

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 7, Section VII

The Totality of the Kingdom

Legend:

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

Overview

Notes: In reading the second half of Chapter 7 you will notice many passages that refer to the themes so clearly stated in Chapter 6: “I cannot be attacked. Attack cannot be justified. I am responsible for what I believe.” These references are not the major theme of this chapter, but they comprise a steady, running undercurrent. There is another theme that seems to be central to Chapter 7; it continues to be repeated in many forms. That theme is that healing comes through seeing your own wholeness, and seeing your wholeness comes by seeing the wholeness of others. Chapter 7 makes *extension* an irreplaceable part of finding your way home. If you do not extend healing, you will project guilt and attack. The emphasis of Section VII, “The Totality of the Kingdom,” is on the collaborative and universal nature of salvation; it applies to everyone and everything. As it says in Chapter 19, speaking of you and your brother, “...you and he will raise your eyes in faith together, or not at all” (T-19.IV(D).12:8).

Paragraph 1

1. ¹Whenever you deny a blessing to a brother *you* will feel deprived, because denial is as total as love. ²It is as impossible to deny part of the Sonship as it is to love it in part. ³Nor is it possible to love it totally **at times**. ⁴You **cannot** be totally committed **sometimes**. [Remember a very early lesson,—“never underestimate the power of denial”.] ⁵Denial has no power in **itself**, but **you** can give it the power of **your** mind, whose power is without limit [of any kind]. ⁶If you use it to deny reality, reality is gone **for you**. ⁷Reality cannot be partly appreciated. ⁸That is why denying any part of it means you have lost the awareness of **all** of it. [Ur: That is the negative side of the law as it operates in this world.] ⁹Yet denial is a defense, and so it is as capable of being used positively as well as negatively [used positively as it is of being used destructively]. ¹⁰Used negatively it **will** be destructive, because it will be used for attack. ¹¹But in the service of the Holy Spirit, it can help you recognize part of reality, and thus appreciate all of it [But in the service of the Holy Spirit, the

law becomes as beneficent as all of the laws of God. Stated positively, the law requires you only to recognize *part* of reality to appreciate *all* of it].¹² Mind [a decision of the mind] is too powerful to be subject to exclusion.¹³ You will never be able to exclude yourself from your thoughts [from what you project].

• Study Question •

1. *The Course often speaks of what is real. Why do we so often fail to experience reality as the Course describes it (1:5–8), and what does this have to do with appreciating the entire Sonship?*

I have never read another book, or followed another spiritual teaching that emphasized the inter-relatedness of all persons quite so graphically as the *Course* does. This section shows that emphasis. If I fail to offer a blessing to my brother, *I* am the one who will end up feeling deprived (1:1). In the Bible, Jesus said, "...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV). In the *Course*, he stated the same principle with an addition, that we are doing it for ourselves as well as for Jesus and our brother: "When you offer a miracle to any of my brothers, you do it to *yourself* and me" (T-1.III.1:2). In this section, he is giving the reverse side of the coin: *Withhold* a blessing from a brother and you are withholding it from yourself.

This is so because denial is as far-reaching in its effects as is love (1:1). The rest of the paragraph really explains what that statement means. You cannot deny just one part of the Sonship any more than you can love only one part of it (1:2). You cannot exclude a brother from the Kingdom of God in your mind without excluding *everyone*, including yourself. Perhaps you think that you *do* love the whole Sonship, but that your love comes and goes with time. You love the Sonship *sometimes*, and at other times your love falters. That isn't possible either, says the *Course* (1:3). Total commitment means *total* commitment, and that means commitment in all time as well as to all the Sonship (1:4).

What gives denial its apparent power is not anything inherent in denial; it is the power of our minds (1:5). The mind is so powerful that we can make reality itself seemingly disappear! Reality, of course, cannot cease to be, but *for us*, whatever we deny does not seem to exist; the mind is *that* powerful (1:6).

Nearly all of us have read about the power of denial, and perhaps you have experienced it personally. The mind is capable of blocking out memories of traumatic past experiences such as rape, auto accidents, parental abuse, and so on. Our minds can cause us to "forget" things we'd rather not remember. We've all heard of widows or widowers who go on setting the table for their deceased spouse, or keeping their clothes in the closet, in an attempt to deny the reality of their death.

The *Course* tells us that the mind can deny, not only negative things, but also the positive ones. The mind can deny the reality of our relationship with God, and when the mind denies that relationship, there *is* no relationship in our experience. The mind can deny the relationship with God of a particular brother or sister, out of a desire to believe that he or she is guilty, evil, or to blame for our personal problems. When the mind does that, in our experience, the relationship between that brother or sister and God simply does not exist; they are outside of God's Kingdom. The problem is that in shutting out our brother or sister, we have shut ourselves out as well. When you deny any part of

reality, such as your brother's relationship with God, your mind has shut out the truth *per se*. When you shut out the truth in one area, that decision extends to all of truth (1:7–8). You not only lose awareness of your brother's relationship with God, you lose awareness of your *own* relationship with God. Either you accept reality as a whole, or you don't accept it at all.

The reason we use denial is that we are defending ourselves against something (1:9), some aspect of reality that we believe threatens us—and, of course, reality *is* a threat to the ego! In black and white terms, if I am a holy child of God, created by God and made what I am by God, then I'm not my own creation, made what I am by my own independent powers. If I want to be my own creation, I have to deny that God created me. My ego tricks me into denying that I am God's creation by getting me to deny that my brother or sister is God's creation.

Yet, because defenses can be redirected and used for another purpose, as the *Course* has told us previously (T-2.II.2; see also T-14.VII.5:6), denial can be turned to a positive use (1:9). This reminds me of what the *Course* said a few sections back about forgetting being turned into a way of remembering (T-7.IV.2, T-7.IV.4). The value of anything, including denial, is determined by the use we give to it. The ego will use denial destructively; for instance, we might attack a brother by denying his holiness or worthiness (1:10). If we give our ability to deny things to the Holy Spirit, however, He can show us how to deny, not the divine nature of our brothers, but rather the veneer of ego ugliness that is hiding the reality of what they truly are (1:11). Instead of denying reality, we will deny the illusion and *appreciate* the reality. Ultimately, our “mind is too powerful” (1:12) to be denied. How could we possibly block the reality of our Self from a mind that *belongs to* that Self and is irrevocably part of It? (1:13)

Paragraph 2

2. ¹When a brother acts insanely, he is offering you an opportunity to bless him. ²His need is **yours**. **3**You need the blessing you can offer him. ⁴There is no way for you to have it **except** by giving it. ⁵This **is** the law of God, and it **has no exceptions**. ⁶What you deny you **lack**, not because it **is** lacking, but because you have denied it in another and are therefore not aware of it in **yourself**. ⁷Every response you make is determined by what you think you **are**, and what you **want** to be *is* what you think you are. ⁸What you **want** to be, then, must determine [**determines**] every response you make.

• Study Question •

2. *When a brother acts insanely, it is an opportunity to receive a blessing. What is the only way for us to have the blessing we need?*

When someone we know is acting crazily, their ego flaring, the *Course* wants us to view the situation as an *opportunity* rather than an obstacle. When someone else's ego is erupting, we have a chance to bless them (2:1). When someone is angry with us, perhaps attacking us verbally or even physically, we do not ordinarily think of it as an opportunity! But it is. They are demonstrating a *need* to us. The inspired perception of the Holy Spirit will reveal these situations as calls for help instead of attacks (see T-12.I,

especially T-12.I.8:7). Probably the most difficult set of lessons we have to learn are those of recognizing the need of the person who is attacking us, so that we react with loving help and blessing, instead of defense and counter-attack.

What we are seeing is not only the need of the other person; their need is our own need (2:2). Over and over we get the message: What we are doing to one another, we are in fact doing to ourselves. What we see in other people is a reflection of us. Therefore, when I am able to look past the ego in my brother or sister and see the deep need they are expressing, what I am seeing is *my own need*. I need what I can offer them, and the only way I can have that blessing is to give it to them (2:3–4). That is not true just some of the time or most of the time. It is a *law of God*. It is the way things work, like the law of gravity: “What goes up must come down.” It is just as inflexible and just as impersonal; “...it has no exceptions” (2:5). If your need is to be met, you must bless your brothers and meet their needs. It’s not just that when you give, you receive; giving is the *only* way of receiving.

Therefore, if you withhold a blessing from someone, you are withholding it from yourself as well. When you withhold it, you are blocking the awareness of it from your own mind (2:6). Thus, if you cannot look past the “sins” of your brother or sister to behold the Christ in them, you will be unable to look past “sins” in yourself to see the pure child of God that you are. This occurs because your perception of your brothers and sisters is being determined by your self-perception (2:7). And, oddly, the way you perceive yourself comes from how you *want* to see yourself. You may believe that you would never *want* to see yourself as less than a child of God, but you do, because that is the only way you can possibly see yourself as autonomous and free from dependency on God.

Until we realize that we are *choosing* to see ourselves this way, in the delusion that this somehow bestows autonomy on us, we will never be free from the guilt that comes with our supposed secession from union with God. Nor will we be able to perceive one another as sinless. Putting it plainly, our choice to see *ourselves* as “sinful” is what causes us to see each other that way. Nothing else is behind that perception! If our insane desire to be “sinners” ended, we would find it impossible to see *anyone* as sinful (2:8).

Yet, we don’t *recognize* that we are making such an insane choice. The *Course* has its work cut out for it! It aims at helping us, first, to become conscious of the insane choice we are making, and then, recognizing it *as* insane, to choose differently, to decide: (1) that we do not want to be “sinners” but children of God; (2) that we do not want to be separate but united as one with each other and God; and (3) that we do not want independence but dependence.

Paragraph 3

3. ¹You do **not** need God’s blessing because that you have forever, but you **do** need **yours**. ²The ego’s picture of you [The picture you see of yourselves] is deprived, unloving and [very] vulnerable. ³You **cannot** love this. ⁴Yet you can very easily escape **from** this image by leaving it behind. ⁵You are **not** there and that is not **you**. ⁶Do not see this picture in anyone, or you **have** accepted it *as* [as] you. ⁷**All** illusions about the Sonship are **dispelled** together as they were **made** together. ⁸Teach no one that **he** is what **you** would not [do not] want to be.

⁹Your brother is the mirror in which you see the image of yourself as long as perception lasts. ¹⁰And perception **will** last until the Sonship knows itself as whole. ¹¹You **made** perception and it **must** last as long as you **want** it.

• **Study Question** •

3. *Consider the way in which the ego sees you (3:2), and ask yourself to what degree you share the ego's assessment. Then, think of someone close to you and ask yourself how much you see this person in the same way. Practice saying things in your mind like this to this other person:
--If I see you as unloving, [name], I must be seeing myself as unloving.
--I will not see you as deprived, [name], because I do not want to see myself as deprived.*

No one lacks God's blessing, because He eternally blesses everyone, knowing each of us as His perfect creation. So it is not the blessing of God that we are seeking; it is our own! (3:1) I find it so ironic to realize that the sense of guilt and condemnation I lived with so much of my life came, not from God's displeasure with me, but from my own self-judgment. As the *Course* so succinctly puts it, "The secret of salvation is but this: that you are doing this unto yourself" (T-27.VIII.10:1). It isn't God Who is judging you; it is *you*:

"You have condemned yourself, but condemnation is not of God. Therefore it is not true" (T-8.VII.15:4-5).

"God does not forgive because He has never condemned" (W-pI.46.1:1).

Your crying need is to learn to be merciful *to yourself*.

We are all so hard on ourselves. We may not go around consciously calling ourselves sinners, or bad, or stupid (although a lot of us do!), but all of us, who are stuck in this world of illusion, *do* judge ourselves. How can we know when we are judging ourselves? Simple. You are judging yourself any time you see "sin" in another.

The ego has a very dark picture of you (see 3:2). The ego's picture is so dark that you cannot possibly love yourself if you accept it (3:3). Now, be honest: Do you deeply, profoundly, and purely love yourself? Do you conceive of yourself as a beneficent, innocent, pure, and holy being that deserves total love? Or, is your image of yourself rather tainted and tarnished? Is your self-respect a little tattered? Don't you, like me, find it easy to say at times, "Oh, I'm no saint!"

There is a certain sense in which it is healthy to recognize one's own flaws and failings. When I can realize that I am still learning, that I am still growing, that I have not "arrived," I can perhaps be more accepting and loving toward others who are still "in process." On the other hand, I think we all need to be *totally free* of guilt and self-condemnation. We need to be honest about where we are in our spiritual growth—and most of us are still at the very beginning—and yet, at the same time, we need to look on ourselves with total acceptance. To me, this is what the *Course* means by being a "happy learner" (T-14.II). We acknowledge our seeming imperfection, but we refuse to accept it as the final truth about ourselves. We know that, in spirit, we are already perfect, and we know that, in time, we are moving increasingly to a full realization of that perfection. We are "content with healing" (T-13.VIII.7:1).

In a nutshell, you need to leave behind any perception of yourself that would interfere with or diminish your love for yourself. You need to realize that you are “wholly lovable” (T-1.III.2:3). Any time such a picture of yourself arises in your mind, tell yourself: “I am not here and this is not me” (based on 3:5).

How can you do that? The most effective way isn't the most direct way. Often, trying to directly confront the self-judgment in our minds won't work; it will tend to reinforce the judgment instead of dissolving it. The *Course* suggests that what works best is to counter our judgments of others (3:6). Refuse to see them as the ego sees them: “deprived, unloving and vulnerable” (3:2). In rejecting this picture of others, you will be rejecting it for yourself.

The Sonship is truly united as one. Therefore, if you rid yourself of judgmental illusions about someone else, it affects your picture of everyone, including yourself (3:7). An illusion you may hold about one person is the same illusion that you hold about yourself. It may not appear in exactly the same form—you may be judging the other person for a sin you would never dream of committing yourself—but it is still an illusion of justified judgment or righteous condemnation: “In every condemnation that you offer the Son of God lies the conviction of your own guilt” (T-13.IX.6:2).

Therefore, if you want to know how you are seeing yourself, *look at your brother*. He is your mirror (3:9). This particular idea is a good candidate for the central message of the *Course* about perception and judgment. How am I treating my brother? That's how I am treating myself. Do I see him as sinful? That's how I see myself. Do I see him as unloving, or unlovable? That's how I see myself.

When you meet anyone, remember it is a holy encounter. As you see him you will see yourself. As you treat him you will treat yourself. As you think of him you will think of yourself. Never forget this, for in him you will find yourself or lose yourself (T-8.III.4:1-5).

Do I want to *change* the way I see myself? Then let me change the way I see my brother. It's that simple. Notice, I said “simple,” not “easy.”

This is the way it will be “as long as perception lasts” (3:9), which will be “until the Sonship knows itself as whole” (3:10), which means until everyone has awakened to their wholeness and their unity in God. That awakening is the final goal. Meanwhile, we must practice perceiving one another as whole and innocent, because granting that innocence to one another is the only way we can remember our own innocence. We made perception and so it will last as long as we want it to (3:11). It will last until we have purified it, until we have lifted the weight of guilt and condemnation from everyone and everything.

One of my favorite lines in the *Course* is in this paragraph: “⁸Teach no one that *he* is what *you* would not want to be” (3:8). When I start to lay a guilt trip on another person, let me ask myself, “Would I want to be what I am telling him *he* is?” Try it yourself! It really cuts into my anger and judgment when I remember to do it. There are times, with some people, where I find myself thinking about them, “You are so self-centered! You are inconsiderate! You are not a loving person,” and so on. When I can stop and ask myself, “Do I want to be seen that way?” the answer is obvious.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹Illusions are investments. ²They will last as long as you value them. ³Values are relative, but they are powerful because they are **mental judgments**. ⁴The only way to dispel illusions is to withdraw **all** investment from them, and they will **have** no life for you because you will have put them **out of your mind**. ⁵While you include them **in** it, you are **giving** life to them. ⁶Except there is nothing there to receive your gift.

The illusions Jesus has in mind here, I think, are illusions about our brothers and sisters (see 3:7). The thing we need to grasp is that we have illusions about people because we *want* them; we *value* them (4:2). If we stop valuing them, they will disappear (4:4). As I said earlier, we really have trouble with this notion; we find it hard to admit that illusions exist because we *choose* them. To dispel illusions, we have to do some mental work. We have to catch ourselves placing value on the illusions, and teach ourselves to “withdraw all investment from them” (4:4). All we are doing is giving apparent life to things that don’t really exist (4:5–6).

The next time you find yourself thinking judging thoughts about another person, try asking yourself, “Why do I value seeing them in this way? What am I getting out of this?” When you get some idea of what the value is you are deriving from judging, try to withdraw your investment in it.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The gift of life **is** yours to give, because it was given **you**. ²You are unaware of **your** gift **because** you do not give it. ³You **cannot** make nothing live, since nothing cannot **be** enlivened. ⁴Therefore, you are **not** extending [*have not extended*] the gift you both *have* [*have*] and *are* [*are*], and so you do **not** know your being. ⁵All confusion comes from not extending life, because that is **not** the Will of your Creator. ⁶You **can** do nothing apart from Him, and you **do** do nothing apart from Him. ⁷Keep His way to remember yourself, and teach His way [*Ways*] lest you forget yourself. ⁸Give only honor to the Sons [*sons*] of the living God, and count yourself among them gladly.

• Study Question •

4. *Compare this paragraph with T-7.IV.6:6–7. How would you summarize the message given in these sentences?*

Although we can give only *imaginary* life to our illusions because they are nothing, we *can* give real life because real life was given to us by God (5:1, 3). Our pseudo-extension, attempting to bring illusions to life, does nothing for us. No real giving takes place, and for that reason, we are left unaware of the treasure that lies within our own being (5:4). Not giving it, we do not know it. Instead, we are left in confusion (5:5), unsure of what we are and of what our purpose is. Attempting to find some kind of existence that is *independent* of God, we find nothing at all, since nothing exists apart from God (5:6). Whatever we may think we do or have done without association with God, in fact we haven’t done anything at all; there *is* nothing apart from God. This is why

the only way to know the inner gift we both have and are is to *give* that gift to others. *We have to use it to know it.*

Since what we are is intimately connected to God as well, in order to remember what we are, we must “keep His way,” which I believe entails acknowledging our connectedness with God and our dependency on God, realizing that we can “do nothing apart from Him” (5:6). Perhaps that sounds demeaning at first: “I can do nothing apart from God? What am I—chopped liver?” But it is meant here as good news! We’re convinced that we *have* done things apart from God, bad things, ugly things, and that as a result we’ve lost our innocence. The message here is that what we have thought about ourselves is not true. “You *do* do nothing apart from Him.”

In order to *retain* the knowledge of what we are, we must “teach His way,” that is, extend it to others (5:7). What does it mean to keep and teach God’s way? What does it mean to give or extend the gift of life? I believe the final sentence of the paragraph answers that clearly: “Give only honor to the Sons of the living God, and count yourself among them gladly” (5:8). Recognize everyone as the Christ, including yourself. Give honor to everyone, and don’t give anyone grief. If we remember the truth about others, we won’t forget the truth about ourselves.

Paragraph 6

6. **1**Only honor is a fitting gift for those whom God Himself created worthy of honor, and whom He honors. **2**Give them the appreciation God accords them always, because they are His beloved Sons in whom He is well pleased. **3**You **cannot** be apart from them because you are not apart from Him. **4**Rest in His Love and protect your rest by loving. **5**But love **everything** He created, of which **you** are a part, or you cannot learn of His peace and accept His gift **for** yourself and **as** yourself. **6**You **cannot** know your own perfection until you have honored all those who were created **like** you.

• Study Question •

5. *When you can, take ten or fifteen minutes for this exercise. Select a person for your mental practice. Then, remind yourself that this person is one created by God, honored by God, and worthy of your honor as well. In your thoughts, appreciate them. Realize you “cannot be apart from them” (6:3) and acknowledge that fact in words. Extend your love to this person, and realize that loving them is giving you the opportunity to “know your own perfection” (6:6).*

This paragraph amplifies what has already been said. You should “give only honor” (5:8) to your brothers and sisters because it is the “only...fitting gift” for them (6:1). How could you give anything less to those who have been “created worthy of honor” by God, and who are honored *by God Himself* (6:1)? In the Bible, when Jesus was baptized, the bystanders heard God speak from Heaven and say, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). The *Course*, as always, extends what the Bible said about Jesus to *everyone*; we are all “His beloved Sons in whom He is well pleased” (6:2).

If God is pleased with someone, how can I be displeased? Am I better than God, or my evaluation of the person more astute than God's? Ridiculous!

The admonition to all of us is, "Love everything He created" (6:5). Simple words. Not so simple a task. Our perceptions stand in the way of our love. What we are learning, and what the *Course* is teaching us—what life is teaching everyone, whether they are *Course* students or not—is to give up every reason for *not* loving everything. This is the only way we will ever give up every reason for not loving ourselves. It is the only way we will ever accept God's gift for us, and accept that very gift *as what we are* (6:5). A few years ago, I visited the Martin Luther King, Jr., Memorial in Atlanta, Georgia (a worthwhile visit for anyone, I think). One quote from Dr. King caught my eye, and it fits with the theme of this section and this chapter:

In a real sense all life is inter-related. All men are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects us all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be, and you can never be what you ought to be until I am what I ought to be. This is the inter-related structure of reality.

Until we are willing to grant everyone status as perfect creations of one God, we will not know our own perfection (6:6).

Paragraph 7

7. ¹One child of God is the only teacher sufficiently worthy to teach another. ²One Teacher is in all minds and He teaches the same lesson to all. ³He always teaches you the inestimable worth of **every** Son of God, teaching it with infinite patience born of the infinite Love for which He speaks [Ur: **born of the Love of Him for whom He speaks**]. ⁴Every attack is a call for His patience, since [*only*] His patience can translate attack into blessing. ⁵Those who attack **do not know they are blessed**. ⁶They attack **because they believe they are deprived**. ⁷Give, therefore, of **your** abundance, and teach your brothers **theirs**. ⁸Do not share their illusions [Ur: **delusions**] of scarcity, or you will perceive **yourself** as lacking.

• Study Question •

6. *Think of a situation in which you felt attacked by someone. According to this paragraph, how should you have reacted to the situation?*

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The Holy Spirit within us all teaches everyone the same lesson, which is that every Son of God is inestimably worthy (7:1–3). It's taking us a hellishly long time to learn that lesson! As I watched the films of racial bigotry and violence in the MLK museum, from times I lived through, I was struck with how absurd and even unthinkable it all seemed to me. How was it possible for human beings to treat other human beings in that way? How could those people believe what they said? The Nazi persecution of the Jews was no less despicable. And yet, as Ken Wapnick has said, we are all Nazis. In every instant in which we perceive *any* Son of God as less than inestimably worthy, our hearts are harboring the same principle of attack, scarcity, and lack.

How patient the Holy Spirit is! Despite our recalcitrance, He abides within everyone, patiently teaching His one lesson, again and again and yet again, until we learn it (7:3).

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He is willing to share His patience with us, so that we can patiently respond to attack with blessing, cheerfully giving from our own abundance so that others can learn their own abundance (7:4–7). People who attack do so because they think they lack something. If we respond to attack with attack, we are sharing their illusions of scarcity (7:8). If responding to attack with blessing seems beyond us, we are sharing the illusion of scarcity. We are all capable of responding to attack with blessing, to hatred with love, and to cruelty with kindness. That is the kind of greatness that God has given us. That, as Dr. King used to say, is our power.

Paragraph 8

8. ¹Attack could never **promote** attack unless you perceived it as a means of depriving you of **something you want**. ²Yet you cannot lose **anything** unless **you** do not value it, and therefore **do not want it**. ³This makes you feel **deprived** of it, and by projecting **your** own rejection you then believe that others are **taking it from you**. ⁴You **must** be fearful if you believe that your brother is attacking you to tear the Kingdom of Heaven from you. ⁵This is the ultimate basis for **all** the ego's projection.

• Study Question •

7. *In any situation in which you experience loss, who is ultimately responsible?*

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This paragraph harks back to the message of Chapter 6: that counter-attack is never justified. That chapter told us that we could never be angry unless we believed that we had been attacked, that attack in return is justified, and that we are therefore not responsible for our thoughts of counter-attack (T-6.In.1:3). Here, Jesus points out that when someone attacks us, the only reason that it seems to justify attack in return is that we believe the attack has deprived us of something we want (8:1). That is another way we are sharing the illusion of scarcity.

The truth of the matter is that our minds are so powerful that they cannot lose anything they want and value (8:2). Therefore, if we experience loss of something, it must indicate that we do not value the thing and therefore don't want it. Please notice that this is speaking about our feelings of deprivation, not about the material absence of something or someone in this world. That is, I do not believe this means, for instance, that if a loved one dies it shows that we didn't value them and wanted them to die! Don't let yourself think that for an instant.

What this does mean is that when we feel deprived we are doing it to ourselves; no one else, nor any external circumstance, is doing it to us. What we are talking about here is our feelings, the way we perceive what happens, and not the happening itself. Perhaps there is some profoundly metaphysical way in which our thoughts of lack engender the physical events of our lives. Perhaps we structure the dramas of our own lives to teach ourselves the lessons we have come to believe. That, to me, is more than I can cope with most of the time.

I can, however, cope with my reactions to the events of life. I can realize that, to use the same example, when I feel intense loss and deprivation at the death of a loved one,

there is some sense in which I am *choosing* to feel that way. Look at how many people have survived the death of a loved one, and survived with joy and panache. Think how many people have been able to sense the enduring spiritual presence of their loved one, and to cherish that closeness even though the physical presence is gone. Those are choices we can all make. I can choose to focus on my hurt in any given situation, or I can choose to focus on how the infinite resources of God within me can meet the apparent lack and fill it to overflowing.

The “ultimate basis” behind all of the ego’s projection is that we believe our brothers are stealing the Kingdom of Heaven from us (8:4–5). When that annoying person in the library keeps popping their gum or riffling the pages of their book, interfering with your concentration, somewhere you believe that they are stealing the peace of God from you. Don’t you have thoughts like, “You are upsetting me” or “You are making me nervous”? How can anyone “make” you feel anything? What you feel is always your choice.

Paragraph 9

9. ¹Being the part of your mind that does **not** believe it is responsible for **itself**, and being without allegiance to God, the ego is incapable of trust. ²Projecting its insane belief that **you** have been treacherous to **your** Creator, it believes that your brothers, who are as incapable of this as you are, are out to **take God from you**. ³Whenever a brother attacks another, **that is what he believes**. ⁴Projection **always** sees **your** wishes [**will**] in others. ⁵If you choose [**will**] to separate **yourself** from God, that is what you will think others are doing **to** you.

Whenever we attack someone or perceive someone as attacking us, we are projecting our belief about *ourselves* onto them. We think we have attacked God; we think we are “attackers” who have stolen Heaven from God, and so we project this onto our brothers and perceive them as out to take God from us (9:2). That is the profound metaphysical truth behind our commonplace attacks on one another. We choose to separate ourselves from God, and through projection we believe that the people around us are trying to separate us from God.

That may seem hard to relate to. Perhaps another way of looking at it will bring it closer to home. Most of us connect inner peace with union with God. So think of projection in those terms. Instead of “separating me from God,” think how often you believe other people are depriving you of inner peace! What the *Course* is saying is this: When you think other people are taking away your peace, it is pure projection; in reality, *you* have banished peace from your mind, and then picked the other people as your scapegoats (9:5).

Likewise, that is what the other person believes when *they* attack *you* (9:3). They think you have taken away their peace; they think you are out to take God away from them. Listening to their own ego, they do not trust your motives (9:1). It’s all the same stupid illusion, whether you are projecting onto them, or they are projecting onto you. Nobody is taking God away from anybody. Nobody *can* take God away from anybody! But, because we each believe that we have betrayed God and therefore lost Him, we project that belief onto one another and attack one another for the imagined wrong. What utter insanity!

Paragraph 10

10. ¹You *are* the Will of God. ²Do not accept anything else **as your** will, or you **are** denying what you are. ³Deny **this** and you **will** attack, believing [**Ur: because you believe**] you have **been** attacked. ⁴But see the Love of God in you, and you will see it everywhere because it *is* everywhere. ⁵See His abundance in everyone, and you will know that you are in Him **with** them. ⁶They are part of you, as you are part of God. ⁷**You** are as lonely without understanding this as God Himself is lonely when His Sons do not know Him. ⁸The peace of God **is** understanding this. ⁹There is only one way out of the world's thinking, just as there was only one way **into** it. ¹⁰Understand totally by understanding **totality**.

• Study Question •

8. *In 10:8, the peace of God is defined as understanding something. Understanding what?*

Most of us think of ourselves as wanting things different from what God wants. We don't *want* our will to be identical with God's, because if it were, we would not be special or unique in any way. Therefore, we conceive of God's Will and our own will as in conflict, or, if not in direct conflict, at least with less than perfect overlap. The idea of totally surrendering our will to God probably strikes terror in our hearts, with anticipation of some kind of loss or suffering as a result. We fear that we won't get something we want or need.

Because we think our will differs from God's, we perceive conflict where there is no conflict. We see ourselves as somehow rebelling against God's Will. We believe there are other people, with independent wills like our own, out there competing with us for a limited amount of goodies. As we have already seen, a self-perception such as this leads to a perception of others in the same way. Thinking that we are attacked by others, we will inevitably counterattack. All of this arises because we have denied our union with the Will of God (10:1–3), which amounts to a denial of our own Identity.

When we acknowledge the seed of God within *ourselves*, however, instead of projecting attack on everyone around us, we see the Love of God in them (10:4). We *see* it there because it *is* there (unlike the attack we have been perceiving, which does not exist anywhere). Seeing God's Love in others feeds back to us and confirms our knowledge that His Love is in us, and since the same Love is in us all, we also recognize our union with them in God (10:5). Notice there are two "see's" and one "know" in 10:4–5. First, we see God's Love in ourselves; second, this enables us to see it in others; third, seeing it in others brings the knowledge that we all are in God. We've seen this three-step sequence before: first receiving a gift from God, then extending it, and finally, when it is reflected back to us, coming to recognize that we truly have received the gift.

That awareness that I am one with everyone in God, and that we are all equally filled with God's Love, constitutes the peace of God. That knowledge is what the peace of God *is* (10:8). Lacking that understanding, we are each on our own, alone in a hostile world, in conflict with God and every other living thing (10:7). Secure in that understanding of oneness, we realize there is no one outside of God with whom we could be in conflict; everyone and everything is part of one harmonious whole. Just as the entry point into the

world of illusion and attack occurred when we took the tiny, mad idea of separation seriously (see T-27.VIII.5–7), so now the way back is through the rejection of separateness and the re-acknowledgment of “totality,” that is, the *absence* of anything separate from God (10:9–10).

That profound metaphysical retraction begins for you when you choose to forgive the person life has given you to forgive. You are not asked to directly undo the vast error that made the separated world. You are asked simply to forgive your brother, because in doing that, you *will* be undoing the fundamental error behind all illusion. Overthrow the ego in one aspect of its thought system and you have overthrown it everywhere (as the next paragraph explains; see 11:1).

The remarks about God being lonely seem to contradict our notion of His perfection. This may bother some of us who don't like inconsistencies. Loneliness for us includes a sense of deprivation or lack, and a feeling of dejection at being alone, both of which seem out of place when applied to God. God is always complete and joyful; how can He be lonely? Saying the statement is metaphorical doesn't solve the problem, because a metaphor is just one thing that represents another. The question remains: What does the word “lonely” mean when applied to God, if it doesn't mean deprived and dejected? It must describe *some* aspect of His being. My understanding of this is that God *is* somehow aware that part of His creation (us) is not fully enjoying its union with God and all creation. This generates a reaction in His mind that is *similar to* what we call loneliness, but without its negative aspects. He is aware that our communication with Him and with our brothers is not as it could be (T-6.V.1:5), but he simultaneously is filled with the overwhelming awareness that our seeming experience of separation and lack is a transitory, meaningless illusion. His perfect knowledge offsets the awareness of our apparent separation and erases any possibility that He would experience any *real* deprivation or dejection.

Paragraph 11

11. ¹Perceive **any** part of the ego's thought system as wholly insane, wholly delusional and wholly undesirable, and you have **correctly evaluated all of it**. ²This correction enables you to perceive **any** part of creation as wholly real, wholly perfect and **wholly desirable**. ³Wanting this **only** you will *have* this only, and giving this only you will *be* only this. ⁴The gifts you offer to the ego are **always** experienced as sacrifices, but the gifts you offer to the Kingdom are gifts to **you**. ⁵They will always be treasured by God because they belong to His beloved Sons, who belong to Him. ⁶All power and glory are yours because the Kingdom is His.

When you correctly evaluate any part of the ego's thought system you will see that it contains no sanity, consists entirely of delusions, and has nothing about it that you truly want (11:1). That mental shift, in regard to a particular situation with a particular individual, is what enables you to “forgive” them. You realize that your perception of attack coming at you from the other person has been insane, delusional, and undesirable. You no longer *want* to see them that way. Since you no longer perceive attack, there is no

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reason for you to judge and attack in return; there is no reason for you *not* to extend love, nor do you perceive anything but God's perfect creation in the other person.

The perceptual shift you experience in forgiveness can be generalized to apply to anything (11:2). You see love everywhere (10:4); you will see only what is real, perfect, and desirable (11:2). You will see that because that is what you want to see. Because you extend love to all creation, you will recognize that you *are* love (11:3). The ego always tries to tell us that giving something away means sacrifice and loss, and in the ego's terms and currency, it *does*. Give away a \$10 bill and you are \$10 poorer. The gifts of the Kingdom, however, are always given to yourself. We're not talking about material riches here, but spiritual riches. What you give is what you have, and the more you give, the more you have. If everyone is part of a unified whole, then everything you give to your brothers and sisters is quite literally given to yourself (11:4–5). You share all the power and glory of the Kingdom of God with God; everything belongs to everyone.

Answer Key

1. We fail to experience reality because our mind denies reality and is powerful enough to cause reality to appear to be gone for us. When we deny any part of reality we lose awareness of all of it. That is why, when we fail to appreciate the entire Sonship, we lose touch with our own reality.
2. The only way for us to have the blessing we need is by giving blessing to another, because we cannot be aware of it in ourselves if we deny it to another (2:4).
3. No written answer is expected.
4. We are unaware of what we both have and are, the gift of God to us, because we do not use it; we do not give it to others; we are not extending it; we do not honor others as Sons of the living God. To know our gift we must use it.
5. No written answer is expected.
6. When someone attacks us, we are asked to respond with patience, given us by the Holy Spirit, who will “translate attack into blessing” (7:4). “They attack because they believe they are deprived” (7:6); therefore, we should give to them out of our abundance, and teach them their own abundance (7:7).
7. You are. You have rejected something, and you are projecting your rejection onto others, so that you believe they are taking that something from you.
8. The peace of God is defined as understanding that all my brothers are part of me, and I am part of God. We are all parts in a single totality. This understanding equates to peace because it eliminates the imagined source of conflict. If we are all part of a single Whole, there is nothing to be in conflict *with*.