

Commentary

ACIM® Manual for Teachers

Chapters 9 & 10

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.

9. *Are Changes Required in the Life Situation of God's Teachers?*

Overview

We typically are concerned about external things such as changes in our life situation. We have begun (or are considering) to function as teachers of God. We wonder: “Will I have to leave my job? Do I need to give up things like watching TV every night? Must my eating habits change?” This section addresses such questions.

Paragraph 1

Changes are required in the *minds* of God's teachers. ²This may or may not involve changes in the external situation. ³Remember that no one is where he is by accident, and chance plays no part in God's plan.¹ ⁴It is most unlikely that changes in his attitudes within his current situation would not be the first step in the newly made teacher of God's training. ⁵There is, however, no set pattern, since training is always highly individualized. ⁶There are those who are called upon to change their life situation almost immediately, but these are generally special cases. ⁷By far the majority are given a slowly evolving training program, in which as many previous perceptual mistakes as possible are corrected. ⁸Relationships in particular must be properly perceived, and all dark cornerstones of unforgiveness removed. ⁹Otherwise, the old thought system still has a basis for return.

¹ M-3.1:5-7: “Therefore, the plan includes very specific contacts to be made for each teacher of God. There are no accidents in salvation. Those who are to meet will meet.” M-3.2:3: “These are not chance happenings.” W-158.3:2: “Yet there is no step along the road that anyone takes but by chance.”

As always, the Course directs us back to the only essential thing: “Changes are required in the *minds* of God's teachers” (M-9.1:1). That ought to be clear to us by now. We've been told, for instance:

“If sickness is but a faulty problem-solving approach, it is a decision. And if it is a decision, it is the mind and not the body that makes it”. (M-5.II.1:5 –6 (CE))

That realization “costs the world we see, for the world will never again appear to rule the mind.” (M-5.II.3:4 (CE))

As teachers and healers, the truth in our minds reaches out to the minds of our brothers and sisters, healing them (M-5.III.3:6). It's only logical that if anything needs changing, it is our minds.

Changes in our external situations *may* be necessary, or maybe not (9.1:2). My guess is it is less often than we think because there is no chance or accident that we are where we currently are (9.1:3). God's plan is always at work. The evolutionary impulse has constantly pushed us from within to be what and where we need to be to best grow and wake up spiritually. So we are probably just where we should be, and only our minds need change. But we likely need to adjust how we *think* about our current situation; that is probably “the first step” (9.1:4).

Jesus keeps hedging his words here because “there is...no set pattern” (9.1:5). Our teacher-training programs are “highly individualized.” You cannot guide yourself by what others have done, nor should you judge anyone else who proceeds differently from the path you choose. Some people “are called upon to change their life situation almost immediately”; perhaps they need to quit their job, end a relationship, or move to a new city. “These are generally special cases” (9.1:6). It's worth noting that some situations do call for abrupt changes, and it's good to be open to them. But, from my own experience, I would advise taking time to consider the ramifications before making drastic changes.

“By far the majority,” Jesus says, “are given a slowly evolving training program” (9.1:7). That's what most of us can expect. At the same time, we must be open to the possibility of external change. Typically, the focus will be on correcting “as many previous perceptual mistakes as possible” (9.1:7). It's worth noting that “many mistakes” in the FIP becomes “many *perceptual* mistakes” in the CE. It isn't outward mistakes that need correction; it is mistakes in perception. Again, the emphasis is on changes in our minds.

In particular, the focus will be on our relationships (9.1:9). This is no surprise. I often give a one-line summary of the Course like this: “It teaches the healing of relationships through forgiveness.” Over and over, it emphasizes that you cannot enter God's Kingdom *alone*:

“The Kingdom cannot be found alone, and you who are the Kingdom cannot find yourself alone.” (T-8.II.8:6 (CE), T-8.III.6:1 (FIP))

The way to God is through relationships. God is approached through the appreciation of His Son (T-11.IV.7:1 (CE), T-11.IV.7:2 (FIP)). You cannot know you are forgiven until you give it away. “All dark cornerstones of unforgiveness” must be removed. If we don't clean up the unforgiveness, “the old thought system still has a basis for return” (9.1:9). So

the “changes in the minds of God's teachers” that this “slowly evolving training program” calls for are primarily about learning to forgive.

Paragraph 2

2 As the teacher of God advances in his training, he learns one lesson with increasing thoroughness: He does not make his own decisions; he asks his Teacher for His answer, and it is this he follows as his guide for action. ²This becomes easier and easier as the teacher of God learns to give up his own judgment. ³The giving up of judgment, the obvious prerequisite for hearing God's Voice, is usually a fairly slow process, not because it is difficult, but because it is apt to be perceived as personally insulting. ⁴The world's training is directed toward achieving a goal in direct opposition to that of our curriculum. ⁵The world trains for reliance on one's judgment as the criterion for maturity and strength. ⁶Our curriculum trains for the relinquishment of judgment as the necessary condition for salvation.

To learn to forgive requires us to give up our judgment. Giving up judgment, listening instead to the judgments of the Holy Spirit, is the “one lesson” we learn “with increasing thoroughness” (9.2:1). The next chapter will deal with the question, “*How is Judgment Relinquished?*” Here, the Course wants to drive home just how necessary it is to let go of our judgments.

The mechanics of it are simple. When you notice that you are judging someone (in the sense of condemnation), stop. Consciously set that judgment aside, and ask within for the Holy Spirit to give you His judgment instead (9.2:1). Setting your judgment aside is “the obvious prerequisite for hearing God's Voice” (9.2:3). We already know His answer: His judgment will be either “This is love” or “This is a call for love.”

Applied to healing, this has to do with difficulty. When you are called upon to offer to heal, you may look at the situation and judge that this healing will be more difficult than most. That judgment is what we must learn to lay aside.

At first, doing this will not be easy for us. We find ourselves making judgments and acting on them almost without thinking about it. That's the whole “slowly evolving” part of this program: learning to give up our ego judgments (9.2:2–3). It isn't hard to do this, but we are stubbornly resistant to it because we find it “personally insulting” (9.2:3). We cling to the notion that our perceptions are accurate, that we are adults, quite capable of evaluating other people's words and actions. Being told to set them aside seems ridiculous.

The ego designed the world to uphold this belief in the virtue of sound judgment. “Growing up” and becoming “mature” consists primarily in learning to rely on our judgments. We encourage self-confidence, which is “in direct opposition to...our curriculum” (9.2:4–5). Learning *not* to trust our personal judgments is “the necessary condition for salvation” (9.2:6). Ouch!

How long does it take to learn to always listen to the Holy Spirit? Jesus tells us this, which should both give us pause and yet be strangely encouraging:

“It is possible even in this world to hear only that Voice and no other. It takes effort and great willingness to learn. It is the final lesson that I learned, and God's

Sons are as equal as learners as they are as Sons (T-5.II.12:1-3 (CE), T-5.II.3:9-11 (FIP)).”

He says it was the last thing he learned, but he did it. Because we are his equals, we can do it too. The spiritual journey is something we must do *together*:

“If you undertake the search together, you bring with you a light so powerful that what you see is given meaning. The lonely journey fails, because it has excluded what it would find.” (T-14.XI.9:1-7 (CE), T-14.X.10:6-7 (FIP))

“The lonely journey fails.” We have to do this thing *in relationships*. As frustrating as our relationships can be, they are the way out provided for us in this world:

“And here [in this world] can he learn relationships are his salvation, not his doom.” (T-20.VI.12:1-5 (CE), T-20.VI.11:9 (FIP))

With our ingrained resistance, how can we ever learn to give up judgment? That will be the subject of the next chapter.

10. How Is Judgment Relinquished?

Overview

Jesus is asking us to give up judgment entirely. We are supposed to refrain from judging anything or anyone as good or bad, or judging any action of another person as something helpful or an attack. As he has pointed out, the whole structure of the world's thinking is built on judgment and developing “sound” judgment. How on earth can we ever give it up? The answer, as always, is both simple and shocking.

Paragraph 1

Judgment, like the other devices by which the world of illusions is maintained, is totally misunderstood by the world.² It is actually confused with wisdom, and substitutes for truth.³ As the world uses the term, an individual is capable of “good” and “bad” judgment, and his education aims at strengthening the former and minimizing the latter.⁴ There is, however, considerable confusion about what these categories mean.⁵ What is “good” judgment to one is “bad” judgment to another.⁶ Further, even the same person classifies the same action as showing “good” judgment at one time and “bad” judgment at another time.⁷ Nor can any consistent criteria for determining what these categories are be really taught.⁸ At any time the student may disagree with what his would-be teacher says about them, and the teacher himself is inconsistent in what he believes.

The world depends on judgment. It keeps the world going, but only because we misunderstand it entirely (10.1:1). The crux of the world's mistaken dependence on our

² “Judgment” in this section (as in the previous section) does not refer primarily to condemnation but to decision making, to judging which course of action is best to take.

judgments is that we confuse them with *wisdom*; we think our judgments, which depend on the differences we perceive, show us the truth (10.1:2). They are not.

In what is considered “normal thinking” in the world, you are “capable of 'good' and 'bad' judgment.” Growing up, that is, becoming mature and wise, consists in strengthening your “good” judgment ability and limiting or eliminating the “bad” judgments (10.1:3). Problems arise, however, because not everyone agrees about what is “good” and what is “bad.” (10.1:4–5).

Take a simple concrete example. Some people think it is wise to begin collecting Social Security as soon as they are eligible. Others think it is better to wait until later—say age 70—because the monthly payments are considerably higher. In part, choosing wisely depends on how long you live, and predicting that is a problem. The same choice can be good in one instance and wrong in another (10.1:5).

Sometimes we think one option is good. At another time, we think it is terrible (10.1:6). For instance, sometimes it is good to buy a new car, and other times, a bad idea. There aren't any consistent criteria (10.1:7). When we are functioning as a teacher to someone who (in that moment) is our student, we may decide the person has a particular need or is exhibiting a particular symptom, and the student may tell us we've got it wrong. Perhaps our opinion of them keeps changing (10.1:8).

Basically, we have to approach each situation admitting to ourselves, “I do not know what anything, including this, means, and so I do not know how to respond to it.” (T-14.XI.6:7-8 (FIP), T-14.XII.8:6–7 (CE)). By refusing to think we know, we open ourselves to receiving guidance from the Holy Spirit.

Paragraph 2

² “Good” judgment in these terms does not mean anything. ³No more does “bad.” ⁴It is necessary for the teacher of God to realize, not that he should not judge, but that he cannot. ⁵In giving up judgment, he merely gives up what he did not have. ⁶He gives up an illusion; or better, he has an illusion of giving up. ⁷He has actually merely become more honest. ⁸Recognizing that judgment was always impossible for him, he no longer attempts it. ⁹This is no sacrifice. ¹⁰On the contrary, he puts himself in a position where judgment through him rather than by him can occur. ¹¹And this judgment is neither “good” nor “bad.” ¹²It is the only judgment there is, and it is only one: “God’s Son is guiltless, and sin does not exist.”³

Instead of attempting to improve our judgment, we need to realize there is no such thing as a good or bad judgment (10.2:1–2). We need to realize that we are *incapable* of judgment (10.2:3)! It isn't that we shouldn't judge; it's that we *can't judge at all*. God isn't asking us to give up judgment. You can't give up what you never had (10.2:4). We suffer from the illusion that we can judge things. That illusion is all He asks us to give up. And

³ This sentence implies that even though judgment in this section is mainly about decision making, the foundation for all of our decisions should be the forgiving judgment expressed in the message “God’s Son is guiltless” (which is also the central theme of the universal course; see M-1.3:5).

if we are giving up an illusion, we aren't really giving up anything; we are just experiencing the illusion of giving up something, a thing we never had in the first place (10.2:5).

What we are doing isn't giving up anything; it's just becoming more honest (see Characteristic #2)(10.2:6). Judgment has always been impossible for us. Recognizing that truth, we just stop trying to judge (10.2:7). To reflect on that a bit: If we look at the judgments we think we have made in life, I think we have to realize that many of them have proved to be wrong. Undoubtedly, many of the other judgments were also wrong; we just did not become aware of it. We should be able to tell, just from the evidence, that we are incapable of making sound judgments.

So giving up judgments isn't a sacrifice; it's an opportunity! We have become eligible to receive divine guidance (10.2:8–9)! Judgment can now occur *through* us rather than *by* us.

There is no “good” nor “bad” about this judgment. There is only one judgment, the same every time for everyone: “God's Son is guiltless, and sin does not exist” (10.2:10–11). Let that sink in. No matter what the situation is, no matter who the person is, this is *always* the judgment of the Holy Spirit, and if we are in tune with Him, it is what comes through us to share with the other person. “You are guiltless. No 'sin' has occurred.”

Paragraph 3

³ The aim of our curriculum, unlike the goal of the world's learning, is the recognition that judgment in the usual sense is impossible. ²This is not an opinion but a fact. ³In order to judge anything rightly, one would have to be fully aware of an inconceivably wide range of things; past, present, and to come. ⁴One would have to recognize in advance all the effects of his judgments on everyone and everything involved in them in any way. ⁵And one would have to be certain there is no distortion in his perception,⁴ so that his judgment would be wholly fair to everyone on whom it rests now and in the future. ⁶Who is in a position to do this? ⁷Who except in grandiose fantasies would claim this for himself?

The entire Course aims at teaching us this. Whereas the world is trying to teach us to improve our judgments so that we make good ones instead of bad ones, the Course aims at having us recognize that “judgment in the usual sense is impossible” (10.3:1). Jesus then forestalls any objection that this is just his opinion: “This is not an opinion but a fact” (10.3:2). He then proceeds to give evidence to prove his point. To make reliable, accurate judgments about anything, we would need to be virtually omniscient. We'd need to be able to foretell the future effects of our judgments, not just on the person we judge, but everyone now and in the future who might be affected. We'd need to be sure “there is no distortion in [our](#) perception” (10.3:3–5), which we *know* is not valid. *Nobody* can do this (10.3:6). No one without “grandiose fantasies would claim this for himself” (10.3:7).

Therefore it is a fact: Judgment in the usual sense is impossible for all of us.

⁴ As the rest of the above sentence implies, “no distortion” means no bias that would make the interests of some people less important to us than the interests of others.

Paragraph 4

4 Remember how many times you thought you knew all the “facts” you needed for judgment, and how wrong you were! ²Is there anyone who has not had this experience? ³Would you know how many times you merely thought you were right, without ever realizing you were wrong? ⁴Why would you choose such an arbitrary basis for decision making? ⁵Wisdom is not judgment; it is the relinquishment of judgment. ⁶Make then but one more judgment. ⁷It is this: There is Someone with you Whose judgment is perfect. ⁸He does know all the facts; past, present, and to come. ⁹He does know all the effects of His judgment on everyone and everything involved in any way. ¹⁰And He is wholly fair to everyone, for there is no distortion in His perception.

Jesus then calls upon us as witnesses to the truth of what he is saying. He asks us to remember how often we thought we had all we needed to make a judgment, only to be proved wrong. He asserts that everyone has had such an experience (probably many of them) (10.4:1–2). We have all had direct experience of the unreliability of our judgments. We probably think that most of them were correct and that the times we were wrong are few in comparison. But we've been wrong far more than we know (10.4:3).

Even if we judge correctly *sometimes*, relying on self-generated decision-making is not a wise choice in itself (10.4:4)! True wisdom isn't skillful judgment; wisdom is giving up judging entirely (10.4:5). It's the only wise choice you will ever make: “to allow the Holy Spirit to decide for God for you” (T-6.VII.B.8:1 (CE), T-6.V.B.6:5 (FIP)) (10.4:6–7). His judgment is perfect! He knows all the facts about the past, the present, and even the future. He knows exactly what effects His judgment will have on “everyone and everything involved in any way” (10.4:8–9).

None of us could ever make judgments as well as He can, and He is “with you.” Why not rely on Him? Learning to listen to His Voice and no other is the hardest lesson we will ever learn, but why not choose to learn it? It's worth the effort because every decision we make with Him will be “wholly fair to everyone.” He perceives everything with perfect clarity, unlike our minds that are clouded by self-generated illusions (10.4:10).

Paragraph 5

5 Therefore lay judgment down, not with regret but with a sigh of gratitude. ²Now are you free of a burden so great that you could merely stagger and fall down beneath it. ⁵ ³And it was all illusion. ⁴Nothing more! ⁵Now can the teacher of God rise up unburdened and walk lightly on. ⁶Yet it is not only this that is his benefit. ⁷His sense of care is gone, for he has none. ⁸He has given it away, along with judgment. ⁹He has given himself to Him Whose judgment he has chosen now to trust instead of his own. ¹⁰Now he makes no mistakes. ¹¹His Guide is sure. ¹²And where he came to judge, he comes to bless. ¹³Where now he laughs, he used to come to weep.

Forget the lurking feeling that you are losing something precious. Take a load off your back or off your mind. Let's breathe a deep sigh of relief and lay judgment down (10.5:1).

If we're honest with ourselves, I think we must admit that we have often felt overwhelmed and crushed by all the decisions we've had to make. Just being an adult with bills, taxes, insurance, car repairs (Which mechanic is *really* honest?), investments, caring for children, caring for pets, staying in good relationship with neighbors. PC or Mac? Big dog or small dog? What breed? Have the baby or not? Have the operation? Can I afford it? It is "a burden so great that you could merely stagger and fall down beneath it" (10.5:4).

Just think! You can be free of all that!

All of that judging and deciding was nothing more than an illusion (10.5:3–4). That's all the world is: an illusion. And all the demands on your inadequate powers of judgment were illusions, completely unnecessary. You have an infallible Spirit within you to take over the job. You've felt crippled, but Jesus is coming to you and saying, "Rise up, let go of your burdens, and walk" (10.5:5).

You are free of the burden of decision-making (if you choose to be), but that's not all. Make this one last choice, and your sense of care evaporates. You no longer have any cares (10.5:6) because in giving away judgment, you also gave away care. The Bible says it well:

"So, humble yourselves under God's strong hand, and in his own good time he will lift you up. You can throw the whole weight of your anxieties upon him, for you are his personal concern." (1 Peter 5:6–7, J.B. Phillips translation)

"You are His personal concern." Wow! If you can trust anyone's judgment, it's that of the Holy Spirit. To put ourselves into His hands is the smartest thing we can ever do (10.5:9). When we've made this choice wholeheartedly, we no longer make any mistakes (10.5:10)! We have a Guide who is perfectly competent (10.5:11). We always bless everyone concerned and never judge them. We used to weep about things; now, we laugh (10.5:12–13).

⁵ The burden here is likely the "weight" of judgment, which is far beyond our actual ability to carry. The relief of laying it down would thus be the same as the relief implicit in this earlier sentence: "Recognizing that judgment was always impossible for him, he no longer attempts it" (2:7).

“Who understands what giving means must laugh at the idea of sacrifice. Nor can he fail to recognize the many forms which sacrifice may take. He laughs as well at pain and loss, at sickness and at grief, at poverty, starvation and at death. He recognizes sacrifice remains the one idea that stands behind them all, and in his gentle laughter are they healed” (WV-187.6:2-5).⁶

Paragraph 6

6 It is not difficult to relinquish judgment, but it is difficult indeed to try to keep it. ²The teacher of God lays it down happily the instant he recognizes its cost. ³All of the ugliness he sees about him is its outcome. ⁴All of the pain he looks upon is its result. ⁵All of the loneliness and sense of loss, of passing time and growing hopelessness, of sickening despair and fear of death; all these have come of it. ⁶And now he knows that these things need not be. ⁷Not one is true. ⁸For he has given up their cause, and they, which never were but the effects of his mistaken choice, have fallen from him. ⁹Teacher of God, this step will bring you peace. ¹⁰Can it be difficult to want but this?

The Course has presented its argument carefully. It isn't difficult to relinquish judgment (10.6:1). Any appearance of giving up is an illusion. Once we realize how much judgment is costing us, we drop it like a hot potato. *Keeping it* is hard (10.6:2).

Judgment causes us to see ugliness all around us. All the pain we see is the result of judgment. The costs include loneliness, a sense of loss, the pain of things disappearing into the past, loss of hope, despair, and fear of death (10.6:3–5). The French novelist Marcel Proust wrote a seven-volume novel called *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* (In Search of Lost Time), an extended reflection on the loss of time and the loss of meaning in the world. It's something nearly everyone experiences to some degree as they age, and it is the outcome of judging things with our egos. The Course insists there is no loss:

“For there is but one mistake: the whole idea that loss is possible, and could result in gain for anyone. If this were true, then God would be unfair; sin would be possible, attack be justified, and vengeance fair. This one mistake, in any form, has one correction: There is no loss; to think there is, is a mistake.” (T-26.II.2:5–7 (CE), T-26.II.2:5-3:2 (FIP)).

Dropping judgment is not difficult when we awaken to the fact that loss is impossible and that only our perceptions of judgment cause us to think loss exists: loneliness, a sense of loss, the pain of things disappearing into the past, loss of hope, despair, and fear of death. Now, we have learned that none of these things are necessary (10.6:6). None of it is true because we have given up the cause: judgment. (10.6:7). None were ever real; they were always nothing more than “the effects of his mistaken choice” (10.6:8). Relinquishing judgment will bring you peace. There is no way that relinquishing judgment and finding peace can be hard to aspire to (10.6:9–10).

⁶ I think someday I should present a study about the word “laugh” or “laughter” in the Course. It occurs far more often than you might think, twenty times, and frequently it is in contexts like this, where laughter replaces tears.

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.