

Class #99

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

Although this section is titled “The Attraction of Love for Love,” it begins on a brief dark note: We think we have killed God’s Son and destroyed the loving being we were. It raises the point only to question it, however; the manner of the question underlines the absurdity of our belief.

On the whole, this section is a clear continuation of the preceding one. Its message is by now a familiar one. The reason we see such a dark world is that we harbor this twisted belief that we have murdered our original Self. But God’s Son cannot be destroyed. *Love is still in our minds, and is irresistibly drawn to God, because love is attracted to love.*

To find love, offer love, not attack. Ask to see as the Holy Spirit sees, for He sees only love, only Christ in you. As you give up your perceptions and replace them with His, the real world comes into view. This is reality as it has always been. When your perceptions are wholly corrected, perceptions give way to knowledge, and you awake from the dream to realize that the unreality you saw never was, and the reality of love is all that has ever been.

Paragraph 1

• Study Question •

1. *What are some of the ways in which you actively attack the real world every minute?*

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Do you really believe that you can kill the Son of God? (1:1)

The honest answer has to be, “Yes, I do,” because that *is* what you are believing if you imagine that you are anything other than love. God created you as the Son of God in perfect love. You are now seeing yourself as something quite different. How did that happen? You must believe that you have killed that Son of God and replaced him with what you are now! That is what your guilt is all about. That is why your ego believes you deserve to die.

But when we realize this is what the ego believes—when we look at it rationally instead of with the ego’s blind insanity—*can we believe it?* How could we kill God’s creation? It isn’t possible. The Son of God is sheltered within God like a pearl within an oyster, in a protected environment that the insanity of our beliefs cannot penetrate (1:2). No matter what we may think, the Father and Son are both alive and doing well, thank you! Despite Their continued existence and immutable purity, we remain unaware of

Them. Our insane beliefs about our attack on ourselves have driven nearly all consciousness of their existence from our minds.

Blinded to reality, our destructive thoughts are attacking the real world “every day and every hour and every minute” (1:3). That may seem an extreme statement, but the longer I watch my mind the more I realize how true it is. Watch your own mind for a while! Try, for instance, to honestly practice the Workbook lesson that says, “Today I will judge nothing that occurs” (W-pII.243). Just try it! Watch how often, even every minute, thoughts of judgment cross your mind. See how often you blame the world for your unhappiness. See how often you mistake yourself and others for bodies, unconsciously preferring the physical to the spiritual. The average human mind is a hostile environment to the real world. This is why the Course so strongly stresses mind training.

Most people who read the Course and learn about the exalted perception of the world it teaches will react with despair at some point, thinking or saying, “I’d *like* to see everything as love or a call for love, but I just can’t! I ask for a vision of the real world, but I just don’t receive it.”

Given the way that we attack the real world, why should our lack of vision surprise us? (1:4). We claim to be looking for love on the one hand, but on the other hand we are driving it away (1:4). Attack and anger are not the way to attract love! The way to *find* love is to *offer* love, because love is irresistibly “drawn to itself” (1:5–6). As the section title says, love is attracted to love; attack thoughts only drive love away (1:7).

In a certain way, this is just common sense: “Everybody loves a lover.” “You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.” You won’t attract love while spitting out attack and blame: This is news? Of course not! The real point of this paragraph is to call our attention to the never-ending barrage of attack thoughts that ricochet through our minds like angry hornets. Generally, we delude ourselves that our minds are filled with love; it’s just that damned world out there that won’t give love to us. Saying that we want love or we want to see the real world isn’t enough; our wanting has to be *undivided*. Otherwise, we are just kidding ourselves.

Notice the careful distinction here, however. You can drive love out of your awareness, but you cannot drive it out of *existence*. You can hide love from your mind, but you cannot destroy it; love is perfectly safe. So, you have not altered reality in any way and you have not harmed anything; therefore, you have not sinned. All you have done is to blind yourself to reality. That is a sad mistake, but it is not cause for guilt; it is no reason to deserve death. You do not need punishment; you need healing.

Paragraph 2

• Study Question •

2. *When you attacked your Self (referred to as “the Son of God”), a) what happened to him and b) what happened to your awareness of him?*

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The main thrust of this paragraph is to underscore the message that although we have

lost awareness of our true Self (God's Son), that Self continues unchanged in God's Mind, abiding there as part of Him (2:1–2). As I said above, we have driven love out of our awareness but not out of existence.

When we chose to perceive something other than love in ourselves, we were *attacking* our Self, because our Self *is* love. We may not have realized what we were doing in our mad wish to be different from God, but our rejection of love constituted an attack on God's Son who is our Self, and He disappeared *from our sight* (2:3). “He did not change, but you did” (2:4). We thought we wanted a split or separated mind and what it could bring us—the ego and the body. But if we retained the knowledge of our true Self, the ego could not live, so we drove that knowledge out of our mind (2:5)

Thus, the reason for our crippled awareness of spiritual realities is neither some fatal degradation of our abilities nor a capricious reluctance on God's part to be found. We lack vision because we have filled our minds with thoughts that make vision impossible, but that can change. Spiritual reality is still there and not hiding, and we all are perfectly capable of seeing it.

Paragraph 3

• Study Question •

3. *What is visible and what is invisible is not up to you. Why is this a good thing?*

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You manifested an illusion that hid reality from you (3:1). But the Holy Spirit sees reality; therefore, it can be seen, just not by you. “It is invisible to you because you are looking at something else” (3:3). Once again, Jesus is pointing out that nothing is wrong with reality; what's wrong is your mind. And all you need to do is to *stop* doing what you are doing—looking at something else, thinking that the illusion you have made up is real—and reality will still be there, totally unchanged and undisturbed.

It isn't up to you to decide what is real, or what is visible or invisible. Reality is what God created; He *defines* reality, not you (3:4–6). The ego's arrogance lies in thinking that you can make something that is not of God and yet is real. One way that arrogance manifests is in the thoughts you may have that try to tell you that you have permanently destroyed your spiritual abilities, or that you have permanently lost Heaven. Another is our presumption that the physical world is real. We tend to think of “spirit” as invisible, but it is the only thing that is truly visible to the Holy Spirit; what is invisible to Him is *bodies* (T-20.VII.8:1–2,5).

You have purposefully *forgotten* what reality is, and “unless [God] had given you a way to remember”—unless He placed the Holy Spirit in your mind—“you would have condemned yourself to oblivion” (3:8). We've seen this same sort of statement before in the Text: Without the Holy Spirit, we would have been permanently lost. If our will had been given free rein, so that we could have made the real unreal and the unreal real, we would have left Heaven and burned our bridges behind us, so that there was no way back. We would have ejected the knowledge of reality from our minds and done so completely

and forever. But God did not allow that to happen. We were not permitted to alter God's creation (ourselves). We could not escape from God's Presence. And, though we drove out our knowledge of God, God sent His Messenger, the Holy Spirit, to safeguard that knowledge within us. Despite all of our valiant efforts, the way to God is still open!

Paragraph 4

• Study Question •

4. *Memory is clearly something related to the past. How can the memory of God be "no more past than future"? (4:8).*

You tried to forget God, but God did not allow that to happen. He sent the Holy Spirit into your mind to carry the memory of God and to safeguard it there (4:1). You would do better trying to forget that you have a big toe; the memory of God is a permanent part of you. "You can deny it, but you cannot lose it" (4:2; see also 4:7).

It does not matter how thoroughly we seem to have lost touch with God. We may deny that we have *heard* the truth; we may deny that we have *seen* the truth. God meets us on the level both levels of sight and of sound; every way we have denied knowledge is met with a response from Him (4:5). The Holy Spirit is present in every one of us to guide and correct what we hear and what we see, so that we recover our memory of God and our Self (4:3–4). He didn't let us get away with it! Love in all its Reality still *is*, right now. It is not past (lost or destroyed), nor is it future (not yet existing but waiting to be born); the memory of God is "forever always" (4:8).

The concept of eternity versus time has long fascinated me. I recall a teacher in Bible college saying, "Eternity is not a very, very long time; it is not time stretched out like a rubber band; eternity is outside of time entirely." Something that is eternal exists now, has always existed, and will exist forever. In eternity there is no past nor future; there is only now.

Thus, if our nature is an eternal creation of God, and if God created us happy, then we are always, already happy. If the memory of God is eternally within us, it is always, already there. It has never been absent, so it does not need to be restored. It has always been present, so it does not need to be sought after. It is within us right now. As you read on I think you will see that this is a prominent theme of this section (6:4; 8:4; 8:7–8). The eternal nature of truth is what makes it possible to realize that there is nowhere to go, nothing to do, and nothing to accomplish. We are all redeemed *right now* (6:4). Learning this, and learning to really believe it, is the only change that is required.

Paragraph 5

• Study Question •

5. *Can you think of a situation in your life to which sentence 4 could come as an effective wake-up call? That is, is there some situation where you need to*

stop trying to control things or to dictate the way things are?

To know love, to remember your own reality as love, all you have to do is *ask for it* (5:1). But it can't dawn on your mind if you are still deliberately rejecting it (5:2). The ability of the human mind to blind itself to the truth should come as no surprise. We've all seen it: The abused wife who refuses to realize her husband does not love her; the alcoholic who refuses to admit he is addicted; the over-eater who cannot admit the effects of over-eating.

We are all doing it. The only reason we don't remember God fully is because we are choosing not to remember. That inner resistance is what we are being asked to notice and acknowledge. We just need to wake up to what we are doing to ourselves. When God seems to be absent, we need to become aware that He only *seems* to be absent because we are actively choosing not to see Him, out of our "insane desire to control reality" (5:3). Back in the third paragraph, Jesus spoke of our desire "to decide what reality is" (3:4). This refers to our impotent wish to be something other than what God created. Instead of being God's creation, we wanted to be our own creation—to be an ego in a body. We have to give up the ego pipe dream in order to remember God (5:3).

You may think you are reaching out to God, but with the other hand you are covering your eyes while denying that you are doing so. You want to be God, in control of the universe, and if you see the real God, that game is over. You still prefer the illusion of independence to the reality of your total dependence on God. It's utterly foolish, of course, and even in this heavy moment, Jesus jokes about it:

You who cannot even control yourself should hardly aspire to control the universe. (5:4)

How absurd to think that I know how things should be! How foolish for me to believe I can prescribe to others how they should behave, or how to solve their problems! All I need to do to disabuse me of that belief is to look at the world around me. Look at the mess of my life, the mess of my relationships, the mess of my hidden thoughts. *This* is the result of the ego's madness. This is what I have produced so far, and I think *I* should be in charge? God forbid!

The good news is that none of it real! (5:5). All I have managed to produce is disaster, but the disaster is not real. It is only an illusion. The next paragraph amplifies this concept.

Paragraph 6

• Study Question •

6. In sentence 10, what "is not there"?

Jesus is advising us not to sell ourselves short, not to settle for an empty illusion of a world (6:1). The world is merely nothing that looks like something, and the impression

we have that we are seeing something real has to be false, because you cannot see what isn't there (6:2). It isn't worth trying to keep, because how can you keep what isn't there in the first place?

If God is going to give us a gift, it won't be this illusion (6:3). He would not give us the world we see, even if we did ask for it. Thank God! What we wanted simply could not be granted reality; both God's nature and our own made it impossible.

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him! (Luke 11:11–13, NIV)

God would not give you something that could harm you. The instant you thought you had deserted God, you were redeemed (6:4). “Not one note in Heaven's song was missed” (T26.V.5:4). Literally *no time* at all passed between our insane choice and God's perfect and complete answer. “The separation never occurred” (T-6.II.10:7). All the horror you *think* you have made has never really existed; it is all a nightmare in your mind (6:5). You are hallucinating. “*It is not there*” (6:10).

If this seems extreme to you, you are not alone, nor is the response one that the Course does not anticipate. Nearly everyone finds it difficult to accept this teaching: The world as we know it does not really exist, and we are all suffering from a shared hallucination. Lesson 152 in the Workbook addresses this difficulty. In sum, it points out that if God is the loving being we believe He is, He simply *could not* have created the world we see, and if He did not create it, it does not exist. Thousands of people have come to a similar realization. They looked at the world, and they looked at the concept of a loving God, and realized that one or the other had to be a lie. Most of them made the wrong choice, however; they decided that God was the lie. The Course is merely taking the alternative option. It recognizes that the world of pain and death is false, and God is what is true.

The real world is just waiting for us to choose to see it. Love is the only thing that is real, and we can see that any time we want to; if we do not see it, it is because we are actively choosing to see something else that doesn't even really exist (6:11).

Paragraph 7

• Study Question •

7. *Sentence 10 really captures the whole paragraph. The unreal world holds no real attraction. And your attraction to love is irresistible, since you are love. Sentence 11 explains why love is so attractive. What is its explanation?*

Your deliberately choosing to forget God and to blind yourself to the truth sounds so

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serious, and yet Jesus dismisses all your active choosing to see something else as of no importance whatsoever! (7:1). You are still the Christ, the Son of the living God; nothing can change that. The Holy Spirit sees nothing but the Christ in you (7:3). Your identity as God's Son may be invisible to *you*, but to the Holy Spirit it is crystal clear. It fills His vision, leaving room for nothing else (7:4).

Do you wonder why life has seemed so disappointing? You were trying to subsist on an illusion, like a person lost in the desert deceived by the mirage of an oasis. What else could you expect but despair? (7:6). How utterly frustrating to pin your hopes on something that "can never be"! (7:8). Beings such as ourselves, sprung from the heart of God and heirs to all of His divine nature, could never be satisfied with the tawdry and ephemeral offerings of time and space; only God Himself can satisfy us (7:9).

My goal is God Himself.

Not joy, nor peace, nor even blessing,

But Himself, my God.

At any cost, dear Lord! By any road! (Author unknown)

It all comes down to this: the real world, which you can see by sharing the perception of the Holy Spirit, is all that exists. You were *made* for this world; it is the only place you will ever feel at home. The unreal world, which you see by sharing the ego's perception, will never satisfy you because it can never exist!

What God did not give you has no power over you, and the attraction of love for love remains irresistible. (7:10)

The outcome is certain. Why keep fighting the inevitable? The love within you, the love that you *are*, must eventually find its way home. You, being love, are irresistibly attracted to God. The very nature of what love is guarantees that it must be so (7:11).

Oh how the thought of God attracts
And draws the heart from earth,
And sickens it of passing shows
And dissipating mirth!

God only is the creature's home,
Though rough and straight the road;
Yet nothing less can satisfy
The love that longs for God. (Frederick William Faber)

The final sentence, presented as the reason for this compelling attraction, is interesting in its own right. It speaks of the nature of love, and therefore tells us a great deal about God and about ourselves. Since God is love, the way God unites the universe is by extending His love. Extension is an essential part of His being and therefore of ours as well. Extending itself is what love does.

Paragraph 8

• Study Question •

8. *Why does corrected perception give way to knowledge?*

The real world is yours for the taking. It has already been given to you “in loving exchange for the world you made and the world you see” (8:1–2). The “always already so” theme can be seen again in this paragraph, quite strongly. The real world exists now and is constantly within our reach; we need only reach out for it. We can see it in any moment we choose to see it. We fail to see it only because we choose not to.

Seeing the real world will make the unreal world invisible because that other world is nothingness (8:3,5). To me, this has both an immediate and an ultimate meaning. The ultimate meaning is that the physical world will literally disappear and “cease to seem to be” (WpII.14.2:12). The immediate meaning is that the world we see will reflect heaven instead of hell. Instead of seeing attack everywhere, we will see only love and calls for love. Instead of seeing sins that deserve judgment, we will see mistakes that deserve correction. Instead of people who merit punishment, we will see only people who merit our love.

When your perception is completely corrected, it will give way to knowledge (8:6–7). This has to refer to the ultimate transition out of the physical into the spiritual, out of form and into formlessness, out of duality and into unity. You will know that the absence of love you used to perceive never really existed, and only love has ever been real, always and forever (8:4, 7). “The Atonement is but the way back to what was never lost. Your Father could not cease to love His Son” (8:8–9).

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Summary of the Chapter

This, then, is “The Curriculum of the Holy Spirit.” He is teaching us to give up all our interpretations of the world and ourselves, which we have chosen only because of our foolish desire to be independent of God. They are only interpretations, not facts. We have tried to judge and interpret *on our own* and the world we see is the result. We need to remember what we are, and to come to rely once again, wholly, and completely, on the judgment of the Holy Spirit. His judgment is that “Every loving thought is true. Everything else is an appeal for healing and help, regardless of the form it takes” (T12.I.3:3–4).

Our interpretations are a denial of that truth; our job as miracle workers is to deny that denial of truth, to say “No” to the ego’s judgments. What seems to be attack or sickness is just a call for love, and deserves only love as a response. The way to remember God is to look at those denials of truth as they rise in our minds, without guilt or self-judgment, and instead of denying them, give them to the Holy Spirit for healing.

We hold on to these false interpretations because we have an investment in seeing

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things that way. We are trying to preserve our own ego identification. We have projected everything we do not want in our minds out onto the world, in a vain attempt to get rid of them, instead of giving them to the Holy Spirit, Who can truly remove them. We have to recognize that none of these things are truly outside us; the attack we perceive is in our own minds and nowhere else.

We have been seeking for salvation where it can never be found: in the world. The ego teaches us to do this because it wants us to seek and never find. It does not want us to realize the love we are seeking is *within our own mind*. When we realize the ego's goals, we will willingly deny the ego's existence and give up our identification with it. When we see what identifying with the ego costs us, we will stop doing it.

The whole thing started with our attack on ourselves. We tried to be unloving and we think we have succeeded. Therefore, we think that attack works because it made us weak. We think we need to attack because we believe we are weak, and we think attack will work to weaken others because it worked on us. But it didn't work; our spirit is invulnerable. Our self-attack did not weaken it. We have been teaching ourselves a course in how to attack ourselves, a course that cannot succeed. We need to resign as our own teacher and accept the Holy Spirit as Teacher instead.

We cannot really destroy what we are as God's creations, although we can choose to suppress our awareness of it. God is still in our memory despite all we think we have done, and the Holy Spirit can teach us to remember that because He carries that memory. He teaches us to see only love or calls for love, and to respond with love. As we do, we discover that love still lives in us.

Our love, which is within us, seems invisible to us. We need to make it visible by extending it to others. When we see the results in the world, we will know that love is real. Our interpretations of the world witness to our weakness and guilt; the Holy Spirit's interpretation witnesses to our strength and innocence. The world is a mirror to show us our reality. How we see it is a result of what we choose to believe about ourselves. When we want only love, we will see nothing else. We have the power of decision, the freedom to choose to see the world right. When we choose to judge and condemn the world, we are judging and condemning ourselves. The ego wants to condemn us to death. The guilt we see is always our own. Undoing guilt is essential. Your interpretation of your brother's ego is your interpretation of your own.

The final section of the chapter teaches that love is still in your mind, and is irresistibly drawn to God, because love is attracted to love. To discover this love in yourself, offer love, not attack. Ask to see as the Holy Spirit sees, for He sees only love. You will begin to see the reality of one situation after another. When your perceptions are wholly corrected, perceptions give way to knowledge, and you awake from the dream to realize that the unreality you saw never was, and the reality of love is all that has ever been.

Answer Key

1. You attack the real world by seeing bodies, by believing in a dangerous world, by fearing the future, by resenting the past, and by trying to find happiness through managing the world better.
2. a. Nothing. b. You lost awareness of him.
3. Because if it were up to you, you would have chosen to make reality permanently invisible, and would have condemned yourself to oblivion.
4. The memory of God is not a memory of something in the past; it is the awareness of a current state, but a state of which you are not currently conscious. It exists *now*, and rather than in the past or future.
5. No written answer is expected.
6. The world we have made; the world we see with our physical eyes. It is in reality nothing, but we see it because we believe in it.
7. Because drawing things into unity is love's very function.
8. Because corrected perception sees that perception has never been (i.e., what it sees has never really existed), and that knowledge has always been the only reality.