and we cannot *as yet* learn the lesson *consistently* (3:7). Clearly, the way this statement is worded, we *will* eventually learn the lesson, but not in the first stage. Also, we *do* learn

the lesson even in the first stage, but not *consistently*. Sometimes we hear it, believe it, and practice it; other times we do not. That's certainly been *my* experience.

What's more, because of the inconsistency in our own minds, we *project* inconsistency onto others, and live in constant suspicion of their motives (3:8). Sound familiar? The ego mind is convinced that other minds are all like itself, which is why the Pharisees saw Jesus as a threat. "This," says Jesus, "is the real reason why...the first lesson is the hardest to learn" (3:9). While we still perceive the ego as something very real and powerful and wicked, it's extremely difficult to react *as if* the ego were nothing. While we *plainly see* attack and injury, we *cannot* forgive. So, to *give all* when faced with someone who seems to be trying to *take all* seems like suicide. It creates profound conflict in our minds.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Upside down as always, the ego perceives the first lesson as insane. ²In fact, this is its only alternative since the other possibility, which would be much **less** acceptable to it, would obviously be that *it* is insane. ³The ego's judgment, here as always, is predetermined by what it **is** [Ur: **though not more so than is any other product of thought**]. ⁴The fundamental change will still occur with the change of mind **in the thinker**. ⁵Meanwhile, the increasing clarity of the Holy Spirit's Voice makes it impossible for the learner **not to listen**. ⁶For a time, then, he **is** receiving conflicting messages **and accepting both**.

Not surprisingly, the ego thinks the first lesson is insane! (4:1). It isn't surprising because, if *the lesson* is not insane, then *the ego* must be insane (4:2), because it believes the exact opposite: "To have, take all from all." What the ego *is* will always predetermine the way it judges things (4:3), and it is the symbol of separation. I can vouch for this. At times, I have wondered if the Course was teaching insanity! Some of its ideas are *so* out of accord with "normal" ways of thinking! This is why people sometimes throw the Course across the room or even off a bridge.

Yet, despite the oft-violent resistance of the ego, the "fundamental change" is inevitable; it "will still occur" as our mind changes (4:4). Before that time, as the first stage progresses, the Voice of the Holy Spirit will grow increasingly clear, no matter what the ego does or how loudly it screams. We will find it *impossible* not to listen (4:5). We will have, therefore, *two* voices in our minds giving us thoroughly contradictory messages, and unfortunately, we will continue "accepting both" of them (4:6). Despite the mind's attempts at dissociation, keeping the contradictory messages partitioned off from one another, some mental conflict is unavoidable.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The way out of conflict between two opposing thought systems is clearly to choose one and relinquish the other. ²If you identify with your thought system, and you cannot escape this, and if you accept two thought systems which are in complete disagreement, peace of mind is impossible. ³If you teach both, which you will surely do as long as you accept both, you are teaching conflict and learning it. ⁴Yet you do want peace, or you would not have called upon the Voice for peace to help you. ⁵Its [His] lesson is not insane; the conflict is.

• Study Question •

4. *If your mind is torn between two thought systems, to get out of the conflict you must choose only one thought system: the ego's or the Holy Spirit's (5:1). What do you think: Is it possible to end the conflict by choosing the ego's thought system entirely? Why or why not?*

We are still (since paragraph 3) discussing the first step here, in which this extreme conflict between mutually exclusive thought systems first arises and grows until it reaches a limit of tolerance. Peace of mind in this state is impossible (5:2). Eventually our mind recognizes that the conflict has to end, and the only way out is to choose one thought system and let the other go (5:1). As long as we hold on to both we are teaching conflict and learning it as well (5:3).

We inevitably will choose the Voice for God, because there is a reason we called on Him in the first place (an invitation that initiated all this conflict). The reason is, *we do want peace*, and we do *not* want conflict! (5:4). The Holy Spirit is “the Voice for peace” (5:4) and the ego is the voice for conflict. It isn't the lesson of the Holy Spirit that is insane; it is the *conflict* (5:5). That realization marks the entrance to the second step. We are starting to recognize what we truly want, and we want peace. The only way to have it is to choose the Voice for peace *only*, and to stop listening to the other voice completely.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹There can be no conflict between sanity and insanity. ²Only one is true, and therefore only one is real. ³The ego tries to persuade you that it is up to you to decide which voice is true, but the Holy Spirit teaches you that truth was created by God, and your decision cannot change it. ⁴As you begin to realize the quiet power of the Holy Spirit's Voice, and Its perfect consistency, it must dawn on your mind that you are trying to undo a decision that was irrevocably made for you. ⁵That is why I suggested before that you remind yourself to allow the Holy Spirit to decide for God for you.

• Study Question •

5. *Can you recall where we read previously about allowing the Holy Spirit to decide for us? (Hint: see T-5.VII.)*

The conflict we experience cannot be real because one of the “sides” in the so-called conflict isn’t real. The ego is insane; it is false. Sanity and insanity cannot conflict because insanity isn’t true and therefore isn’t real (6:1–2). As I pointed out in the previous study question and answer, choosing completely for the ego is not even an option! You cannot simply choose to be something you are not. As the Course puts it elsewhere:

What lives is holy as Himself, because what shares His life is part of Holiness, and could no more be sinful than the sun could choose to be of ice; the sea elect to be apart from water, or the grass to grow with roots suspended in the air. (W-pl. 156.3:3)

The ego (as always, frantic to prove it exists) insists there *is* a choice. It tells us we need to decide which is true: the ego’s voice or the Holy Spirit’s Voice. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, teaches the obvious: only the truth is true (6:2, compare with T-14.II. 2:1: “The Holy Spirit, seeing where you are but knowing you are elsewhere, begins His lesson in simplicity with the fundamental teaching that *truth* is true”). Only what God created exists, and our “decision” can’t change it (6:3). Can a drop in the ocean “decide” to exist apart from water? No more can we “decide” that we are no longer what God created us to be.

In listening to our own egos, we are not really trying to “decide” anything. We have been trying to *undo* “a decision that was irrevocably made” for us (6:4).

The only way out of the error is to decide that you do not have to decide anything. Everything has been given you by God's decision. (T-7.X.6:8–9)

That realization begins to dawn on us the moment we open our minds to the Voice for God, and the more we listen to His perfect consistency and quiet power, the more we know it must be true (6:4). This is what Jesus really meant when, at the end of Chapter 5, he suggested that we tell ourselves, “I choose to let Him [undo the consequences of my wrong decision], by allowing Him to decide for God for me” (T5.VII.6:11). Allowing the Holy Spirit to decide for God for us means, simply, to recognize that the choice of what we are has already been made, and cannot be changed.

Therefore, it isn’t really a matter of my choosing between the ego and the Holy Spirit. More accurately, it’s a matter of my realizing I don’t have a choice! I *must* be for God. The old gospel hymn had it right, in a sense: “My stubborn will at last has yielded; I would be Thine, and Thine alone... Lord, let in me Thy will be done.”

In the second step we stop trying to decide for ourselves and begin to recognize that somewhere deep within we have already decided; we already want peace or we would not

have started this difficult journey! The decision has been made for us (6:4). We were created wanting peace; we don't have any choice about it.

Paragraph 7

7. ¹You are **not** asked to make insane decisions, although you can [Ur: you are free to] think you are. ²It **must**, however, be insane to believe that it is **up to you** to decide what God's creations **are**. ³The Holy Spirit perceives the conflict **exactly as it is**. ⁴Therefore, His second lesson is:

5To have peace, teach peace to learn it.

We are not “asked to make insane decisions” (7:1) such as deciding which voice, God's or the ego's, is telling the truth about “what God's creations are” (6:3 and 7:2). As I've said, we aren't really making a decision about what we are; that isn't subject to choice. The mental conflict we experience is just an ego smoke screen, and the Holy Spirit knows that; He sees the conflict as it is (7:3) and knows there is “no conflict between sanity and insanity” (6:1). He knows that we have to become motivated; therefore, He instructs us in a way that motivates us: “To have peace, teach peace to learn it” (7:5).

There is no point in arguing with the ego; it isn't interested in resolving the argument, it only wants to keep it going. It isn't interested in answering any questions, it just wants to keep us asking them. So the Holy Spirit, like that kindly parent with the child awaking from nightmares, does not confuse us with what we have to avoid to escape from harm; He just tells us, in very simple terms, what to *do* in a positive sense. “To have peace, teach peace.” We do not have to decide what we are; teaching peace will *show* us. He knows that this is enough; for if we will *extend* what we are, we will *learn* what we are, and the smoke and mirrors of the ego will disappear without any need to attack them.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹This is still a preliminary step, since *having* and *being* are still not equated. ²It is, however, more advanced than the first step, which is really only the beginning of the thought reversal [Ur: really only a thought reversal]. ³The second step is a positive affirmation of **what you want**. ⁴This, then, **is** a step in the direction **out of conflict**, since it means that alternatives have been considered, and **one** has been chosen as **more desirable**. ⁵Nevertheless, the term “more desirable” still implies that the desirable has degrees. ⁶Therefore, although this step is essential for the ultimate decision, it is clearly **not** the final one. ⁷[Ur: It should be clear that the] Lack of order of difficulty in miracles has not yet been accepted, because **nothing** is difficult that is *wholly* **desired**. ⁸To desire wholly is to **create**, and creating **cannot** be difficult if God Himself created you **as** a creator.

• Study Question •

6. Refresh your memory: What does it mean to equate "having and being," and in what way is this our goal? (8:1; see also T-4.III.9 and T-4.VII.5)¹.

This second stage goes a step beyond the first because it includes "a positive affirmation of what you want" (8:1-3). The first step introduced conflict; this step *begins* to move us out of it. Recognizing that we want peace, we start to move in that direction (8:4). As we give peace, we receive it; as we share it, we experience it. Each experience of peace increases our motivation; we want more of it, and we want it more consistently. During this step, we are not always *at* peace, but we are constantly growing in our desire to *have* peace, and the frequency of peaceful periods in our lives is increasing as well.

Yet, this is "still a preliminary step" (8:1). The first step was "very preliminary," and this one is "still...preliminary." It's still setting things up for the final step; still clearing the land and plowing the field before planting the crop. Although we do desire peace, we still do not desire it *wholly* (8:5 and 8:7). We cannot yet say, in honesty, the words of Workbook Lesson 205: "The peace of God is *everything* I want" (W-p1.205.1:2). That kind of wholeheartedness is what signals the beginning of the *third* stage. Here, in the second stage, we are moving in that direction but we have not arrived yet. Our desire for peace still falters. We desire peace *more than* other things, but we still desire other things! (8:5).

The second step is the time in which we are *learning* to be single-minded. It is a process that is leading up to an "ultimate decision" (8:6), when singled-mindedness becomes our settled choice. One by one the idols fall. One by one, we recognize that we *do not want* what we thought we did, and so we come to learn the "pearl of great price" (Matthew 13:46, KJV) for which we are willing to relinquish everything, even our whole world. If we *wholly desire* peace, it cannot be difficult to attain (8:7). Our Teacher is working with us to increase our motivation until it becomes one-pointed, single, and pure. As that increases, we will grow closer to the identity of having and being (8:1), and nearer to complete acceptance of the idea that there is no order of difficulty in miracles

¹ "In your own mind, though denied by the ego, is the declaration of your release. *God has given you everything*. This one fact means the ego does not exist, and this makes it profoundly afraid. In the ego's language, "to have" and "to be" are different, but they are identical to the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit knows that you both *have* everything and *are* everything. Any distinction in this respect is meaningful only when the idea of "getting," which implies a lack, has already been accepted. That is why we make no distinction between *having* the Kingdom of God and *being* the Kingdom of God" (T-4.III.9:1-7).

"God, Who encompasses all being, created beings who have everything individually, but who want to share it to increase their joy. Nothing real can be increased except by sharing. That is why God created you. Divine Abstraction takes joy in sharing. That is what creation means. "How," "what" and "to whom" are irrelevant, because real creation gives everything, since it can create only like itself. Remember that in the Kingdom there is no difference between *having* and *being*, as there is in existence. In the state of being the mind gives everything always" (T-4.VII.5:1-8).

(8:7). Once our desire is entirely unified, it will *create* the peace we long for (8:8). God created us to be creators, so what our minds want without reservation simply comes into being. Our wanting it is how we create it. As yet, however, we have not reached that level; we are still working at increasing motivation and transforming our perceptions (9:1).

Paragraph 9

9. ¹The second step, then, is still perceptual, although it is a giant step toward the unified perception that reflects [Ur: parallels] God's knowing. ²As you take this step and hold this direction, you will be pushing toward the center of your thought system, where the fundamental change will occur. [Ur: You are only beginning this step now, but you have started on this way by realizing that *only one way is possible*. You do not yet realize this consistently, and so your progress is intermittent.] ³At the second step progress is intermittent, but the second step is easier than the first because it follows. ⁴Realizing that it *must* follow [Ur: The very fact that you have accepted *that*] is a demonstration of a growing awareness that the Holy Spirit will lead you on.

• Study Question •

7. *Why is this step not the last step? Give as many reasons as you can (see 8:1,5–7 and 9:1–2).*

The second step moves us far towards the unified perception that parallels God's knowing and allows the final transfer of perception to knowledge, but it is still centered on correcting perception. It isn't the final step.

The progress during this stage is *intermittent* (9:3). There will be a spurt of progress, then a plateau, then another spurt. As you reach a plateau, you may think that you have arrived at the final lesson. Then another area of attachment to the world will crop up; some aspect of your life where ego values linger, or something you are still clinging to and cherishing above your peace. You may struggle a while, learning that this thing is not worth your peace. Each such learning leads to another plateau.

The second step is both a choice-point (a step) and a process (or stage). You “take this step” and then “hold this direction” (9:2). As this stage progresses, you are “pushing toward the center of your thought system” (9:2), that is, the *ego's* thought system you have identified with. The words “pushing toward the center” picture a process that begins with items on the periphery of that thought system and which then—perhaps with some effort (“pushing”)—proceeds step by step toward its core. When you reach the core, when you uncover the thought that underlies all the peripheral points, “the fundamental change will occur” (9:2). The “final” decision will be made (8:6).

Like peeling the layers off an onion, one by one you strip away the ego's disguises, uncover its hidden values, and let them go. The second step is easier (9:3) because it

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follows the first step. You have built up some momentum, momentum that will only increase.

As you begin to move into the second step, you realize that the process you are going through is *a necessary process*; it “*must follow*” (9:4, my emphasis) the first step. Once the Holy Spirit’s thoughts have taken root in your mind, the conflict with the ego thought system is inevitable. Every aspect of it must be rooted out and discarded. The conflict can be disturbing until you realize it is necessary. When you recognize its necessity, you relax a bit. You won’t be disturbed when another aspect of ego gets exposed. You won’t moan, “Oh, no! Not again!” Instead, you will realize that far from meaning that you have fallen back, the new exposure of the ego is evidence that the Holy Spirit is leading you on (9:4). Each newly uncovered ego attachment is a new occasion to strengthen your motivation for peace, a new chance to let go of false goals, a new opportunity to relinquish attack and to learn peace by teaching it.

Answer Key

1. (a) People believed that Jesus was attacking them because he did not share their thought system.
(b) People who believe in the ego thought system will perceive others who *do not share* that thought system as attacking them. As I listen to the Holy Spirit, I will be refusing the ego's thoughts. That will weaken the ego thought system, and people who identify with their ego may feel attacked by me, even when it is apparent to any objective observer that I am not attacking them.
2. "Fundamental change" is the transition from the world of projection into the Kingdom and creation, from "having" to "being." We might call it full enlightenment, or the complete reversal and erasure in the mind of the illusions of the ego. The Holy Spirit's lessons all work with transforming our perception until we are ready for perception to be translated into knowledge.
3. No written answer is expected.
4. Choosing the ego's thought system cannot take you out of conflict, because it is a system of conflict, between the ego and God, the ego and others, the ego and the Holy Spirit, and even the ego and you. Earlier, the Course gave another reason why it is not possible: The ego's system is one of negation:

A firm commitment to darkness or nothingness, however, is impossible. No one has ever lived who has not experienced *some* light and *some* thing. No one, therefore, is able to deny truth totally, even if he thinks he can. (T-3.II.1:6-8)
5. "I do not feel guilty, because the Holy Spirit will undo all the consequences of my wrong decision if I will let Him.
I choose to let Him, by allowing Him to decide for God for me" (T5.VII.6:10-11).
6. *Having* refers to possessing something; *being* refers to what we are. To recognize these two as identical means to realize that we have only what we are, but since *we are* everything, we *have* everything. To recognize the equality of having and being means to come to a full and complete knowledge of what we are as God created us, perfect and whole and complete, lacking nothing. That full Self-recognition is the goal of our learning: "This is a course in how to know yourself" (T-16.III.4:1).
7. This step is not the last step because:
 - having and being are still not equated, as they are in Heaven
 - this step implies that there are degrees of desirability, which means we still desire the ego, albeit to a lesser extent
 - degrees of desirability implies an order of difficulty in miracles
 - this step is still perceptual (does not arrive at *knowledge*)
 - this step *approaches* the fundamental change, but is not that change.