

Answer Key

1. We attack them in an attempt to make them weaker and thus equalize the situation.
2. You will realize that attack does not accomplish anything. Your undiminished strength will not need to be defended or bolstered up by attack.
3. You will be manufacturing false evidence that appears to prove that attack *does* have effects. The people you are attacking, believing themselves to be vulnerable, will react as though your attack has injured them. Your ego will use that to convince you of the power of attack.
4. Your love is unreliable because it is ambivalent or impure. Realize that you must allow the Holy Spirit to love through you.
5. —cannot learn well without “constant, clear-cut direction” (5:2)
—cannot learn by yourself (5:3)
—cannot be a teacher for yourself or anyone (5:5)
—cannot establish your own curriculum (5:6)
—cannot see beyond your limitations or understand what is beyond them (5:7)
—cannot transcend your limited resources (5:2)
6. The meaning of love.
7. You might tell them that their situation isn’t that unusual. Apparently, their ego has been doing its best to keep them from learning, since it is trying to maintain its attack on them and keep the split in their mind. We should not be surprised if learning what the Course has to teach seems difficult to implement, even when it is easy to understand.
8. No. You will become an excellent teacher and learner, though only under the proper conditions, which you by yourself cannot provide.
9. Your undivided attention.

want to learn. (M-Int.2:5).

When you have that as your clear goal, you will learn it by teaching it to others.

Paragraph 9

• Study Question •

9. *Your learning potential is limitless. You will be given all you need: a curriculum with an undivided goal, and the means to achieve the goal that are in complete accord with it. What must you give?*

Give your attention to the Holy Spirit (9:4) and you will be lead to God. You have unlimited learning potential. All you need is the right Teacher. “Nothing can oppose the decision of God’s Son.” (9:6)

I want to emphasize one line: *You need offer only undivided attention.* Part of the purpose the Workbook serves is to make us aware how divided our attention really is. All we have to do is to recall one sentence several times a day, and we can’t do it. Our minds get totally distracted by the world we think is real, and we forget all about the Holy Spirit and His lesson. This is why we all need a training curriculum, in the form of the Workbook, for at least one year. It takes time to begin to form the habit of simply *paying attention* to our minds, noticing the ego’s thoughts there, and turning them over to the Holy Spirit, listening for His judgment. Don’t get discouraged if you don’t learn this in a week or two, or a year or two. Keep working towards that goal; that is all that is really asked of you. Jesus is saying here that you have “unlimited learning potential;” you *can* learn this. The deepest, truest part of you wants this; that deep part of you will awaken, if you keep the door open.

In all its imagery of teachers, students, curriculums, learning aids and class goals, this section has been repeating the same basic message: the way out of hell for us to is stop listening to our own egos and to listen instead to the Holy Spirit. Stop trusting your own interpretation of people and things, and ask the Holy Spirit to tell you what they mean and what they are for. He will always lead you to see everything as love or a call for love, and to respond to everything only with love.

Paragraph 8

• Study Question •

8. *An honest appraisal of how well you have taught yourself will lead you to resign from the job. Should you, then, simply admit that you are incapable of being an effective teacher and learner, and just give up?*

[The notes on these last two paragraphs are rough and incomplete; I did not have time to finish editing them. AAW]

The picture of the ego thought system and its curriculum, teaching us what we *don't want*, is certainly depressing. But the message of the Course again comes through clearly: this is not something to be depressed about. Rather, we should “take heart.” *If you look at it*, it isn't depressing; it's just ridiculous! Notice once again the imperative need to “look at it.” (8:1) The ego and all the mess it seems to have created isn't anything to be afraid of or depressed about or guilty about; it is just silly, because it can't possibly work! Anything that sets a goal and then strives *not* to attain it can't possibly work. (8:2)

Resign now as your own teacher. This resignation will not lead to depression. It is merely the result of an honest appraisal of what you have taught yourself, and of the learning outcomes that have resulted. (8:3–5)

In other words, stop listening to your ego. Stop taking it seriously. Stop being guilty about your ego. Laugh at it, or smile at it. Stop giving credence to your ego interpretation of things; you have no idea what they are and you can't possibly teach yourself. Assign yourself to the Teacher Who knows.

Look at what you have taught yourself and the outcome it has produced in your life. Has it made you happy? Have you found what you have been looking for? Make that “honest appraisal” and you will fire the ego immediately! (8:5) And you won't feel depressed; you'll feel inspired!

You have been a terrible teacher and a terrible learner, but it won't stay that way. Under the right conditions “you will become an excellent learner and an excellent teacher. But it is not so yet” (9:6–7). You are just at the starting gate. You have to learn first how to be a good learner; then you can become a good teacher. At this point you don't even know what “the proper learning conditions” are; you can't provide them and you can't understand them. (9:6)

None of this will happen “until the whole learning situation as you have set it up is reversed. (9:7)” You have to fire the ego and hire the Holy Spirit. You have to let Him totally reverse your learning goals. You've been trying to learn how not to learn, and you have learned very well. Now, you have to start by recognizing what you want to learn, really learn. What you want to learn above all else is your own innocence, your own perfection as God's creation, your own Being as wholly loveable and wholly loving.

The purpose of the course might be said to provide you with a means of choosing what you want to teach on the basis of what you

Paragraph 7

• Study Question •

7. *If someone came to you and said, "You know, I just can't seem to learn this forgiveness that the Course teaches. I try and I try, but I never become more forgiving," what would you tell them in light of this paragraph?*

Sentence 1 refers to the ego's general principle as stated in the previous section (T12.IV.1:4). As applied to our attempts to learn (particularly to learn to love), this becomes, "Try to learn but do not succeed" (7:2). The result of such a rule is obvious: You never learn anything! (7:3–4). Sounds like your life, doesn't it? The ego's methodology results in your *deliberately* misinterpreting everything in your life that is meant to serve as an object lesson, every bit of spiritual teaching that comes your way, and every person who has the potential to offer you assistance on your journey (7:4). The ego's whole purpose is to keep you from finding what you are looking for! It knows if you find what you are looking for, the ego is done for. If you really want to learn anything, it obviously makes no sense to continue to listen to your ego!

In choosing the ego you have chosen a curriculum that is against love and against learning; it is nothing more than "a course in how to attack yourself" (7:7). I've always found that one of the more amusing lines in the Course. I recall one time listening to a tape recording of this section with my friend, Lynne, as we drove somewhere in the car. We began listing all the ways we had attacked ourselves, and somehow it was so ridiculous that we started laughing hysterically. You could take *A Course in Miracles* and invert the meaning of each sentence, and it would be a good description of what the ego wants to teach us.

"Everything real can be threatened, and illusions are real, too. You have destroyed what God created and are no longer innocent or loving. You are the victim of the world."

The ego constantly teaches me that I am weak, I am no good, I am guilty, I am a failure, and I can't do it. Its teaching is designed to confuse and frustrate me—and it has worked pretty well! My mind is split and in turmoil, one part warring against the other, one part trying to learn and the other part deliberately blocking that learning, because that is exactly what the ego wants (7:9–10).

Yet there is yet a sane place in my mind that really *does* want to learn something, and because it is my choice to learn it, I *can* learn it (7:11). I have a Perfect Teacher, and I have a will to learn. That is all I need.

Imagine a classroom filled with “special education” students, all of whom have flunked the previous year of school. Would you allow these students to plan the course of study for themselves or for anyone else? (5:6). Of course not; they need informed guidance. No more would God expect us to set up our own learning program, which is why, through the Holy Spirit, He has set one up *for us*.

Paragraph 6

• Study Question •

6. *What specifically should you not try to teach yourself?*

When we listen to our own interpretations of the world and accept them as fact, we are doing exactly what this passage talks about. We are trying to teach ourselves what we don't understand. It is simply impossible! (6:1–2). Our handicap is that we do not know the meaning of love. If you wanted to learn to read, would you ask a blind person? Of course not! Yet, that is what we are doing when we try to learn by ourselves what love is. Jesus urges us to stop.

In a certain sense, a huge part of the Course is aimed at getting us to recognize our inability to teach ourselves. Until we ask for help, we are going to remain ignorant.

The ego's goal is to seek for love and *not* find it. If the goal is “not to learn,” how can we expect to learn anything? (6:3). And that is the ego's goal, for sure, because learning of reality will dissolve the ego; to survive, it has to prevent our learning.

To the Holy Spirit, everything in this world is a learning aid, like using blocks to teach addition in grade school. Would you ask someone who did not know arithmetic what the blocks are for? He would not know. But when we try, on our own, to figure out what bodies are for, what relationships are for, what the events of our lives mean, that is exactly what we do: we are asking a teacher who does not know. (6:5–6) If you already *knew* what these things were for, you would have learned from them. (6:7) Since you have not learned, you obviously do not know what they are for! You need someone to tell you. You need the Holy Spirit. We are being asked to acknowledge that, “I do not know what anything is for” (W-pI.25).

Learning in one specific situation leads to transfer. Once you have learned, for instance, what relationships are for by listening to the Teacher in one relationship, you can transfer that learning to other relationships. Once the Teacher gives you the key, you can go on to apply it to many different things. In school, once you learned that two apples plus two apples makes four apples, you could *generalize* the principle that $2+2=4$, and then *transfer* that to other situations: two boys plus two boys equals four boys, and so on. That is how the Holy Spirit wants to teach us. In one specific situation, He shows us what the “learning aids” are for. We see the principle, we generalize it, and then we transfer that principle to one situation after another (6:4). But it must start with our setting aside our own ideas and listening to the Teacher.

attack and counter-attack at its source.

Another way of saying this is, when you have freed your own mind of guilt, you will see no guilt in anyone.

Paragraphs 4 and 5

• Study Question •

4. *If you thought that your love for your romantic partner was your strength, what would this passage say about that?*
5. *List all of the things you do not, should not and cannot do, according to these paragraphs.*

The result of our self-attack has created an impossible situation (5:4). By attempting to separate from God, Who is Love, we have placed ourselves at odds with our own love. This makes it impossible for us to rely on it! How can you rely on something that you believe you have mortally wounded, and that now constitutes a threat? (4:1–2). You are “learning impaired” because you have a split mind (4:3; 5:1).

I think that in this passage, the Course is explaining why, although we *are* the very Love of God, we cannot teach ourselves to love; why, although we already have perfect knowledge, we need a teacher who is, in some sense at least, *not us*. Our very descent into ignorance has destroyed our self-confidence. We are afraid to listen to that inner voice when we think it is coming from us; the voice is suspect, and we are afraid it will deceive us.

You don’t trust your own true Self! You have, therefore, a desperate need for something or someone to represent pure, invulnerable Love to you. That is the function of the Holy Spirit or Jesus (5:2–3). Left to our own devices, our learning disabilities would prevent us from learning. The Course expresses this same thought concerning our imperative need for “a larger Self” such as the Holy Spirit at least twice elsewhere, in other terms (T13.VII.10:7; T-25.VIII.12:4). In talking about forgiveness, the *Song of Prayer* pamphlet says that our part consist primarily in getting out of His way (S2.II.2:6–7). We cannot learn without His help (5:2; 5:4).

The picture of us as developmentally disabled is striking, and it really is a good parallel. There is no question that the Course does not support the idea that, since we all know, we don’t need any teacher. Its picture of the situation is miles apart from that: It says that *without help we will never learn*.

We absolutely *need* the Holy Spirit and His curriculum. We have utterly convinced ourselves that we are no longer perfect love. How can a mind so split possibly teach itself to love? The ego cannot see love when love stares it in the face; how can it ever give you love? The ego mind is trapped in the cycle of attack and counter-attack; it cannot see things any other way. It is a terrible teacher. (5:4-6) To teach love, we would have to understand it. If we understood it, we would not need to learn! To listen to your ego is truly a case of the blind leading the blind.

If all that is so, why bother attacking? What kind of protection can it offer if, in the primary example of your self-attack, it didn't work? (2:5).

But more than this: if you are invulnerable then, despite any attacks you have endured, you must still be strong! (2:6–7) So you have no *need* for attack because you are not weak. (2:8)

Thus, recognizing your invulnerability removes both the belief that attack is necessary because I am weak, and the belief that attack works.

Paragraph 3

• Study Question •

3. *If you attack another person you won't realize that attack is ineffectual; why?*

Probably our greatest fear, in terms of spiritual things, is that we have done something to ourselves that has permanently screwed us up. This is the fear that preachers of hellfire and brimstone prey upon. We don't realize how arrogant this is! We are attributing to ourselves the power to destroy what God created. The truth is, we can't screw ourselves up. God's creation determined what we are and what we will be forever. We can't change that.

Just pause and let the first sentence of this paragraph soak in! Nothing you have ever done to yourself, or think you have done to yourself, has had any effects. You have not destroyed yourself. You have not sabotaged your success. You have not corrupted yourself or weakened yourself. The real you cannot be harmed. Thus, nothing you think has been done to you by the world or by yourself has actually had any real effect. If you really believed this, you could forgive the world! It is your belief that you *have* attacked yourself, and that the attack *worked*, which is behind every thought of attack you now have.

If you believe your attack on yourself has worked, you will attack others because you feel weak. Your belief in the power of attack comes from your belief that it worked on you. Those other people will certainly react to your attacks, and inevitably you will interpret their counter-attack as a reinforcement of your belief in attack (3:2). The whole destructive cycle gets set in motion, starting from your belief that when you attacked yourself, it worked.

“The only place you can cancel out all reinforcement is in yourself“ (3:3). It has to start *with you*. When other people see what you are doing as attack—as they inevitably will do, being caught in the ego just like you—you can't avoid thinking that your attacks have worked <http://two.pairlist.net/mailman/listinfo/acimlessons>. It does no good to try to change their perception of your behavior; you have to change your own mind about attack's power to harm you. What needs to change isn't out there in the world, in other people; it is within your own mind.

You have to come to see that your attack on yourself *did not work*. If nothing happened when you attacked yourself, it could not possibly have had any consequences! (3:4). When you see that your self-attack did nothing, you have cut off the whole chain of

recognizing all calls for help as exactly what they are except your own imagined need to attack” (T-12.I.4:1). Now, he is explaining where that “imagined need” comes from. It comes from our belief in our weakness, and from our belief that our attack on ourselves worked.

Paragraph 2

• Study Question •

2. *Give two reasons why, if you recognize your own invulnerability, you will no longer attack others.*

If the need to attack comes from our belief in our weakness, it becomes obvious why we need so very much to come to believe in our strength instead. If we knew our true strength we would not attack people. To let go of attack, we have to recognize our own invulnerability (2:1). That will free us to see the world as the Holy Spirit sees it, filled, not with threats, but with calls for help.

I realize that the idea of being invulnerable probably seems ridiculous to you. Invulnerability is a characteristic of Superman, and it only exists in comic books—right? Two nights ago I stubbed my toe in a dark bedroom and it hurt like blazes; I sure don’t *feel* invulnerable! I know when I first read this idea in the Course it seemed like a joke. Intellectually, I understood what the Course was saying: that God only creates the eternal and therefore, if He created me, I must be eternal and changeless. Thus, anything that God creates is invulnerable. That makes perfect sense. The problem is, that isn’t my experience in life. Like everyone, I’ve been hurt too many times in too many ways to easily accept the idea that I am, in reality, invulnerable.

The Course teaches that the “real me” cannot be hurt, and that whatever *can* experience pain *is not me* (see Lesson 248 in the Workbook). Thus, instead of proving that I am not invulnerable, my experience of pain just demonstrates the extent to which I have identified with a false self-concept. My body suffers pain; therefore, my body is not part of me. This is why the Workbook has us practice with the words, “I am not a body” (Lesson 199 and many other places) and “I am spirit” (Lesson 97).

If you can accept the idea that you are invulnerable it leads to two extremely useful conclusions. First, any attack on an invulnerable person has to fail, which means that your attack on yourself failed. *Attack doesn’t work*. Second, an invulnerable person cannot be weakened by attack. *You are not weak*.

When you acknowledge your invulnerability, you are admitting that attack has no effect. That must be so because when you tried to separate from God nothing happened (2:2–3). You are still you; your spirit cannot be touched. What God created cannot be changed or hurt. “*Nothing really happened*” (2:3, my emphasis).

Now something that has no effects cannot be said to do anything (2:4). Our so-called attack on ourselves is no more than an empty gesture; we have not been affected by it. And if you haven’t really done anything then there is nothing to be guilty about, and no reason to fear God’s wrath. This is the message of the Atonement!

Class #95

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

The overall message of this section (“The Sane Curriculum”) is that the Holy Spirit’s curriculum delivers all it promises, while the ego’s curriculum is insane and leads to death. The ego teaches that we have attacked ourselves by sinning, and that we have destroyed ourselves. Because our attack on ourselves worked, we now need to attack others in order to survive. The ego’s curriculum is depressing, but if you *look at it*, it is merely *ridiculous* (8:1). We are asked to *resign as our own teacher*, and to allow the Spirit of God to guide us in a new way. That new way is His judgment that our self-attack did not work! And that everything we see is either love or a call for love (T-14.X.7:2), and therefore the only appropriate response to anything—including our own attack on ourselves—is love.

Paragraph 1

• Study Question •

1. *We first attack ourselves, perceive ourselves as weak, and then see ourselves as weaker than others. Why do we subsequently attack others, if we believe they are stronger than us?*

The only possible reason you would use attack as a way to get what you want is if you believe, first, that attack is necessary, and second, that attack works. We do believe those things. We have the illusion that we have successfully attacked our true identity, and that as a result, we have become weak. (Of course, we cannot actually alter what God has created, so our weakness is wholly imaginary.) Perceiving ourselves to be in danger because of our weakened condition, we believe attack is a necessary means of self-defense. And, because attack successfully weakened *us*, we think we can use it to weaken others (1:1–4).

When God created us we were perfect and had everything. Now we experience ourselves as imperfect and lacking many things. That’s just our perception, of course, not the reality, but it seems real to us, so we ask: “How did we get this way?” Deep down we are convinced that we did it to ourselves. We sinned, and we were cast out of Heaven. We attacked ourselves and it worked! Now, we are weak, and we *have to* attack to defend ourselves against people who are stronger than we are. We don’t think of the attack as wrong because, in our eyes, we are just restoring a more favorable balance of power (1:5–6). This is what the ego believes with unswerving devotion.

Back in Section I, Jesus told us that, “There is nothing to prevent you from