

Commentary

ACIM® Manual for Teachers

What Are the Characteristics of God's Teachers?

Explanation of underlining, italics and footnote formats can be found at the end of the commentary. See also the note there on the effects of switching from the FIP edition to the Complete and Annotated Edition. Please note that the FIP and CE versions may differ in where paragraph breaks occur.

Overview

We are continuing the discussion of the ten characteristics of a teacher of God. Remember that trust is the bedrock on which all the rest of the characteristics rest.

VI. Defenselessness

God's teachers have learned how to be simple.¹ ²They have no dreams that need defense against the truth. ³They do not try to make themselves. ⁴Their joy comes from their understanding Who created them. ⁵And does what God created need defense? ⁶No one can become an advanced teacher of God until he fully understands that defenses are but the foolish guardians of mad illusions. ⁷The more grotesque the dream, the fiercer and more powerful its defenses seem to be. ⁸Yet when the teacher of God finally agrees to look past them, he finds nothing was there. ⁹Slowly at first, he lets himself be undeceived, but he learns faster as his trust increases. ¹⁰It is not danger that comes when defenses are laid down. ¹¹It is safety. ¹²It is peace. ¹³It is joy. ¹⁴And it is God.

“It’s a gift to be simple,” says the old Shaker song:

*'Tis the gift to be simple, 'tis the gift to be free
'Tis the gift to come down where we ought to be,
And when we find ourselves in the place just right,
'Twill be in the valley of love and delight.
When true simplicity is gained,*

¹Based on the rest of the above paragraph, God's teachers are “simple” in the sense that they do not make a false image of themselves and then employ “complicated structures of defense” (W-135.6:3) to defend that image against the truth. Instead, they simply rest in the truth of how God created them, which needs no defense because it cannot be hurt.

*To bow and to bend we shan't be ashamed,
To turn, turn will be our delight,
Till by turning, turning we come 'round right.*

The simple, Jesus asserts, “have no dreams that need defense against the truth” (1:1–2). The converse is also true: “Complexity is of the ego.” Suppose we were just willing to take God at His word, to trust in the integrity of His creation, and to accept a blanket verdict of “guiltless” on ourselves and everyone else, how simple our lives would be!

Isn't it interesting that being simple is something that must be *learned*?

What does it mean for a person to be “simple.” The Merriam-Webster dictionary gives these two definitions:

“1 : free from guile : innocent. 2a : free from vanity : modest. b : free from ostentation or display: 'a simple outfit.'”

“Free from guile”; to “have no dreams that need defense against the truth.” A simple person isn't putting on a show, pretending to be other than what they really are. They accept themselves as God created them and “do not try to make themselves” (1:3). They are not trying to make an ego, a self separated from God and others. The source of their joy (the fifth characteristic, previously discussed) is “their understanding Who created them” (1:4).

Defenselessness follows naturally from gentleness. Both rely on knowing our true Identity. Knowing the truth about ourselves and our Creator, we realize we need no defense. Truth needs no defense; only illusions need it (1:6). The level of defense required is commensurate with the extent of our dream of the ego (1:7). The bigger the lie, the greater the need for defenses.

Once we as teachers of God are willing to look past the defenses we've erected to defend our egos, we realize “nothing was there.” We've been defending an illusion, a mad dream of something that doesn't even exist (1:8). Recognizing our illusions rarely happens all at once. Typically, we give in to being disillusioned slowly at first, but the more our trust (see characteristic #1) increases, the faster we shed our ego clothing (1:9).

Amazingly, paradoxical as it may seem, becoming defenseless does not increase our danger (1:10). What comes instead is safety, peace, and joy, all of which rely on realizing our union with God (1:11–14).

VII. Generosity

This section on generosity has always held a unique appeal for me. It is a classic example of what the Course means when it says our everyday thinking is *upside down*. I love the way it not only inverts the meaning of *generosity* but also of *self-interest*.

“The term ‘generosity’ has special meaning to a teacher of God. ²It is not the usual meaning of the word; in fact, it is a meaning that must be learned, and learned very carefully. ³Like all the other attributes of God’s teachers, this one rests ultimately on trust, for without trust no one can be generous in the true sense. ⁴To the world, generosity means ‘giving away’ in the sense of ‘giving up.’ ⁵To the teacher of God, it means giving away in order to keep. ⁶This has been emphasized throughout the text and the workbook, but it is perhaps more alien to the thinking of the world than many other ideas in our curriculum. ⁷Its greater strangeness lies merely in the obviousness of its reversal of the world’s thinking. ⁸In the clearest way possible and at the simplest of levels, the word means the exact opposite to the teachers of God than it does to the world.”

The first two sentences warn us that the Course is about to redefine *generosity* in a way that we must carefully learn (1:1–2). To learn carefully means we need to pay special attention to be sure we understand. The difference in how this word is understood is crucial to teachers of God; they cannot function properly without understanding it.

Generosity is similar to the other characteristics in that it “rests ultimately on trust” (1:3). You cannot be generous “in the true sense” without a solid trust in God’s governance. Why trust is foundational to generosity will be clear when you grasp the word’s true meaning. It does *not* mean giving away in the sense of giving up, as the world supposes (1:4). It means “giving away in order to keep” (1:5).

If we haven’t learned this meaning of generosity so thoroughly that it has become established beyond doubt in our minds, when we give anything to another person, we are going to think that we have lost it and given it up. Typically we will *think* this way before giving something and choose not to give it! Trust is essential here. We have to trust God’s promise that “To give and to receive are one in truth” (Lesson 108) or “As you give you will receive” (W-122.6:4 (FIP)). It takes trust to give without outward evidence of what we receive or keep.

The Course emphasizes this concept of giving and receiving all through; it is one of the core ideas in its curriculum:

“Today’s idea [“All that I give is given to myself“], completely alien to the ego and the thinking of the world, is crucial to the thought reversal that this course would bring about” (W-pl.126.1:1).

“A major learning goal this course has set is to reverse your view of giving, so you can receive” (W-pl.105.3:1).

This understanding of giving and receiving is incredibly “alien to the thinking of the world,” which has thus far governed our actions. Therefore, the Text and Workbook have affirmed this lesson repeatedly (1:6). It seems especially strange because it is a blatant contradiction to our “normal” way of thinking (1:7).

It could not be any clearer or simpler: To a teacher of God, generosity is “the exact opposite” of what the world thinks it is (1:8).

² The teacher of God is generous out of self-interest. ²This does not refer, however, to the self the world speaks of. ³The teacher of God does not want anything he cannot give away, because he realizes it would be valueless to him by definition.² ⁴What would he want it for? ⁵He could only lose because of it. ⁶He could not gain. ⁷Therefore he does not seek what only he could keep, because that is a guarantee of loss. ⁸He does not want to suffer. ⁹Why should he ensure himself pain? ¹⁰But he does want to keep for himself all things that are of God and therefore for His Son. ¹¹These are the things that belong to him. ¹²These he can give away in true generosity, protecting them forever for himself.

Giving something because we want to keep it (1:5) sounds selfish, *and it is*, but not as we usually think of selfishness. Our generosity comes from a kind of self-interest that is totally unlike what the world means by that term. The “self” that a teacher of God is enriching by his generosity is his higher Self, the Christ-self (2:1–2). This Self is one we share with everyone. So, the ego and body may lose when we give material things away, but our spirit gains. Giving to this Self means acting in ways that benefit everyone, not your individual self.

Since the material world is only an illusion, the loss of material things is not an actual loss, while the “invisible” benefit to our Self is everlasting. Sometimes, but not always, our material giving results in some kind of reciprocal material gain, but not always. That’s how I understand it, at least.

Since the only way to receive is to give, a teacher of God “does not want anything he cannot give away” (2:3). Things that we can’t give away are “valueless...by definition.” Notice that this is a further clarification of what sort of things are valueless, which we discussed earlier in the section on the development of trust. Think about that. What does the way you feel about your possessions say about your attachment to external things and only your personal well-being? How does it feel to think of them as “valueless”? What kind of things are *not* things are things you cannot give away, things that *are* valuable? The latter question is answered a bit further on.

Jesus asks us, “Why would you want valueless things that cannot be given away, and therefore cannot bring you gain?” (2:4) Holding onto things selfishly can only bring us loss; never gain (2:5–6).

People who live by God’s definition of generosity are happy. Their hearts and hands are open to others. They do not labor to accumulate things they do not wish to share (2:7). They *enjoy* giving. If I think of a selfish person, by contrast, someone who clings to their possessions, time, and affections, I picture someone whose life is constricted and cut off from the rest of the world. A teacher of God does not want to suffer like this, living in

² What does the teacher of God generously give? Based on the discussion above, it would be all the things that we often withhold from others out of fear of loss, but that the teacher now gives, trusting that he will *gain*. This would include emotional gifts like love and forgiveness, as well as more physical gifts, like gifts of time, energy, things, and money.

a way that guarantees pain (2:8–9). They have learned Buddhism's noble truth that attachment only brings suffering.

The teacher, however, *does* want “to keep for himself all things that are of God, and therefore for His Son” (2:10). There are things with real value. Again, this points to living in a way that benefits everyone, not just yourself. Things of God, which belong to every child of God, are the only things you can keep (2:11). “These he can give away in true generosity, protecting them forever for himself” (2:12). The valuable things are intangible. We cannot touch them, but we can experience them. They include things such as love, peace, a sense of innocence, being cared for, and belonging.

So, I don't think this section tells us to give away all of our material possessions. I think, instead, we must be *ready* to give away anything that the Holy Spirit tells us to give, particularly anything that could communicate the things of God to someone or that may act as brakes to our spiritual growth. The Course insists we are not bodies and should not be attached to them or idolize them. Nevertheless, it tells us the Holy Spirit can utilize them as instruments to communicate God's grace to others. The same is true of all our material possessions. To a teacher of God, they become, like the body, wholly neutral things whose only purpose is as tools for purposes of salvation.

VIII. Patience

Those who are certain of the outcome can afford to wait, and wait without anxiety. ²Patience is natural to the teacher of God. ³All he sees is certain outcome, at a time perhaps unknown as yet, but not in doubt. ⁴The time will be as right as is the answer.³ ⁵And this is true for everything that happens now or in the future. ⁶The past as well held no mistakes; nothing that did not serve to benefit the world as well as him to whom it seemed to happen. ⁷Perhaps it was not understood at the time. ⁸Even so, the teacher of God is willing to reconsider all his past decisions if they are causing pain to anyone. ⁹Patience is natural to those who trust. ¹⁰Sure of the ultimate interpretation of all things in time, no outcome already seen or yet to come can cause them fear.

The opening line of this little section tells us plainly how to find patience: We must become sure of the outcome (1:1)! In a word, *trust*. Once we become confident that “A happy outcome to all things is sure” (W-292), patience without anxiety is natural (1:2). Lesson 292 assures us we have God's “guarantee of only happy outcomes in the end” (W-292.2:1). We can interfere and delay “the happy endings He has “promised us for every problem that we can perceive; for every trial we think we still must meet” (W-292.2:2). When the happy outcome arrives is, like it or not, up to us. As long as we insist on believing in a will other than God's, we postpone the final celebration. We must trust God's will, and believe that “God's will *is* done in earth and Heaven” (W-292.1:6).

³ It is not clear what the “answer” is here, as there are no references to the word in the preceding sentences or paragraphs (which raises the possibility that it is a scribal error). In context, the meaning of the sentence seems to be that the time will be as right as is the *outcome*.

Notice the verb tense: “*is done.*” Trust in God is the key here. Yes, the end is at a time still unknown, but the end is nevertheless certain (1:3). Jesus assured his followers in the gospels that “The Kingdom of God is here.” In the Gospel of Thomas, he says:

“[The Kingdom] will not come by watching for it. It will not be said, ‘Look, here!’ or ‘Look, there!’ Rather, the Father’s kingdom is spread out upon the earth, and people don’t see it.” (Thomas, I 13, Patterson and Meyer translation)

The time is unknown but “not in doubt” (1:3). When it comes, it will come at just the right time (1:4)! The Manual says, *everything* happens at just the right time, now and in the future (1:5). Trust in God means knowing that to the core of our being. *Even the past* “held no mistakes, nothing that did not serve to benefit the world, as well as him to whom it seemed to happen” (1:6).

Perhaps that seems beyond belief. No mistakes at all in everything? Things like the assassinations of Gandhi, MLK, RFK, or John Lennon? COVID-19? The unexpected death of a loved one or dear friend? Financial ruin? Homelessness? Starvation of children? All these things were perfectly timed and benefited “him to whom it seemed to happen” (1:6). “Come on, Jesus!” we want to exclaim. “You can’t mean that!”

Yet Jesus seems to be saying just that in very emphatic terms. He asserts that every occurrence has supported our journey to God, even if it “was not understood at the time” (1:7). And he said the same thing earlier: “All things, events, encounters and circumstances are helpful” (I.4:5).

I wonder how Jesus’s disciples felt the day after the crucifixion. Their revered leader, whom they believed to be the messiah, was arrested, convicted of being a common criminal, beaten, and put to death in the most horrible way imaginable. How could anyone call *this* perfectly timed and helpful? Yet it was. It was.

A teacher of God trusts what happens and where it is all going. If we have such trust, patience is natural.

I think Jesus stops to realize how we might misuse what he is saying to justify some of our past mistakes. “Aha! It was all supposed to happen that way; I just did what God planned for me to do.” We might think, regarding someone we’ve wronged in the past, “What happened to them was what they needed; they just didn’t understand it at the time.” So he says: “Even so, the teacher of God is willing to reconsider all his past decisions, if they are causing pain to anyone” (1:7). Perhaps the Holy Spirit can use even our unkind acts to benefit others as well as ourselves, but how much more helpful our *kindness* would have been!

This characteristic of patience is beautifully balanced. With patience, we can be sure of the positive outcome of everything (even our mistakes), yet, if we realize we are causing pain to anyone, be humble and caring enough to re-think those past events and change our thoughts.

The final sentence sums up patience for a mature teacher of God. Because we trust we are patient. We are certain God is ultimately in control and that “all things in time” will prove to have been helpful in the end. There is no possibility that anything we have seen so far or still to come can cause us to fear (1:10).

I think most of us have a lot of growing to do!

IX. Faithfulness

The extent of the teacher of God's faithfulness is the measure of his advancement in the curriculum. ²Does he still select some aspects of his life to bring to his learning, while keeping others apart?⁴ ³If so, his advancement is limited and his trust not yet firmly established. ⁴Faithfulness is the teacher of God's trust in the Word of God to set all things right; not some, but all. ⁵Generally his faithfulness begins by resting on just some problems, remaining carefully limited for a time. ⁶To give up all problems to one Answer is to reverse the thinking of the world entirely. ⁷And that alone is faithfulness. ⁸Nothing but that really deserves the name. ⁹Yet each degree, however small, is worth achieving. ¹⁰Readiness, as the text notes, is not mastery.⁵

As we discuss all these various characteristics, we may be wondering if there is any way we can get some idea of how far we have progressed along the path to "advanced Teacher of God." It turns out there is a way to gauge our progress: faithfulness. "The extent of the teacher of God's faithfulness is the measure of his advancement in the curriculum" (1:1).

Then follows a few specifics.

1. Do I apply the Course's teaching to my entire life?
Are there still some aspects of my life that I hold apart from applying the Course's teaching? For instance, do I seek to follow Spirit's guidance all the time, for every decision, or just now and then? Do I still hold on to particular grudges, withholding forgiveness from people who have offended me most deeply?
2. Do I trust God "to set all things right; not some, but all" (1:4)?
3. Do I still keep trying to solve particular problems independently, carefully limiting what you let go of instead of giving them all up to the "one Answer" of the Course (1:6)?

The very definition of faithfulness is to give up all your problems to the one Answer of the Course (1:6-8). Anything less than that is unfaithful.

⁴This tells us the meaning of "faithfulness" here. Rather than referring to faithfulness to others, it refers to faithfulness in applying the curriculum to *all* aspects of our lives. This faithfulness, however, as the second paragraph of this characteristic says, is ultimately directed toward God and His Son. In other words, being faithful in applying the curriculum *is* being faithful to Them.

⁵T-2.XII.9:5-7: "As soon as a state of readiness occurs, there is always some will to accomplish, but this is by no means undivided. The state does not imply more than the potential for a shift of will. Confidence cannot develop fully until mastery has been accomplished."

To whatever degree I am holding things back, my advancement is limited. My trust isn't yet firmly established (1:3). Not that we need to be ashamed of our imperfect faithfulness, any more than a ten-year-old needs to be ashamed that they have not yet learned to drive a car or earn their living. We are works in progress. The gradual relinquishment of control is "generally" the case. We are learning, and we need to be happy learners. Part of trust, I think, is *trust in the process*. A good part of what we are learning is to stop beating ourselves up, to stop "should-ing" ourselves. Release. Let go. Be patient! All things in time will work out in the end. And most significantly, don't beat yourself up for beating yourself up! If you catch yourself doing that, as I have—laugh! "Each degree [of faithfulness], however small, is worth achieving" (1:9). Congratulate yourself on each positive move; don't focus on what is yet to be done.

"Readiness...is not mastery" (1:10). The CE footnote refers to the place in the Text that spoke to this point:

"As soon as a state of readiness occurs, there is always some will to accomplish, but this is by no means undivided. The state does not imply more than the potential for a shift of will. Confidence cannot develop fully until mastery has been accomplished." (T-2.XII.9:5-7 (CE), T-2.VII.7:4-6 (FIP))

Being ready for a change of mind or "shift of will" is frequently "by no means undivided" readiness. "Mastery," in the context of the Manual, refers to consistent faithfulness. Being ready for change is good! But it isn't an actual change, and our will at first is divided. Faithfulness is truly the measure of our spiritual progress.

² True faithfulness, however, does not deviate. ²Being consistent, it is wholly honest. ⁶Being unswerving, it is full of trust. ⁴Being based on fearlessness, it is gentle. ³Being certain, it is joyous. ⁶And being confident, it is tolerant. ⁷Defenselessness attends it naturally and joy is its condition. ⁸Faithfulness, then, combines in itself the other attributes of God's teachers. ⁹It implies acceptance of the Word of God and His definition of His Son. ¹⁰It is to Them that faithfulness in the true sense is always directed. ¹¹Toward Them it looks, seeking until it finds. ¹²And having found, it rests in quiet certainty on That alone to Which all faithfulness is due.

Note: In the CE, sentence #11 in the FIP has been moved to become sentence #7, which also changes the numbering of sentences 7 to 10. The words themselves have not changed. Here is a table showing the changed numbering:

<i>FIP</i>	<i>CE</i>
7	8
8	9
9	10
10	11
11	7

⁶ M-4.II.1:5: "The term [honesty] actually means consistency."

When we have achieved mastery, our faithfulness is undeviating (2:1). Jesus then runs through the characteristics presented thus far, showing how faithfulness includes them all. It incorporates honesty because it is consistent. Its trust is complete. Having no fear (because of perfect trust), faithfulness is gentle, never feeling any need to attack or defend. Its certainty engenders complete joy. It is tolerant of the flaws and mistakes of others because of its confidence that “all things work together for good,” and everyone will eventually wake up. Defenselessness comes to it naturally. “Joy is its condition.” (2:2–7). Then follows the clear statement that faithfulness combines all “the other attributes of God’s teachers” (2:8). That is why we can use the degree of faithfulness as our measure of growth. It consists of the entire package.

Faithfulness means you have accepted God’s Word about *everything*, especially “His definition of His Son” (2:9). That definition, you may recall from earlier in the Manual, is “guiltless”:

“There is a course for every teacher of God. The form of the course varies greatly. So do the particular teaching aids involved. But the content of the course never changes. Its central theme is always, ‘God’s Son is guiltless, and in his innocence is his salvation.’” (M-1.3:1-5).

The objects for our faithfulness are always God and His Son (2:10). A Teacher of God looks to God and to His Son in everyone, seeking that innocence until it finds it (2:11). In the end, all faithfulness rests on the very nature of God; it is “That alone” in all His creation which merits our faithfulness (2:12).

X. Open-Mindedness

The centrality of open-mindedness, perhaps the last of the attributes the teacher of God acquires, is easily understood when its relation to forgiveness is recognized.⁷ ²Open-mindedness comes with lack of judgment. ³As judgment shuts the mind against God’s Teacher, so open-mindedness invites Him to come in. ⁴As condemnation judges the Son of God as evil, so open-mindedness permits him to be judged by the Voice for God on His behalf. ⁵As the projection of guilt upon him would send him to hell, so open-mindedness lets Christ’s image be “projected” on him. ⁶Only the open-minded can be at peace, for they alone see reason for it.

Open-mindedness, Jesus says, may be “the last of the attributes the teacher of God acquires” (1:1). It amounts to total and complete forgiveness of the world and everyone in it. A mind that still retains unforgiveness towards certain people and things is *closed* to those people and things. When I condemn someone in my thoughts, I shut them out of my heart. I cannot extend myself to them in love, and I cannot freely open myself to them. They just are not welcome.

⁷As described here, open-mindedness mainly means being open-minded about the fundamental nature of things, especially the fundamental nature of *others*. That is why open-mindedness is associated with forgiveness and contrasted with judgment (i.e., condemnation).

Seeing this connection between forgiveness and open-mindedness makes it easy to understand why Jesus considers it “central” to the curriculum (1:1). Anyone who has read the Text and Workbook cannot fail to notice that forgiveness is at the heart of the Course. Forgiveness requires a lack of judgment. That results in open-mindedness (1:2). Judgment shuts our minds against one another, but even more, it shuts them to the Holy Spirit. Open-mindedness refuses to judge and says, “I don’t know who this person is”; it invites the Holy Spirit in (1:3).

“Father, my mind is open to Your Thoughts, and closed today to every thought but Yours” (W-236.2:1).

When we are open-minded to the Holy Spirit, He can speak to us freely. Our open-mindedness allows Him to judge our brothers and sisters *for* us, and His judgment is: “Innocent of all charges” (1:4). Our judgment condemns others as evil; His judgment is always “The Son of God is guiltless.” A closed mind projects its guilt onto others, thus condemning them to hell. “Open-mindedness lets Christ’s image be ‘projected’ on them” (1:5).

I like how the Course puts “project” in quotes in the latter part of 1:5. The FIP version replaces the word with “extended” (not in quotes), which the Course usually uses in similar instances. We project guilt; we extend Christ’s image. Both are using the same mental ability. Our mind determines how we picture our brothers and sisters in both cases. Do I see guilt, or do I see Christ? As Lesson 351 declares:

“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.”

Is my mind open? Or is it closed? Only if it is open can I be at peace because only the open-minded see the *reason* to be at peace (1:6). If I see a guilty person, I have some reason to fear them, and if I fear, I cannot be peaceful. Open-mindedness, then, must erase fear and bring peace.

2 How do the open-minded forgive? 2They have let go all things that would prevent forgiveness. 3They have in truth abandoned the world and let it be restored to them in newness and in joy so glorious they never could have conceived of such a change. 4Nothing is now as it was formerly. 5Nothing but sparkles now which seemed so dull and lifeless before. 6And above all are all things welcoming, for threat has gone. 7No clouds remain to hide the face of Christ. 8Now is the goal achieved. 9Forgiveness is the final goal of the curriculum. 10It paves the way for what goes far beyond all learning. 11The curriculum makes no effort to exceed its legitimate goal. 12Forgiveness is its single aim, at which all learning ultimately converges. 13It is indeed enough.

How is it that open-mindedness produces forgiveness? (2:1) It’s effortless to see. By being open-minded, we have removed all the obstacles that prevent forgiveness (2:2). To forgive opens the way to love:

“The course does not aim at teaching the meaning of love, for that is beyond what can be taught. It does aim, however, at removing the blocks to the awareness of love’s presence, which is your natural inheritance” (T-Int. I:6-7 (FIP)).

“Your task is not to seek for love, but merely to seek and find all of the barriers within yourself that you have built against it” (T-16.IV.6:1).

In a sense, to forgive *is* to love. Forgiveness and love are released as we remove all the obstacles, all our judgments. We have relinquished our attachments to the world of illusion, thus allowing the Holy Spirit to gift us with the sight of the real world instead, a world “in newness and in joy so glorious they could never have conceived of such a change” (2:3). Truly, forgiveness changes everything (2:4)! Any aspect of the world that seemed dull and lifeless to us before now sparkles instead (2:5). Nothing seems threatening anymore; all the world seems to welcome us (2:6). Our vision of the face of Christ is clear and vivid; no clouds remain to hide It (2:7). We have achieved the final goal of the Course, which is forgiveness (2:8–9).

Completing the curriculum of the Course “paves the way” for our transition to a state we cannot yet even imagine, “far beyond all learning” (2:10). “Beyond learning” is a state that is utterly beyond this world, beyond material existence. The transition to this state is what the Course calls “the last step,” a step only God can take. We have nothing to do with it; we just get ready for it.

Getting us ready is the “legitimate goal” of the Course, and it makes no effort to do any more than that (2:11). That legitimate goal is forgiveness. All our learning “ultimately converges” in forgiveness (2:12). And forgiveness is “indeed enough” (2:13). All ten characteristics, which at first seem so lofty and beyond our reach, “converge” on the final goal, forgiveness. Forgiveness is not an elementary lesson! Forgiveness is the *final* lesson, the last step in our learning, the goal beyond every lesser goal. Only when we have finally ascended the mountain will we truly and fully understand forgiveness. Only then will we experience it completely.

3 You may have noticed that the list of attributes of God’s teachers does not include those things which are the Son of God’s inheritance.
2Terms like love, sinlessness, perfection, knowledge, and eternal truth do not appear in this context. 3They would be most inappropriate here. 4What God has given is so far beyond our curriculum that learning but disappears in its presence. 5Yet while its presence is obscured, the focus properly belongs on the curriculum. 6It is the function of God’s teachers to bring true learning to the world. 7Properly speaking it is unlearning that they bring, for that is true learning in the world. 8It is given to the teachers of God to bring the glad tidings of complete forgiveness to the world. 8 9Blessed indeed are they, for they are the bringers of salvation.

⁸ Luke 1:19 (KJV): “And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.”
Luke 8:1 (KJV): “And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him.”

The final paragraph of this section is not about open-mindedness alone. It is more of a summary of the whole ten characteristics.

Perhaps, as Jesus suggests, you may have noticed that some desirable characteristics are absent from the list he has given: “Terms like love, sinlessness, perfection, knowledge, and eternal truth.” They aren’t here (3:1–2). They would be inappropriate in this context (3:3). Why? Sentence 1 contains the fundamental reason: These traits are part of “the Son of God’s inheritance.” They are not things we must learn and develop; they are givens. They are gifts of God to us.

Take love, for instance. We might think that we need to learn to love, to develop love. But, as the two quotes I gave above state, love isn’t a thing we must seek for; love cannot be taught. Instead, it is our “natural inheritance.” You already *are* love:

“You are the work of God, and His work is wholly lovable and wholly loving. This is how you must think of yourself in your heart, because this is what you are” (T-1.I.27:1-2 (CE).T-1.III.2:3–4 (FIP))

Likewise, you are already sinless and perfect. Your true Self is perfect in knowledge as well as in love:

“This Self alone is perfectly consistent in Its thoughts; knows Its Creator, understands Itself, is perfect in Its knowledge and Its love, and never changes from Its constant state of union with Its Father and Itself.” (W-Review5.4:5)

These traits, therefore, do not need to be learned or developed. They need to be remembered and rediscovered. The obstacles to our awareness of them must be removed, and that removal is the meat of our curriculum. When we awake to what God has already given us, all our learning will simply disappear (3:4), no longer necessary. But while our mental blocks continue to obscure God’s gifts, we need to focus on the curriculum: learning forgiveness and all these ten characteristics (3:5).

The function of a teacher of God is to “bring true learning to the world” (3:6), but “true learning” is *unlearning*, removing the blocks to the awareness of love’s presence. We are here to help the rest of the world do that: unlearn the thinking that blocks the blessing. We are here to announce glad tidings, to proclaim forgiveness (3:7). Indeed, we can echo the words of the prophet Isaiah, quoted by Jesus on the day he began his ministry:

“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound” (Isaiah 61:1 ESV)

Like the angels at Jesus’s birth, we bring “good tidings of great joy...to all people” (Luke 2:10). We are “bringers of salvation”; how blessed we are (2:9)!

If you can, try to picture a person who has mastered these ten characteristics. They have left behind the constant struggle with circumstances and people. They *trust* the events of their lives and are at peace. Tolerance for everyone just as they are comes to them naturally. They are not anxious; they are patient, knowing God has things under control. They are not defensive nor stingy but are generous. They are incredibly kind to

everyone. They trust what you do, knowing God will use even your mistakes for good. They never lie to you or change their attitude toward you. They never judge you. They are consistently joyful. They recognize you as a fellow child of God, guiltless and blameless.

That is what it means to be enlightened. That is what it means to be a teacher of God.

Legend:

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

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

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

Effects of Differing Editions of the Course

There were significant changes made in the CE, although for the most part there was no alteration in the meaning of the text, and the *Manual for Teachers* had far fewer changes. There are some changes in section and paragraph breaks and sentence structure that result in different numbering in references to the same text in the two editions. When there is a major difference I will indicate it with a footnote.

I have attempted for all references to add a separate FIP reference if it differs from the CE reference, but I may have missed some. If so, I apologize. Please let me know of any referencing problems you find.

I have also tried to edit my commentary so as to reflect any wording changes in the CE. For instance, the CE Text restored the plural use of "you" where the FIP had substituted the phrase "you and your brother." One such instance will illustrate the kind of change, significant in actual words but nearly identical in overall meaning:

FIP: Thus you and your brother but shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point you both agreed to keep intact.

CE: You shared a qualified entente, in which a clause of separation was a point which you had both agreed to keep intact.