

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 15, Section II

The End of Doubt

Overview of the Section

This section reinforces the importance of the holy instant for us, addresses our doubts about how long it will take to experience it, and urges us to “practice the mechanics” of it as a means to attaining it.

What is a Holy Instant?

Since so much of this chapter pertains to the holy instant, it may be a good time to pause and to define, as simply as I know how, what the Course means by the holy instant. I've already (in commentary on T-15.I) mentioned two major senses in which the Course uses the term: 1. The eternal state of mind of the holy Son of God, the eternal Now, a state of anxiety-free, perfect peace that is our native sphere. 2. Moments within time in which we tap into that eternal state and, for a brief instant, experience it consciously. After studying everything the Course has to say about it, here is my definition of that second meaning of the holy instant:

The holy instant is an experience of grace, an instant in which we set aside some or all of our identification with the ego and our belief in the reality of the world it has projected, and allow the reality of our true Identity to shine through.

Paragraph 1

1. ¹The Atonement is *in* time, but not *for* time. ²Being in you [**Being for you**], it is [**for the**] eternal. ³What holds remembrance of God **cannot** be bound by time. ⁴No more are you. ⁵For unless **God** is bound, you **cannot** be. ⁶An instant offered to the Holy Spirit is offered to God on your behalf, and in that instant you will awaken gently in Him. ⁷In the blessed instant you will let go **all** your past learning, and the Holy Spirit will quickly offer you the **whole** lesson of peace. ⁸What can take time, when **all** the obstacles to learning it have been removed? ⁹Truth is so far beyond time that **all** of it happens at once. ¹⁰For as it was created one, so its oneness depends not on time at all.

• Study Question •

1. **Paragraph 1.** *The main message of this paragraph concerning the Atonement and time seems to be (choose one):*
 - A. The Atonement is not bound by time, and can bring the whole of truth to us in an instant.
 - B. Because we are in time, and truth is completely beyond time, the Atonement is beyond our reach.
 - C. The Atonement is not gradual; all of it happens to us at once, in a kind of “mountain-top” experience.



In the preceding paragraph, Jesus has said that “Holiness lies not in time, but in Eternity” (T-15.I.15:4). Now, he tells us of something that *is* in time: the Atonement (1:1). Yet, although the Atonement operates in time, its goal lies beyond time. Atonement is “for the eternal,” which is where holiness abides. Working in time, the Atonement reminds us of what is eternal—that is, what *we are*. We *are* eternal, being creations of the Eternal. We are not bound by time (1:3–5). We are part of God and exist in God, and since God is not bound by time, we cannot be bound either. In a holy instant we can remember our eternal reality, and when we give or offer the holy instant to another person, we are remembering *their* eternal reality for them.

It only takes an instant to awaken: “in that instant you will awaken gently in Him” (1:6). These instants of awakening are what time is for. And because we are connecting with something that is beyond time, we can receive “the whole lesson of peace,” having “let go all [our] past learning” (1:7). For me, the process of waking up isn’t so much one of growing gradually, slightly more awake, as it is of flashing into full wakefulness for an instant and then dropping back. Just doing it more and more often.

Waking up doesn’t take time when all the obstacles are removed. It happens “all of it...at once” (1:9). Finding peace, or truth, doesn’t depend on time at all (1:10). What is encouraging about this, to me, is that *in any instant* I can find peace, tap into truth, and wake up. You and I already have all that it takes to do so. The problem is we also have crud that is obscuring the truth and blocking the way.

Paragraph 2

2. ¹Do not be [Be not] concerned with time, and fear not the instant of holiness that will remove **all** fear. ²For the instant of peace is eternal *because* it is without [wholly *without*] fear. ³It **will** come, being the lesson God gives you, through the Teacher **He** has appointed to translate time into eternity. ⁴Blessed is God’s Teacher, Whose joy it is to teach God’s holy Son his holiness. ⁵His joy is not contained in time. ⁶His teaching is for you **because** His joy is yours. ⁷Through Him **you** stand before God’s altar, where He gently translates [translated] hell into Heaven. ⁸For it is only in Heaven that God would have you be.

• Study Question •

2. *What seems to be the attitude the Course in encouraging in us about the holy instant? (Besides this paragraph, see also T-15.I.15:11.) There may be more than one answer.*
 - A. We should be unconcerned about when the holy instant will come to us, and simply practice giving the holy instant to others all the time.
 - B. Do not be afraid of the holy instant.
 - C. Trust the Holy Spirit to bring it to us when we are ready.
 - D. Stop seeking it and believe that we have it right now.
 - E. All of the above.

This section seems to be talking about the holy instant in the sense of *the* holy instant, the “big” one, when full enlightenment comes to us. Most of us get concerned about time, from time to time (no pun intended), wondering how long this journey is going to take. “Will I finish this soon? In this lifetime? Will I have to come back again—and again—and again?” Jesus is telling us *not* to be concerned with time, and *not to be afraid of* the instant of holiness that will remove all fear” (2:1). Interesting, isn’t it? We’re afraid it will *never* happen, and we’re afraid that it *will* happen! This “big” holy instant is eternal “because it is wholly without fear” (2:2). That implies a connection between fear and our sense of passing time. I believe that the only thing that keeps us from experiencing the ultimate holy instant *is* our fear of it. God has already given it, but we resist receiving it. So the reason it seems to be taking a lot of time is that we are still holding on to our fear.

Nevertheless, “it *will* come” (2:3). The Holy Spirit is the Teacher, given by God, who leads us out of time into eternity. Teaching us is His joy (2:4), a joy that is eternal and timeless (2:5). His joy *is* ours (2:6), which I think means, in simple words, the Holy Spirit rejoices when we are joyful. He works with us to translate every hellish experience of time into a heavenly one (2:7-8).

Paragraph 3

3. ¹How long can it take to be where God would have you? ²For you **are** where you have forever been and will forever be. ³All that you have, you have forever. ⁴The blessed instant reaches out to **encompass** time, as God extends Himself to encompass you. ⁵You who have spent days, hours and even years in chaining your brothers **to** your ego in an attempt to support it and uphold its **weakness**, do not perceive the Source of **strength**. ⁶In this holy instant you will unchain **all** your brothers, and refuse to support either **their** weakness **or your own**.

• Study Question •

3. *The holy instant seems to be a moment of enlightenment, which is “a recognition, not a change at all” (W-pI.188.1:4). Which one of the following is not something we recognize in the holy instant?*
- A. *Where we have been forever.*
 - B. *The real Source of strength.*
 - C. *Our brothers' weakness.*
 - D. *What we have forever.*

How long does it take to be where you already are? No time at all! (3:1–2). You were created in God as part of God. You *are* God expressing at the point of you, and God is the truth of what you are. “Let me remember I am one with God” (W-pI.124.title). That is *already true*, and has “forever been and will forever be” (3:2).

Over and over the Course makes its point: We have never left Heaven:

The Kingdom of Heaven is the dwelling place of the Son of God, who left not his Father and dwells not apart from Him. Heaven is not a place nor a condition. It is merely an awareness of perfect oneness, and the knowledge that there is nothing else; nothing outside this oneness, and nothing else within (T-18.VI.1:4-6).

And so today we find our glad return to Heaven, which we never really left (W-pII.227.2:1).

There is no need for help to enter Heaven for you have never left (C-5.1:1).

We've never left home:

Father, Your Son, who never left, returns to Heaven and his home" (W-pII.241.2:2).

Father, I was created in Your Mind, a holy Thought that never left its home (W-pII.326.1:1).

The separation never happened!

The full awareness of the Atonement, then, is the recognition that the separation never occurred. (T-6.II.10:7).

All seeming experience to the contrary, therefore, *must* be a dream or an illusion.

The journey to God is merely the reawakening of the knowledge of where you are always, and what you are forever. It is a journey without distance to a goal that has never changed (T-8.VI.9:6-7).

Because we are “already there” (or should I say, “already *here*”?), it takes no time whatsoever to “get there.” There is no “there” to get to; only *here*. Only *now*. This is why the holy instant can be “this instant and every instant” (T-15.IV.1:3). God has given us His nature, and we have It forever (3:3).

The holy instant is a moment when the veil opens and you remember, you *know*, that you and God are one; that God is the truth of what you are. It isn't that, *for that instant*, you and God are One; rather, in that instant, which *encompasses* time (3:4), you know that you *always* have been One with God and always will be, whatever your past or future experience may be.

We are talking about what has been called the *mystical experience*, that which mystics of all ages and all faiths have experienced. Here are just a few quotes from a variety of holy men and women, a sampling of Catholic, Moslem, and Jew:

My Me is God, nor do I recognize any other Me except my God Himself.

St. Catherine of Genoa

I went from God to God, until they cried from me in me, "O Thou I!"

Bayazid of Bistun, Sufi mystic

We are saved, we are liberated and enlightened, by perceiving the hitherto unperceived good that is already within us, by returning to the eternal Ground and remaining where, without knowing it, we have always been... To become Godlike is to identify ourselves with the divine element which in fact constitutes our essential nature, but of which, in our mainly voluntary ignorance, we choose to remain unaware.

Philo (Hellenistic Jewish Biblical philosopher, 20BC–50AD)

Notice how Philo says that enlightenment is "remaining where... we have always been." That takes no time at all. What *seems* to take time is letting go of "our mainly voluntary ignorance." Our egos need constant propping up. We spend "days, hours, and even years in chaining [our] brothers to [our] ego" (3:5). We are vainly trying to support our feeble ego, while all the while we have the very Source of strength within us. That Source *is* us: "Now are we one with Him Who is our Source" (W-pI.164.title). That lesson goes on to say:

What time but now can truth be recognized? The present is the only time there is. And so today, this instant, now, we come to look upon what is forever there; not in our sight, but in the eyes of Christ. (W-pI.164.1:1-3).

That is the holy instant: "This instant, now, we come to look upon what is forever there." It takes no time; it happens in an instant. And when we recognize this truth, this Oneness with God, about *ourselves*, of necessity we recognize it as well about "all [our] brothers" (3:6), and unchain them, setting them free from our ego's demands and condemnation.

The picture of ourselves as having spent "days, hours and even years" chaining our brothers to our ego in an attempt to support that ego (3:5) is surely a distressing one. Yet I'm sure that most of us can think of at least hours that we have spent in that way. Think of the many times you've tried to persuade someone that your opinion was right. Or the times that you have attempted to compare yourself favorably to someone else. There are so many ways that we attempt to stroke and comfort and coddle our egos at the expense of others.

Our preoccupation with the weakness of our egos blinds us to the true source of strength (3:5), which is the holy instant. The holy instant is where we recognize our true strength, and the strength of our brothers and sisters. We are no longer willing to support the weaknesses of the ego. In affirming the strength of spirit, and refusing to support ego weakness, we unchain ourselves and our brothers (3:6). And in reality, this is an act of mind that takes no time whatsoever.

Paragraph 4

4. ¹You do not realize how much you have **misused** your brothers by seeing them as sources of **ego** support. ²As a result, they witness **to** the ego in your perception, and **seem** to provide reasons for **not** letting it go. ³Yet they are far stronger and **much** more compelling witnesses for the Holy Spirit. ⁴And they support His **strength**. ⁵It is, therefore, your choice whether they support the ego or the Holy Spirit **in you**. ⁶And you will recognize [**know**] which you have chosen by *their* reactions. ⁷A Son of God who has been released through the Holy Spirit in a brother [*if the release is complete,*] is **always** recognized. ⁸He cannot **be** denied. ⁹If **you** remain uncertain, it is **only** because you have not given **complete** release. ¹⁰And because of this, you have not given a single instant **completely** to the Holy Spirit. ¹¹For when you have, you will be **sure** you have. ¹²You will be sure because the witness **to** Him will speak so clearly of Him that you will hear and **understand**. ¹³You **will** doubt until you hear **one** witness whom you have **wholly** released through the Holy Spirit. ¹⁴And then you will doubt no more.

• Study Question •

4. *The way we use our relationships with our brothers has kept the holy instant from us. We have perhaps had little tastes of vision, but we doubt it; we are not sure. This section is titled, "The End of Doubt," and this paragraph tells us when our doubt will end, and how. How will doubt end?*
- A. *When we realize how much we have misused our brothers.*
 - B. *When our brothers get their act together and start supporting the Holy Spirit in us.*
 - C. *When we have heard the grateful response of one witness whom we have wholly released through the Holy Spirit.*

It's striking when we recognize that we have actually been misusing our brothers and sisters by perceiving them in ways that contribute to the support of our own ego (4:1). If you see someone as a victimizer, you are using them to support your perception of yourself as a victim. If you see a person as a fool, you are using them to support your own ego's sense of superiority. Our perception of our brothers and sisters is shaped—or more accurately, distorted—by our belief in and attachment to our own ego. Stop for a moment and try to recall a time when you have done something like this. It's important to become aware of what we have done and are doing.

If are using other people to support our ego, and we are not aware of it, they will seem to be giving us good reasons to hold on to our own ego (4:1,2). Instead of using people to support our egos, we ought to be looking upon them as witnesses for the Holy Spirit (4:3). In truth, that is what they are. Every person we encounter can be seen by us as a compelling witness for the Holy Spirit. I suspect that if we think that someone we are

interacting with is witnessing to their ego, it's because we are attempting unconsciously to use them to support our own ego—and they are not cooperating. Because we are trying to use them to stroke our own ego, their ego seems to be in conflict with us. In chapter 9, the course says, “If you point out the errors of your brother's ego you must be seeing through yours, because the Holy Spirit does not perceive his errors (T-9.III.3:1). In other words, as Jesus says very clearly here, “It is... your choice whether they support the ego or the Holy Spirit in you” (4:5).

Suppose someone in your past grievously injured you, as you perceive it. Your mind is filled with anger, judgment, and unforgiving thoughts. Perhaps you can easily agree that such thoughts are of the ego, not of the Spirit. Do you see how holding on to a perception of the other person as bad or unworthy provides you with a reason for not letting go of your ego? (4:2) Yet the truth is the very persons we so heavily judge are “*much* more compelling witnesses for the Holy Spirit” (4:3).

You are the one who determines whether this person supports your ego or supports the Holy Spirit in you (4:5). Gary Simmons, in his book, *The I of the Storm*, points out that we cannot possibly feel threatened or afraid if we are connected to the Truth of our being. He says, “What appears as an adversary in life is really a mirror of one’s own resistance. Our resistance and defensiveness, therefore, arise out of those parts of ourselves that are not connected to our wholeness.” (*The I of the Storm*, page 65). Thus, every conflict can be viewed as an opportunity to rediscover and reconnect with the wholeness we have been, perhaps unconsciously, denying. This is why the Course tells us that, “My sinless brother is my guide to peace. My sinful brother is my guide to pain. And which I choose to see I will behold” (W-pII.351). The choice of how we see our brothers determines whether *we* experience pain or peace. The choice is up to us (4:5).

What is the evidence of which choice we are making? The reaction of the other person! (4:6) It's the way people around us react to our perceptions of them that indicates what our choice has been. Think about it. If you have chosen to see a brother as a compelling witness for the strength of the Holy Spirit in yourself and in him, he will almost certainly react favorably. On the other hand, if you have chosen him as a source of support for your ego, giving you good reason of your own ego, you will be projecting a feeling of separation and competition. You may be visibly angry. You may be defensive. None of these things are going to evoke any kind of positive reaction from the other person.

Jesus says that when you have fully released a brother—the words, “*if the release is complete*” are in the Urtext and are italicized—if the release is complete *you will know it; you will be sure you have* (4:6,11). And quite clearly, he says that if you remain uncertain that you have completely given someone over to the Holy Spirit and have released them from your unforgiveness, it just proves you have not *completely* done so (4:10). When you or I have completely forgiven someone, the reaction of the other person is so clear, and speaks so clearly of the Holy Spirit, that you cannot miss it (4:12). The Course is talking radical forgiveness here! The forgiveness Jesus is setting forth is a total transformation of consciousness, from black to white. It's *miraculous*. Instead of seeing someone as sinful, you see them as a holy Son of God. That's no small shift! You *completely* release them from every last shred of guilt. That's what it takes to open

yourself to Oneness. It takes complete forgiveness, but just of one person, to bring us certainty and end doubt forever (4:13-14). Then, we will have entered the holy instant.

Paragraph 5

5. ¹The holy instant has not yet happened to you. ²Yet it will, and you will recognize it with perfect certainty. ³No gift of God is recognized in any other way. ⁴You can practice the mechanics of the holy instant, and will learn much from doing so. ⁵Yet its shining and glittering brilliance, which will literally blind you to this world by its **own** vision, you cannot supply. ⁶And here it is, **all** in this instant, complete, accomplished and **given wholly**.

• Study Question •

5. *When the Course says, “The holy instant has not yet happened to you,” it does seem to be referring to some major, spiritual turning point, in which we become completely certain that we have experienced the holy instant (see 4:9-11, 5:2). What can we do if the holy instant has not yet happened to us? (There may be more than one correct answer; choose all that are correct.)*
- A. *Continue to go through the motions of the holy instant until it comes to us.*
 - B. *Rest without anxiety, in confidence that it will come to us eventually.*
 - C. *Keep trying very hard to make it happen.*
 - D. *Since it is already accomplished and given wholly, start proclaiming that it has happened to us.*

The assumption here is that the reader has *not* experienced the kind of holy instant described above (5:1), in which someone is completely forgiven and completely released, resulting in a blinding flash of certainty and awareness for the one doing the forgiving. For the vast majority of us, that will be true. If you *have* experienced such a holy instant, you will *know* that you have; you will be *sure* of it (5:2), so you won't need me to reassure you! If you *do* wonder, then you probably are part of that vast majority still resisting the holy instant.

But don't feel left out; *it will happen* (5:2). And when it does you will recognize it “with perfect certainty” because that's the only way God's gifts are recognized (5:3).

Meanwhile, we are told, we can “practice the mechanics of the holy instant, and will learn much from doing so” (5:4). That's great news. To me, this is similar to the admonition to “Fake it till you make it,” although “practice the mechanics” has a different ring to it. For me, it sounds more like practicing the scales and exercises on a piano. You aren't “faking it,” you are practicing all the different aspects of what will eventually make up some beautiful music. Or it is like all the exercises that football players go through to get in shape for the actual game.

So, with the holy instant, when we practice the mechanics, we can sit quietly, breathe, and do exercises such as those given in the Workbook. We can attempt to let go of our

grievances; we can attempt to see the light past the ego in our brother or our sister. We may not experience the “shining and glittering brilliance, which will literally blind you to the world by its own vision” (5:5), but nevertheless we “will learn much from doing so” (5:4). We can't supply that blinding brilliance on our own; that comes from God, and comes of itself when we've removed the last of our blinders. So just keep practicing. One day, it will happen.

Paragraph 6

6. ¹Start **now** to practice your little part in **separating out** the holy instant. ²You will receive very specific instructions as you go along. ³To learn to separate out this single second, and to experience it as timeless, is to begin to experience yourself as **not** separate. ⁴Fear not that you will not be given help in this. ⁵God's Teacher and His lesson will support your strength. ⁶It is only your weakness that will depart from you in this practice, for it is the practice of the power of God in you. ⁷Use it but for one instant, and you will never deny it again. ⁸Who can deny the Presence of what the universe bows to, in appreciation and gladness? ⁹Before the recognition of the universe that [the universe, which] witnesses to It, **your doubts must disappear.**

• Study Question •

6. *List the specific practice instructions given in these two sections (there are three), and describe each exercise briefly as best you can. (See I.9:4–7; I.13:3–8; II.5:4 to 6:1).*

Here we see that the kind of practice expected of us is to “separate out this single second, and to experience it as timeless.” It is clear that learning this is not something that happens overnight; we will be given help in this, and our weakness will depart from us as we practice. When we use the power of God “but for one instant,” our doubts will disappear.

We are told in this paragraph that, “You will receive very specific instructions as you go along” (6:2). Watch for these “specific instructions” through the rest of the chapter.

The practice described in this paragraph of “separating out the holy instant” seems to consist in allowing myself to be present in this moment, “this single second,” while recognizing that it is the only time there is. No past. No future. Just *now*. This is one of the “mechanics” of the holy instant. Perhaps you have heard this taught as, “Be still, and know that I am God,” or simply focusing only on the breath. It's the same practice. You cannot be fully present in the present moment while your mind is occupied with past pain or future plans, so to focus on “this single second” is an exercise in letting go of hurt, grievances, and guilt about the past, and letting go of worry, fear, and anxiety about the future. It isn't the holy instant, but it approximates something of what the holy instant contains, and it trains the mind to desire that kind of mental peace.

Some of us are afraid we can't learn to quiet our minds in this way. Jesus reassures us that we will be given help; “God's Teacher” (the Holy Spirit) “and His lesson will

support your strength” (6:5). When we exercise the power of our minds in this way we are practicing “the power of God in you” (6:6). Weakness is departing and strength is arising as we practice.

Eventually we will all get to the point where we conclusively and whole-heartedly allow this Power of God to flow through us, as us, and once we do, “you will never deny it again” (6:7). We will know for sure, and we will know that we know. The universe will bow to us in appreciation and gladness, becoming our witness to the Power of God manifested in us, and all doubts will disappear (6:8–9).

Answer Key

1. A
2. A, B and C
3. C
4. C
5. A and B
6. (a) Thinking of this instant as all there is of time. In it I am free and without condemnation.
(b) Practice giving the holy instant to others by forgiveness.
(c) Practice “the mechanics” of the holy instant, going through the motions, learning to separate this single second from all the past and future.