

Class #98

Study Guide and Commentary ACIM[®] Text, Chapter 12, Section VII Part 2

Summary of section VII so far: The world around us reflects what our minds know and believe. We come to know what is inside us by seeing it reflected in the world outside us. When our minds are healed, we will perceive miracles. When we tune in to the inner truth about ourselves, we will become miracle workers in this world; the fruits we bear will demonstrate our inner reality: our Self, our strengths, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. This learning process begins with specific persons and incidents, and gradually expands to everything.

The only true purpose we have in this world is learning these lessons about ourselves by extending healing to the world. We must desire this as our only goal, and whatever we want to see inwardly we will manifest outwardly, thus reinforcing our conviction of its reality. If we follow the ego, we will see what the ego wants to see. Our minds are not as united in the desire for love as we may believe. The mind can trick itself into believing it is not divided. The world we perceive can reveal the true state of our mind if we will let it do so. If we see guilt, hatred, and attack in the world, some part of our mind still *wants* to see those things. It is not the world that needs to be healed; it is us.

Paragraph 8

• Study Question •

1. *What do you think the messengers of love are (mentioned in 8:5–6)? Angels? Loving friends? Cupid?*

The healed mind sees only love: “When you want only love, you will see nothing else” (8:1). (As you already know if you have read many of my commentaries, this is one of my favorite lines in the course. I quote it often.) When we, in our split-minded condition, look at the world, we see a mixture of good and evil, of love and hate. That isn’t the truth. What we are seeing is a reflection of the split in our minds (8:2–3). We need to recognize the split in our minds, and to *not accept* the reality of what we see in the world. A mind whose undivided goal is love does not perceive hatred, attack, evil, and death. It sees with the vision of Christ, or with the judgment of the Holy Spirit; it sees everything as an expression of love or a call for love.

We first accepted the split in our minds because we believed it was what we wanted: a

mind apart from God and separate. Because we made that choice, the world reflects it. But what we see in the world is not real; it is only a projection of our mind's decision *about itself* (8:4). When we begin to withdraw the projection and to recognize that what we are seeing is not something outside ourselves, but rather something that is in our mind, projected outward, the error we have made about the world is undone. Our mind is divided between love and not-love, and not the world. Furthermore, when we bring our seemingly split mind to the Holy Spirit, He tells us that the split in our mind is just as unreal as its projection. The world is an illusion that reflects an illusion about our own minds.

If the content of our minds determines how the world appears to us, we need to choose better mental content. We need to choose to “make love manifest” (8:6). As we have seen, to manifest means to plainly show or demonstrate something, or to be evidence of something. As we begin to act as lovers and givers, instead of attackers and takers, we become evidence for the existence of love, and we invite the world to send us messages of love in return.

Paragraph 9

• Study Question •

2. *What you see the world giving you is completely determined by what you see yourself giving it. But how is this true if someone hates you? Does this mean that people will only hate you when you already hated them?*

We have free will. In fact, in the mental prison we've created for ourselves, this “is your one remaining freedom” (9:1). We can choose which world we want to see: the ego's world of hatred and attack, or the Holy Spirit's world of love and joining (9:2–3). As we saw earlier (T-12.VI.3), the love we give to the world is the only thing that grants it some degree of reality; the ego's world does not really exist at all since the ego cannot love. The Course keeps urging us to recognize which world we see depends upon our choice. We will see the world as we *choose* to see it. More specifically, we will see the world as we choose to see *ourselves*.

What, after all, *is* your reality? Are you really an ephemeral ego housed in frail and failing flesh? Or are you a spirit whose being radiates from the very heart of God?

The Course assures us that only love is real (T-12.I.10:1; see also T-13.III.8:7). If nothing but love exists, then we, too, must be pure love and nothing else. As such, it therefore must be impossible for us to truly hate or truly attack. That is as true of everyone and everything as it is true of us. We have manufactured a marvelously realistic and complex *illusion* of a world filled with attack and selfishness, but if we accept the premises that God is Love and that God defines what reality is, the world of attack *must* be unreal (9:4).

Our fundamental error is that we believe *we are capable of something besides love*. God created only love. If something else exists in us, we must believe that *we* created it.

That is what we *want* to believe: that we can create independently of God. That is *why* we believe in something besides love. But nothing but love exists; we have been mistaken to think otherwise.

We believe that the world and the people in it have given us something less than love. The only reason we believe that is because we looked within ourselves and we thought we saw the power to give something other than love *in ourselves* (9:5). We decided we were unloving, and that decision determined what we found in the world (9:6).

If you are having trouble seeing why you would choose to see yourself as unloving, think of it this way: God has the monopoly on love. He IS Love. If you want to convince yourself that you can create independently of God (and autonomy is the basic drive of the ego), the only possible choice is to create *not-love*. You therefore choose to see yourself as unloving, and that decision is projected out onto the world so that it appears as unloving to you. Just as a mirror confirms your picture of your body, an attacking world confirms your picture of an attacking self that exists apart from God. You see the world this way because you want to see it this way.

Paragraph 10

• Study Question •

3. *You most likely experience your own mind as frequently mean, petty, egocentric and dim-witted How can it possibly be as powerful and grand as the Course says it is, if these things are true about you?*

The author here seems to be speaking as *Christ* rather than simply as the man Jesus.

It is my dark decision about myself that has distorted my perception of the world. We are afraid of Christ because we are afraid of ourselves (10:1). I looked within and saw “sin.” I looked within and saw someone who would choose to gain at the expense of anyone or everyone else. Because I see myself that way, I see the world that way; I see Jesus that way; and I see God that way. But what I believe I saw *cannot be reality* (10:2). The ugly things I believe about myself are all lies I’ve told myself to convince myself the separation is real.

The truth about us is this:

The reality of your mind is the loveliest of God’s creations. (10:2)

That’s what we don’t believe about ourselves. Our mind *came from God* (10:3). If we were perceiving ourselves truly, we would never see the disturbing and distressing pictures we now see. So often when we examine our own minds, we come away from the experience feeling upset. According to the Course that can only be happening because we are not really looking at our reality; we are focusing on illusions.

Your mind, as God’s creation, is *magnificent* and *beautiful*. Only what God creates exists (T-3.II.3:6). He would not create anything that would cause us to fear. If we are afraid of what we see when we look within, or what we see when we look at the world,

we must be seeing something that isn't there! (10:4). Fear arises only from the false perception of something God did not create—and there is no such thing.

We dwell in the Mind of God that created us along with all our brothers and with Christ. If we choose to, we can see that reality. If we make that choice we will experience perfect peace, because that is God's will for us. He wills us to be at peace, and to extend that peace to every mind we encounter (10:5–6).

That is the wonderful message of the Course. As the Workbook puts it,

There is a way to look on everything that lets it be to you another step to Him.
(W-193.13:1)

Paragraph 11

• Study Question •

4. *What, in your own words, would you say is the single condition for seeing peace, seeing Jesus and seeing the real world?*

•

We *can* see the real world; we *can* see only love; we *can* see everything as a step towards God. The first sentence tells us how. To accept your mission to extend peace means to accept yourself as an extension of God, as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit in the world (11:1). It means that you become a peacemaker: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9). And when you accept that as the truth about what you are, you will make it manifest; you will see the world that way. The persons and events that speak of peace will come to us when we call upon them (11:2). We call upon them by choosing to believe in them and wanting to see them. When we *want* to see a brother without sin, we will see them without sin. Our wanting is the controlling factor.

Just wanting peace, however, isn't quite enough. If we have divided goals, we won't recognize peace (or the way to peace) when it shows up. Just like the attention asked for by the Holy Spirit (T-12.V.9:4), our wanting must be undivided. We must want nothing *but* peace (11:4). We may feel frustrated because it seems that, even though we deeply want peace, peace eludes us. The only reason we do not see it yet is that we still have divided goals. We still have an investment in seeing something else, so we *do* see something else.

The next time you lose your peace over some situation, remind yourself that, if you chose to, you could be perfectly at peace, no matter what is going on. Only your thoughts about the situation are causing you upset, and you *could* change your thoughts. You could, but most likely, you will find you don't want to. And there it is, staring you in the face: The reason you don't have peace is that you don't want it above all else. Something else is more important to you than peace, or seems to be.

And yet, the longer we work with Jesus and the Course, we are told, the more we will come to realize that “[we] do want only that” (11:5).

This might seem confusing at first—you don't want it, you do want it. Haven't you ever thought you wanted something, only to discover, after gaining a clearer understanding, that you don't really want it? You just thought you did. That's what Jesus is saying here. You *thought*, and still think, that you want something other than love, but as your understanding increases, you will come to see that you were wrong; you have never wanted anything except love. And when that happens, you will see the real world (11:6). You will see *only* the real world because that is all that really exists (11:7).

Notice what is changing first here: your perception of *yourself*. As you see yourself now, you seem to want things other than God and other than peace. You seem to give things besides peace a higher priority. For instance, perhaps someone criticizes you or asks in a disrespectful manner towards you. You react by feeling upset, and you want that person to change; you feel that if they would only change, you could be at peace again. In doing that, you are making changing that person's behavior more important than our peace. You are choosing *not* to be at peace until they change. Thus, you are choosing to see them as attacking your peace, and yourself as a victim. You also feel a need to retaliate, to somehow effect a change in that person; this means that, perhaps unconsciously, you perceive yourself as an attacker.

According to the Course, you could choose to change those perceptions. You could see yourself as an invulnerable source of love, and your brother as one who is calling for love. You could, instead of responding to the situation as though the ego were the truth about you, respond to it as though Christ were the truth about you. If you are willing to take that risk, Jesus says, the truth that lies within you will reveal Itself to you and validate your trust in It (11:6).

It all rests on your choice (11:8–9). We are not aware of all our decisions and choices. But since what you see witnesses to your decision, you can let what you are seeing instruct you about what you *must* be choosing, and consciously choose again.

Paragraph 12

• Study Question •

5. *If, when you look at the world, you see it as deserving of condemnation in some way, what does that say about how you see yourself?*

This paragraph summarizes it all. When you decide to recognize the truth about yourself, when you decide your only mission is to extend peace and love, you will discover the Christ *in yourself*. Seeing yourself as a being of love, you will naturally begin to express love, which results in extension. Then, you will begin to extend your vision of Christ, which means that you will choose to see Christ in the world as well as yourself (12:2). You will see this vision outside *because* you chose to see it in yourself, (12:3), just as, until now, you have seen a world full of attackers because that is how you have chosen to see yourself. It is our vision of what lies within us that determines what we perceive outside us (12:4).

Your judgment on yourself is what got you in trouble. Judgment is not your function; judgment belongs to the Holy Spirit (12:5–6). Your perception of yourself is distorted and made up of illusions. The very definition of illusion is something that appears to exist when it does not, which is a good description of the ego. The Holy Spirit’s perception of us is accurate and consistent with the truth; there is no illusion in it. He sees us as God created us; we imagine ourselves to be corrupted by our own choices. Only one of those perspectives can be true, and obviously, His is the true perspective. Therefore, we need to stop relying upon our own judgments, and to rely instead on His. When He assures us of our innocence and holiness, we need disregard the inner critic and to listen to God’s Voice, no matter how guilty we may feel. Likewise, when He assures us of our *brother’s* innocence and holiness, we must learn to let go of our condemnation no matter how damning the evidence may seem to us, and to accept the judgment of the Holy Spirit that everything is either love or a call for it (12:6–8). This is what it means to “share His function” (12:7).

We are so hard on ourselves! It may be a truism that we are our own harshest judges, but the statement is so frequently made because it is so evidently true. We are so good at making the case against ourselves, but the Holy Spirit is the Universe’s greatest defense attorney. He always wins an acquittal! (12:8).

Paragraph 13

• Study Question •

6. *Please speculate: Why do you think the ego would pursue the goal of your death?*

When you see something you don’t like, it is because you have first judged *yourself* and then projected that judgment onto the world (13:1). Realize what you are doing! The world does not exist independently of you.

This does not mean that you have done exactly what you are condemning in the world. If you see child abuse, it does not mean that you are a child abuser. What this means is that if you look at a child abuser and see a guilty sinner rather than a confused son of God who deserves your love, it is because you have seen yourself as sinful and undeserving of love. Jesus saw people crucifying him. That did not mean he was crucifying himself. The key is how he reacted to them. He forgave them. He prayed for their forgiveness. He understood that they did not know what they were doing. The Text here does not talk about what you see but about how you react to it.

The world you see is but a judgment on yourself. It is not there at all.
(T20.III.5:2–3)

Those brief lines are worthy of memorization. They are worth repeating to yourself when you find yourself having critical or judgmental thoughts about another person or some situation. How do you react when someone is rude to you? How do you react to the

presence of terrorism in the world? How do you react when a loved one dies? Try applying these words whenever your mind begins to judge harshly or to feel put upon.

The ego believes that your act of separating from God (which is real in its sight) has merited death. In the ego's mind, God must want to kill you for what you have done. Of course, God wants no such thing because your desire to separate from Him was no more than an impotent idle wish (13:2–3). But the ego wants to kill you as its final expression of its feeling for you (13:4). As Marianne Williamson has said so well, the ego is your self-loathing.

The description of the ego's implacable antipathy towards us, its unrelenting and diabolical pursuit of our pain, and its dedication to our death in this paragraph is remarkable in its power and clarity. There is no mistaking the message: The ego wants you to suffer horribly and die. It wants you to live every moment in dread of impending death (and so many of us do exactly that!). That life of misery and terror is not enough, however; in the end, the ego craves your total annihilation. "Your destruction is the one end toward which it works" (13:6).

We may be used to the idea that our ego is "pro-us." When someone exalts their own self-interest above the well being of others, we say they are being "egotistical." We think of the ego as the part of us that is always looking out for Number One. The picture of the ego presented by the Course may be quite unfamiliar and even counter-intuitive. Why would the ego want to kill us?

The answer given here is that the ego wants our crime (separating from God) to be real. If the punishment is real, the crime must be real. Death confirms the separation's reality. That is the ego's true goal for us. Yes, it will lead us to look out for Number One and to attempt to gain for ourselves at the expense of others, but our gain is only its ostensible agenda. Its *true* agenda is to bury us ever more deeply in guilt until our death is certain.

Paragraph 14

• Study Question •

7. *The ego tells you that are guilty because you have been a traitor to God.*

7.a. *Does the ego itself want to die?*

7.b. *How does confusing yourself with the ego lead you to think that you want death?*

It is about as impossible to betray God as to murder a rock (14:1). The whole scenario promulgated by the ego is simply impossible. God is all that is, and nothing *is* apart from Him. If God is conceived of as a circle, that circle encloses everything that exists. To think of something as outside of God is like speaking of a part of the circle that is outside of it. There is no part of it outside, nor can there be.

The ego believes it is a traitor to God because it has torn itself off from God and

become separate, and it believes that it is us. However, God cannot be betrayed (14:1). On the other hand, we *can* be. The ego pretends to be on our side, our champion, yet it is constantly betraying us, working against us to bury us in guilt (13:2 and 14:2). The ego is convinced of our guilt, and works ceaselessly to convince us of that guilt. It tries to make us so guilty that we think ourselves deserving of death (14:4).

Feelings of guilt are an infallible sign that we have been listening to the ego's condemning voice (14:4). Guilt *never* comes from God. When we believe we are guilty, we believe we *deserve* suffering and death. We will think that God in His justice has no choice but to send us to hell (14:5). We even believe in insane concepts like "the wrath of God." Indeed, entire religions are based on these beliefs! They arise only in the ego.

Because we identify with the ego, we align ourselves with its belief in our guilt. We accept its assessment of us. Therefore, we imagine that *we want death!* (14:5). And God will not save us from what we want (14:6). Such is God's respect for our free will that He will not interfere with our decision. As long as we keep on choosing death, death is what we will experience.

That is why the undoing of guilt is an essential part of the Holy Spirit's teaching. (14:3)

I wish I had time and space in this commentary to gather together everything the Course has to say about the primacy of undoing guilt. If any concept could be said to summarize the message of the Course, this is certainly one such concept. For just a few examples of what the Course has to say on this topic, examine these passages: T14.III.1:3–4; T-15.VII.14:3; T5.V.8:1; and T13.X.6.

Jesus says that eradicating guilt is "essential" for students of the Course. That means that, while guilt lingers, we cannot fully embrace the teachings of the Course. Any eruption of guilt should be a red flag to us, signaling us that the ego has spoken and we have believed it, and calling us to turn our hearts to God to be washed clean by His loving gaze.

Paragraph 15

• Study Question •

8. *What does it mean to "yield to the desire for death"? (15:1).*

When you find yourself believing in your own guilt or that of others, you are accepting condemnation and ultimately death. If you feel guilty, you will (to some extent) feel you deserve to die.

When guilt arises, Jesus tells us: "Remember that I did not die" (15:1). If he did not die then guilt is not real. Look within and see Him in yourself; see His response of love to every call for love (15:2). Let the guilt, the feeling of unworthiness or the perception of unworthiness in another, be that red flag to cause you to turn within to the presence of Christ, reminding yourself that "He lives!" There is an old Gospel song that always spoke

to me:

*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today!
He walks with me and talks with me
Along life's narrow way.
He lives! He lives, salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know he lives?
He lives within my heart.*

God raised Jesus from the dead and gave him eternal life. That was not just for him alone; it was for you. Jesus' victory over death proclaimed more than just his innocence; it trumpeted the innocence of all living things (15:3–4). Find Christ in your heart and let him live through your life, and you will share the eternal life that was given to him (15:5). When you have seen the deathless Love of God *in yourself*, you will see only that as you look out on the world (15:6).

Answer Key

1. The messengers of love are, basically, a world that loves you and that is lovable, because it reflects your unified desire for love.
2. No; this isn't about what other people do, it is about how you perceive them. Even when someone hates you, you can see them as a loving being. Some people hated Jesus and crucified him, even though he was giving only love; however, he did not see their actions as coming from hatred or attack. He saw their fear and their need for love, and he continued to offer only love in return.
3. Meanness, pettiness, egocentricity, and dimness are not your real mind; they are illusions you have fabricated about yourself. You are seeing things that are not there (10:4).
4. The single condition is to want and to extend only peace.
5. You see yourself as deserving of condemnation.
6. The ego pursues your death because it can live only by your death. Your death proves that the ego won in the battle for life; death is the ultimate proof that the separation is real. If you truly separated from God you deserve to die; ergo, if you die, you really did separate, and the ego is real.
7. How our identification with the ego leads us to want to die:
 - 7.a. No, the ego wants *you* dead.
 - 7.b. You identify with the ego's desire for *your* death, which leads you to desire death.
8. *Guilt* is the desire for death. Because a judgment on others always reflects an unconscious judgment of yourself, to see guilt in yourself or in others is to yield to the desire for death.