

Class #94

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 12, Section IV

In the last section we saw the ego's investment in looking for attack and guilt in the world, and finding it. In this section, we will explore the ego's investment in seeking for love in this world, and not finding it. The ego knows you want love. It knows it can't win by telling you that you don't need love and don't want it; you won't accept that. So, although it is terrified of love (because it knows that love will be its undoing if you find it), it lets you look for love. But it protects itself by telling you to look for it where you can never find it—in this world. This is just another way the ego tries to convince us that our salvation lies in something or someone in this world.

By contrast the Holy Spirit will lead you to seek and find love where it is, within yourself. Our search for love is really a search for the Self we think we have lost, while the ego's search is designed to keep that Self hidden from us.

Paragraph 1

• Study Question •

1. *Why does the ego want to keep us from finding love?*

Because we sprang from God's Love, we naturally crave to love and be loved. The ego correctly sees love as a threat to its own existence, because if we reconnect with God's Love the ego *will* cease to exist (1:1; compare with 3:1–2). Yet the ego does not directly oppose our desire for love. It knows that it can never convince your mind that love is undesirable because that is where your mind originated (2.4). Therefore, although its covert goal is keeping you away from love, its overt goal is for you to seek for love, intensely. Its covert goal is met by leading you to *seek in the wrong places*. Its motto is "Seek and do *not* find." (1.4).

This section, in a sense, could be seen as a prelude to the intense teaching on special relationships that begins with Chapter 15. The Course views special love relationships as the ego's attempt to replace love for God with love for a person. Recognizing that we have a need for love, a need that can only be satisfied by God Himself, the ego directs us to seek for love in the world with only certain special people. That keeps our instinctual desire for love occupied, and at the same time satisfies the ego's need for separateness.

Notice how the ego operates on two levels, which I indicated by the words "covert" and "overt" above. It has a goal that it cannot let you become conscious of, and a second "goal" that it openly offers to entice you. The ego is like a con man that seems to want to help you but is really setting out to rob you. The ego appears to be offering us life, but its

real desire is our death, since that is the ultimate proof that separation is real. Thus, in regard to love, we are not conscious of the ego's fear of love; yet our egos divert us away from love time after time under the guise of helping us.

Paragraph 2

• Study Question •

2. *Recall if you can some instances of defeat in your search for love. Look at each, and see if you can identify how the ego was tricking you into looking outside yourself for salvation.*

•

Since the ego's intention is to prevent us from finding love, our search for love in the wrong places is inevitably disappointed (2:1). Yet, because the ego has convinced us that the search is *our* search, we end up feeling like failures (2:2). That, of course, is the ego's very purpose. I have no doubt that most of us feel frustrated in finding the love we want, so the ego is apparently doing a very good job! You just have to read the newspapers, listen to the talk shows, or watch TV shows like "Friends" or "Sex in the City" to see how universal that frustration is.

Our mind, created by God, is love. Therefore, "the search (for love) is inevitable" (2:3). Our mind gave birth to the ego, which is all that lends it any credibility (2:5). But the mind also "has the power to deny the ego's existence" (2:6). Therefore, the ego wants to keep us away from our minds, looking outside in the world for what can never be found there. If we can understand the ego's strategy and realize where it is leading us, we will certainly abandon the ego and let it go.

Paragraph 3

• Study Question •

3. *Why does the ego teach us to respond to love with attack?*

•

The ego does not want to find love (3:1). It therefore causes us to misperceive it when it appears, so that we don't see love even when it is there. We not only see *calls for love* as attacks that merit counterattack, we often see *love itself* as a threat. I recall being fascinated, years ago, while reading a book titled *Your Fear of Love*. It helped me to realize that, in a number of ways, I was pushing love away before it had a chance to reach me. By causing us to misperceive love, the ego tricks us into responding with attack. Attack is the only response it knows (3:4). This is how the ego keeps us from succeeding in our search for love.

Paragraph 4

• Study Question •

4. *What are the results when we try to satisfy our need for love by seeking within the world?*

When you devote a major portion of your life to a search that cannot possibly succeed, you are bound to experience “futility and depression” (4:1). It is like the Greek myth of Tantalus, who was made to stand chin-deep in water with all kind of sweet-smelling and delicious fruit dangling just over his head, but whenever he tried to drink or eat, the water would magically recede or the fruit would miraculously be lifted just out of his reach. We get the word “tantalize” from his name, and that is what the ego does to us. Jesus is pointing this out to us because he knows that we don’t realize how frustrating and depressing our chosen path of romance really is.

Constant frustration is not the result we are looking for, of course (4:2–3). Fortunately, there is an alternative. The ego promises and never delivers, but the Holy Spirit promises and always delivers (4:4–5). Notice that He *encourages* us to seek love, and promises we will find it. He won’t mislead us (4:6–7).

I think it is important to notice that both the ego and the Holy Spirit advise us to seek love. The difference is in where we look. Some people read the Course’s teaching about special love relationships and become suspicious of any loving relationship. They begin to feel that having a loving relationship is somehow wrong, which is, of course, ridiculous. In a book called *Creating Union*, which contains the Pathwork teaching on relationships (which is very similar to what the Course says), there is a chapter called, “The Valid Desire to Love and Be Loved.” Wanting to love and be loved is not only valid, it is inherent in our nature. There is nothing wrong with wanting a loving relationship in this world. The trick the ego plays is to get us to use such relationships to replace God or as an attempt to fill up our perceived lack and make us complete. We *are* complete in God. It isn’t that we are not supposed to be in love with anyone, it’s that we are supposed to be in love with *everyone*.

Paragraph 5

• Study Question •

5. a) *What part does the Holy Spirit play in our search for home?*
b) *When we allow the Holy Spirit to fulfill His mission, what will our mission be?*

In this world, being on some kind of journey is unavoidable. Picture it. You’re in a place that does not seem like home. You don’t remember exactly where home is, but wherever it is, you want to be there. Wouldn’t you start to look for it? That’s exactly our situation in this world (5:1–2). It’s what we are looking for, at least in part, in our

relationships: a sense of being at home and belonging. We're looking for someone who makes us feels comfortable and accepted, someone who seems to know us and know us well. "Home is where the heart is," so the saying goes.

But if we are looking for a home outside ourselves—that is, in the world—we will never find it (5:3). That's not where our home is; our home is within us (5.4). We have forgotten that. We've not only forgotten that our home is within, we've forgotten even how to look for it! (5:4). Many people, when doing the Workbook lessons, find its instruction to sink down within themselves to be difficult to follow. That is part of the reason we have the Holy Spirit; He is here to help us re-learn how to find that inner resting place.

The Holy Spirit remembers that for us, and He will guide us to the home within ourselves (5.4-5). That is His mission, and when we learn to find that inner rest, it becomes our mission to teach the same skill to our brothers. He carries out His mission through us. We participate in His mission: to teach our brothers to find their home and their love within themselves (5.6).

Jesus calls himself "the manifestation of the Holy Spirit" in this world (T-12.VII.6:1; C-6.1:1). Each of us, when we learn what is being taught, will become the manifestation of the Holy Spirit to people in our lives (C-6.5:1). This chapter is about the content and method the Holy Spirit uses to teach us. The goal of the curriculum is to make us into His manifestations, His representatives in the world. When we are willing to set aside our private interpretations, and to have them all translated by the Holy Spirit into His perception of the world, His judgment that all is either love or a call for love, that is what we will become.

To do that we have to give up our investment in the world as we now see it (T12.II.10:9). One type of investment, discussed in the previous section, is a need to see guilt and attack outside of our minds rather than in the mind. Another type of investment, discussed here, is our need to find fulfillment and love in this world. It is a vain search, as the writer of Ecclesiastes in the Old Testament saw so clearly: he called it "vanity of vanities" (totally meaningless) and "a chasing after the wind" (Ecclesiastes 1:2; 2:11; 6:9, NASB).

Paragraph 6

• Study Question •

6. *The Course here, as in many places, asks us to consider the heavy price we pay for clinging to the ego. If we see what the ego is costing us we will let it go willingly. Despite this emphasis on the cost, is there any reason to fear ultimate loss? Why, or why not?*

There is hope, but not where we have been looking for it. We need to commit ourselves to the Guide given us by the Father. His mission is to teach us we have eternal life (6.1). Note: He teaches us, not to somehow obtain eternal life, as in traditional Christian teaching, but that we already have it. The ego's teaching leads through defeat,

depression, and futility to end, finally, in death, the ultimate defeat, which takes away everything. Telling us it is seeking for love, the ego is really seeking our death. Death, to the ego, is the pearl of great price, the brass ring on the merry-go-round.

We may wonder why the ego seeks death, or why it seeks our death. What is death except separation from life? And God is life. Therefore, in seeking to be separate from Him, we are seeking death. The line, “If death is your treasure” reflects that goal of ours—in what we have sought to do death *is* our treasure (6.4). It is the final proof that we have achieved our goal of separating from God. When we listen to the ego, that is our goal and our treasure, and it will cost us everything else! We will even believe that we have purchased it because of the horrific price we have paid to obtain it (6.5).

But death is not possible for us, if God’s Will is life (6:2). You cannot separate yourself from God or from the Sonship (6.6–8).

When Jesus refers here to selling our inheritance, he is referring to the story of Jacob and Esau in Genesis 25:27-34. They were twins, but Esau was the elder, so he became his father’s heir. Jacob, however, was a clever schemer, while Esau was a bit of a redneck, ruled by his appetites. One day after a hard day of hunting he came home famished. Jacob was cooking some stew, so Esau demanded to have some. Jacob said, “First, sell me your birthright.” Esau, rather stupidly, agreed, and as a result lost his inheritance. Jacob went on to be renamed Israel, and became the father of God’s chosen people; Esau was disinherited.

The story reflects our fears. We are afraid that we have forfeited our chance at Heaven because of a stupid mistake, because we listened to our base desires instead of listening to God. Jesus hastens to reassure us: “Your inheritance can neither be bought nor sold” (6:7). The story is wrong; God never excludes anyone (6:8).

The moral for us, as we examine our ego’s gross mistakes, is not to take them too seriously. We may have gone off looking for love in all the wrong places; we may have been seeking death in the mistaken belief that it would prove we had vanquished God; or we may have (to use the words of Exekiel in the Old Testament) gone “whoring after idols” (Ezek. 6:9, KJV). Compared to our misdeeds, Esau’s over-eager appetite for a dish of stew seems pretty trivial, but even these seeming egregious sins have not and *cannot* cause our Father to void our inheritance. Remember: The ego’s wishes cannot create reality; they can only make illusions. In the Introduction, the Text says, “Nothing real can be threatened” ((T-In.2:2), and the flip side of that is, everything real is invulnerable. If it is real it can’t be destroyed.

Paragraph 7

• Study Question •

7. *To regain our awareness of our divine inheritance we have to “invest” in it. What does this mean?*

•

In orthodox Christian teaching the word “atone” means “the reconciliation between God and people brought about by the death of Jesus Christ” (Encarta® World English

Dictionary). In the Course, the Atonement is not some price that has to be paid by you, or God, or Jesus, as reparation for your sins to buy back something you have lost, such as your wholeness or your life (7:1). You haven't lost it at all. When you thought you "sold" it, God kept it for you (7:2). You don't need to be made whole. You just need to be made *aware* that you are already whole, and always have been. That is what the Atonement does.

The "seeking for love" that you get caught up in is just your mind's calling out for the part of itself it thinks it has lost forever. You are looking for someone else to fill up the empty space you believe is inside of you. But all along, you *are* what you have been looking for. You are looking for wholeness and asking someone else to give it to you, and they can't do that. What you are looking for is within you. *It is you*. Workbook Lesson 318 says:

I was created as the thing I seek. I am the goal the world is searching for.
(WpII.318:1:5–6)

How do we "buy back" this awareness? With spirit. That is to say, with will, because "spirit is will" (7.3–4). We must exercise our will to give up our investment in seeing the world our way, and be willing to listen to the Voice of the Holy Spirit, to learn to perceive with His perception. To become aware of our total unity with God we have to be willing to abandon the false awareness of being a separate individual, apart from Him. "You must relinquish your investment in death, or you will not see life though it is all around you" (7.6). This is hardly a loss! Give up death, gain eternal life, and see life all around us! All we have to do is realize that the direction we've been going in leads nowhere, and the plan we've been following is pointless. It has neither gained us anything nor lost us anything; we are still God's Son, still heirs to the Kingdom of God, and still possessors of "life eternal" (7:6).

Answer Key

1. The ego wants to keep us from finding love because it believes (correctly) that love is a threat to its existence.
2. No written answer is expected.
3. Love, if recognized by us, will utterly defeat the ego. The ego teaches us to respond to love with attack because it does not know how to respond to love with joy. Faced with this obvious deficiency in the ego, we would look elsewhere for guidance.
4. Futility, depression, and loss of joy.
5. a) He remembers for us where our home is, and shows us how to get there.
b) Our mission will become the same as His: guiding our brothers home, as He does. We will become His instruments in the world.
6. No, because we cannot buy or sell our inheritance. God does not write us out of his will because we made mistakes. We cannot lose our inheritance; we can only delay our awareness of it.
7. To “invest” in the Kingdom means to put our spirit and will into it. We must “will” the Kingdom, choose it, desire it, want it. We must value it above the world we have made, and give up our investment in death.